

Tertullian and Medicine

Thomas Heyne, Dallas

ABSTRACT:

Scholars have long described Tertullian as the first Christian writer to show an appreciable knowledge of medicine, but none has analyzed this theme in comprehensive detail. A thorough analysis of Tertullian's corpus reveals a remarkably consistent respect for physicians, profound understanding of medical science, and creative use of medical metaphors. His medical knowledge – derived from Soranus of Ephesus and Pliny the Elder – was deeper than that of prior Christians, and it appears to have deepened further throughout his lifetime. Furthermore, Tertullian never disparaged doctors as many of his contemporaries did. Nonetheless, he was apparently ignorant of Galen, and he never made medicine his major priority.

I. Introduction¹

Few scholarly topics are of more practical import today than the interplay between faith and healthcare. And few early Christian writers are more controversial and fascinating than Tertullian of Carthage. Lively scholarly debate continues on numerous topics, including whether he rejected secular learning or embraced Montanism, and whether these opinions changed. Relatively unexplored is the corollary question: did Tertullian, as many scholars have intimated, reject medical science? More specifically, did the ‘fundamentalist’ Tertullian typify a rejection of medicine by certain early Christians, who either embraced suffering or prayed for healing—and therefore ‘hastened the decline of medicine’?² Put differently, was Tertullian an example of the ‘Christian...glorification of disease,’ which ‘delighted exuberantly in famine and plague’?³ In addition, what precisely was Tertullian’s knowledge and opinion of disease and medicine, and did his opinions ever change? Despite a burgeoning interest in the history of medicine and early Christianity, and despite repeated scholarly acknowledgements of Tertullian’s medical erudition, these questions remain largely answered.

In this article, I aim to show that Tertullian displayed a remarkable knowledge of medical science, respect for the medical art, and creativity with medical metaphors and arguments. His medical interest – although never an obsession or major priority – seems to have increased rather than diminished with time. I shall first demonstrate why the question of Tertullian’s attitude toward medicine cannot be answered hastily, and then review previous scholarship on this topic. After examining the medical interests of Tertullian’s Christian and non-Christian predecessors, I

¹ I owe profound gratitude to the countless friends and colleagues who assisted me with this paper. In particular, I would like to thank Geoffrey Dunn, Mark Edwards, Gary Ferngren, Bernard Green, Aaron Linderman, Yannis Papadogiannakis, and particularly my scholarly father for helpful suggestions and assistance with typographical errors. Thanks also to Sean Finnegan, Michael Voges, Gabriel Seifert, and Thomas Whisenant for their assistance with the foreign languages. Finally, thanks to the UVA for permission to use photographs, and Claire Therese, Aurelie Nelson, Samuel Fernandez, and the Bodleian staff for helping me acquire several works from overseas.

² Vivian Nutton, *From Galen to Alexander: Aspects of Medicine and Medical Practice in Late Antiquity: DOP 38* (1984), 1-14; Victor Dawe, *The Attitude of the Ancient Church Toward Sickness and Healing* (Harvard Dissertation, 1955), 78.

³ Ludwig Edelstein, *Ancient Medicine*, ed. Oswei and Lilian Temkin (Baltimore, 1967), 387; Vivian Nutton, *Murders and Miracles: Lay Attitudes towards Medicine in Classical Antiquity*, in: *Patients and Practitioners: Lay Perceptions of Medicine in Pre-Industrial Society* (Cambridge, 1985), 23-53, 45.

shall proceed through Tertullian's corpus, discussing his use of medical knowledge, particularly from Pliny and Soranus. To conclude, I will demonstrate that Tertullian's favorable attitude towards medicine is not surprising given his estimation of the body and its unity with the soul.

II. Avoiding hasty conclusions

Just as happens in other debates concerning Tertullian, some scholars quote (or misquote) single passages to demonstrate the issue rather hastily. Among those who see the Carthaginian as 'anti-medicine' is the eminent medical historian Vivian Nutton, who argues that the 'fundamentalist' Tertullian rejected medicine and urged Christians to pray for cure or accept disease as a trial from God.⁴ As proof, Nutton has repeatedly cited a particular passage from Tertullian:

... our numbers are burdensome to the world, which can hardly supply us from its natural elements; our wants grow more and more keen ... In very deed, pestilence, and famine, and wars, and earthquakes have to be regarded as a remedy for nations.⁵

Remarkably, the quotation comes from Tertullian's *De anima*, which Adolf von Harnack once deemed the foundation for physiological psychology.⁶ Yet Fridolf Kudlien, another medical historian, supports Nutton's assertion: Tertullian 'attacks not only Pagan physicians ... but medicine per se.'⁷ As proof, Kudlien cites Hans Schadewaldt, who relies upon this passage from 'Tertullian':

But medicine and everything included in it is an invention of the same kind [as demonology]. ... For what reason do you not approach the more powerful Lord,

⁴ V. Nutton, *From Galen to Alexander* (1984), 5.

⁵ Tertullian, *An.* 30.4 (CChr.SL 2:827). The English translations used in this paper come from the ANF, unless otherwise specified. See V. Nutton, *From Galen to Alexander* (1984) 8; *ead.*, *Murders and Miracles* (1984), 23-53; and *ead.*, *Ancient Medicine* (London, 2004), 287.

⁶ Adolf von Harnack, *Medicinisches aus der ältesten Kirchengeschichte: TU* 8.4 (1892), 37-152, 70.

⁷ Fridolf Kudlien, *Cynicism and Medicine: Bulletin History Medicine* 45 (1974), 305-37, 317.

but rather seek to cure yourself, like the dog with grass, or the stag with a viper, or the hog with river-crabs, or the lion with apes?⁸

Tracing Schadewaldt's source, however, we see that he has reproduced a passage from an article by Harnack – yet Harnack himself was quoting Tatian, not Tertullian.⁹ Although it is generally accepted that Tatian had little respect for φαρμακεία,¹⁰ this example can scarcely prove that Tertullian rejected it as well.

On the other hand, some have argued somewhat cursorily that Tertullian permitted and favored medicine. So Darrel Amundsen has repeatedly relied on a particular passage from *De corona*: 'Let Aesculapius have been the first who sought and discovered cures: Esaias mentions that he ordered Hezekiah medicine when he was sick. Paul, too, knows that a little wine does the stomach good.'¹¹ But one must be wary of basing an argument on a single passage castrated from its complex rhetorical context – a single affirmation from the shifting Carthaginian rhetor, as Jerónimo Leal shows, means little.¹² Furthermore, given Tertullian's apparent aversion to paganism, philosophy, astrology, and secular teaching, and given his acceptance of both fasting and healing miracles (interesting issues related to medicine yet beyond the scope of this article),¹³ Tertullian's attitude towards medicine is scarcely transparent. Even Gary Ferngren's recent work, which cites a few passages,¹⁴ does not attempt to demonstrate the extent of Tertullian's medical knowledge, how he used medical ideas, or whether he ever changed his mind (as he changed his

⁸ Hans Schadewaldt, *Die Apologie der Heilkunst bei den Kirchenvätern: Veröffentlichungen der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Pharmazie* 26 (1965), 115-30, 126-7.

⁹ See Darrel Amundsen's astute exposition in *Medicine, Society, and Faith in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Baltimore, 1996), 10. See Tatian, *Orat.* 17-8 (Molly Whittaker, *Tatian: Oratio ad Graecos* [Oxford, 1982], 34-7) and A. Harnack, *Medicinisches* (1892), 55 [19] n.1. Harnack himself commits two errors: the canine remedy is in Pliny, *HN* 8.63 (not 25.8), and he omits a citation for the leonine remedy (*HN* 8.19). For Pliny, I will follow the translation and divisions in John Bostock, *The Natural History of Pliny* (London, 1855), available online at www.perseus.tufts.edu.

¹⁰ For Tatian, medicine was connected to demons: see D. Amundsen, *Medicine, Society, and Faith* (1996), 146-8, 158-73; Oswei Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians* (London, 1991), 122-5; Gary Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity* (Baltimore, 2009), 27-8, 52.

¹¹ Tertullian, *Cor.* 8.2 (CChr.SL 2:1051). Cited in D. Amundsen, *Medicine, Society, and Faith* (1996), 146; *id.* and Gary Ferngren, *Medicine and Christianity in the Roman Empire: Compatibilities and Tensions: ANRW II 37.3* (1996) 2957-80. See O. Temkin, *Hippocrates* (1991), 115.

¹² Jerónimo Leal, *La antropología de Tertuliano: Estudio de los tratados polémicos de los años 207-212 d.c.*, *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 76 (Roma, 2001), 185. See Tertullian, *Publ.* 1.10-2.

¹³ On miracles, see Tertullian, *Scap.* 4.5. See also Thomas Heyne, *Were Second-Century Christians 'Preoccupied' with Physical Healing and the Asclepian Cult?: Studia Patristica* 2010.

¹⁴ G. Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care* (2009), 26-7.

opinions on remarriage and fasting). Finally, these authors have made little attempt to explain Tertullian's opinions in light of his unique anthropology.

III. Previous scholarship: A yet unwritten page

The lack of particular attention to medicine in Tertullian is remarkable, particularly given his importance. In inaugural essays on early Christians and medicine, Stephen D'Irsay and Adolf von Harnack cited passages from *De anima* to show that Tertullian was perhaps the 'first Christian' deeply interested in and knowledgeable of medicine.¹⁵ Since then, several individual studies have analyzed the extent and use of medical knowledge in particular Fathers, including Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Jerome, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Augustine, Evagrius Ponticus, and Isidore of Seville.¹⁶ Notably, most of these studies have made little effort to connect the medical imagery with each writer's theology.¹⁷ Alongside these focused works, broader surveys on early Christians and medicine have discussed Tertullian briefly, often to prove or disprove early Christian acceptance of medicine.¹⁸ But the very man cited by both sides remains relatively unexplored.

¹⁵ Stephen D'Irsay, *Patristic Medicine: Annals of Medical History* 9 (1928), 364-78; A. Harnack, *Medicinisches* (1892), 78f.

¹⁶ See Jacqueline Lagrée, *Wisdom, Health, Salvation: The Medical Model in the Works of Clement of Alexandria*, in: *From Athens to Jerusalem* (Rotterdam, 2000), 227-40; Alfred Breitenbach, *Wer christlich lebt, lebt gesund - Medizinische und physiologische Argumentation im 'Paidagogos' des Klemens von Alexandrien: JbAC* 45 (2002) 24-49; Karin Schweiger, *Medizinisches im Werk des Kirchenvaters Origenes* (Düsseldorf: Doctoral Dissertation, 1983); Samuel Fernández, *Cristo médico, según Orígenes*, *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 64 (Rome, 1999); A. S. Pease, *Medical Allusions in the Work of St. Jerome: HSCP* 25 (1914), 73-6; J. J. Cuesta, *La antropología y la medicina pastoral de San Gregorio de Niza* (Madrid, 1946); Jeffrey Bishop, *Mind-Body Unity: Gregory of Nyssa and a Surprising Fourth-Century CE Perspective: Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 43.4 (Summer 2000), 519-29; Mary Keenan, *Augustine and the Medical Profession: Bulletin History Medicine* 7 (1936), 168-90; *ead.*, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus and Early Byzantine Medicine: Bulletin History Medicine* 9 (1941), 8-30; *ead.*, *St. Gregory of Nyssa and the Medical Profession: Bulletin History Medicine* 15 (1944), 150-61; Susan Wessel, *The Reception of Greek Science in Gregory of Nyssa's De hominibus opificio: VigChr* 63 (2009), 24-46; Gerhard Müller, *Arzt, Kranker und Krankheit bei Ambrosius von Mailand: Sudhoffs Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin* 51 (1967), 193-216; Rudolf Arbesmann, *The Concept of 'Christus Medicus' in St. Augustine: Traditio* 10 (1954), 1-28; Susan Griffith, *Medical Imagery in the Sermons of Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford D.Phil., 2009); Luke Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus* (Oxford, 2005), 104-30; William D. Sharpe, *Isidore of Seville: The Medical Writings: TAPhS* 54 (1964). Breitenbach, Fernández, Cuesta, and Wessel are significantly more thorough than Lagrée, Schweiger, and Bishop. One Christian writer whose medical ideas certainly deserve more attention is Nemesius of Emesa.

¹⁷ Fernández, Dysinger, and Wessel excepted.

¹⁸ D. Amundsen, *Medicine, Society, and Faith* (1996); H. Schadewaldt, *Apologie* (1965); Gervais Dumiege, *Le Christ médecin dans la littérature chrétienne des premiers siècles: RAC* 47 (1972), 115-41; and, most impressively, G. Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care* (2009). See the detailed survey on medical metaphor in Michael Dörnemann, *Krankheit und Heilung in der Theologie der frühen Kirchenväter*, *Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum* 20 (Tübingen, 2003).

Those works that have been devoted specifically to Tertullian's attitude to or knowledge of medicine tend to be limited, superficial, or obscure.¹⁹ In the most often cited article, Pierre de Labriolle boldly claims that medicine 'c'est presque une obsession' for Tertullian, but he makes little progress past Harnack – simply paraphrasing similar passages from the *De anima* and adding two from *Scorpiace*.²⁰ Apparently unaware of Labriolle and Harnack, Michel Perrin merely summarizes ideas from J. H. Waszink.²¹ Waszink's massive and erudite commentary on *De anima* is certainly important and relevant; however, he focuses on this single work, aiming more to challenge Heinrich Karpp's *Quellenforschung* of Soranus' Περί Ψυχῆς than dissect Tertullian's attitude and knowledge of medicine. Similarly, two articles from Roberto Polito focus on Soranus and Asclepiades rather than Tertullian, whom he deems an Epicurean materialist.²² More disappointing are the article and subsequent monograph by Giorgio Rialdi: although he devotes more pages directly to Tertullian and medicine than any other scholar, his work is remarkably repetitive and superficial, citing none of the above-mentioned scholars nor any ancient medical texts.²³

Although numerous other works are relevant, they do not address the topic directly or in detail. Scholarly analyses of Tertullian's exegesis or terminology discuss Tertullian's use of medical imagery, but they do so only in passing.²⁴ The impressive anthropological studies by Peter Brown, Aline Rouselle, and Michel Foucault focus more on sexual abstinence than

¹⁹ See the *Chronica tertulliana*.

²⁰ Pierre de Labriolle, La physiologie dans l'œuvre de Tertullien: *Archives generales de medicine* 83 (1906), 1317-28, 1327.

²¹ Michel Perrin, Un exemple de l'utilisation de la médecine chez les penseurs chrétiens: Tertullien et l'embryologie, in: *Médecine antique: cinq études Paul Demont* (Amiens, 1991), 91-110. Amazingly, Perrin never admits his heavy reliance on Waszink.

²² Roberto Polito, I quattro libri sull'anima di Sorano e lo scritto De anima di Tertulliano: *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 3 (1994) 423-68, and *id.*, Master, Medicine, and the Mind: Asclepiades vs. Epicurus: *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 30 (Summer 2006) 285-335.

²³ Giorgio Rialdi, Medicina nella dottrina di tertulliano: *Scientia Veterum* 126 (1968), 11-50; *id.*, *La scienza medica di Tertulliano per un dialogo con l'uomo d'oggi* (Genoa, 1970).

²⁴ T. P. O'Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible: Language-Imagery-Exegesis*, Latinitas Christianorum Primaeva, 21 (Nijmegen, 1967), 98-107; René Braun, *Deus Christianorum: Recherches sur le vocabulaire doctrinal de Tertullien*, Études Augustiniennes (Paris, 1977). See S. Fernández, *Cristo médico* (1999), 28-29; M. Dörnemann, *Krankheit und Heilung* (2003), 161-172. While Alberto Viciano finds O'Malley's analysis exhaustive, I can scarcely agree; O'Malley focuses only on four works in ten pages. See Alberto Viciano, *Cristo salvador y liberador del hombre: estudio sobre la soteriología de Tertulliano* (Pamplona, 1986), 335.

medicine;²⁵ similarly, the major analyses of Tertullian's anthropology focus more on philology than medicine.²⁶ Finally, most of the particular textual commentaries on Tertullian's various works give very little attention to medicine.²⁷ Considering the number of scholars who have noted Tertullian's interest in medical science,²⁸ it is remarkable how little research this issue has received. One of the first and most important pages in the history of Christianity and medicine seems remarkably empty.

Given the variety of previous and possible approaches, I should here clarify what is here meant by 'medicine'. In Tertullian's day, medicine was understood as both *scientia* and *ars*, connected to both the *artes liberales* (through natural philosophy) and to the skilled crafts.²⁹ Furthermore, medical imagery was often used as a *tropus* for exposition and argumentation.³⁰ Accordingly, I shall examine these three facets: Tertullian's knowledge of medical science (what did he know of anatomy, physiology, and therapeutics?), his attitude toward medical practice (did he respect physicians sufficiently to permit Christians to visit them?), and his use of medical imagery (what did he achieve with medical metaphors, broadly speaking?). As we shall see, his medical erudition, estimation, and argumentation are quite impressive, particularly compared to numerous Christians and non-Christians of his time.

²⁵ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988); Aline Rouselle, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity* (Oxford, 1988); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 3 vols. (New York, 1978-1986).

²⁶ J. Leal, *Antropología de Tertuliano* (2001); Salvador Vicastillo, *Un cuerpo destinado a la muerte: Su significado en la antropología de Tertuliano* (Madrid, 2006); Jérôme Alexandre, *Une chair pour la gloire: L'anthropologie réaliste et mystique de Tertullien* (Paris, 2001); Jean-Claude Fredouille, Observations sur la terminologie anthropologique de Tertullien: constantes et variations, in: *Les Peres de L'Église face a la science médicale de leur temps* (Paris, 2005); *id.*, *Tertullien et la conversion de la culture Antique*, Études Augustiniennes (Paris, 1972); Roberto Montero, *La antropología del 'Adversus Marcionem' de Tertuliano* (Madrid, 2007).

²⁷ The exceptions I have found and employed are Alois Gerlo, *De Pallio* (Wetteren, 1940); William P. Le Saint, *Treatises on Penance*, ACW 28 (New York, 1955); Marie Turcan, *Tertullien. La toilette des femmes*, SC 173 (Paris, 1971); and particularly J. H. Waszink, *Q. Septimi Florentis Tertulliani De Anima. Edited with introduction and commentary* (Amsterdam, 1947) and Giovanna Azzali Bernardelli, *Scorpiace*, Biblioteca Patristica 14 (Florence, 1991).

²⁸ E.g. W. P. Le Saint, *Treatises on Penance* (1955), 183; R. Braun, *Deus Christianorum* (1977), 114; T. P. O'Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible* (1967), 99; P. Brown, *Body and Society* (1988), 77; G. L. Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God: Perspectives on the Theology of Tertullian* (Atlanta, 1979), 66; and Timothy D. Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford, 1985²), 205.

²⁹ E.g. Pliny, *HN* 29.5; Celsus, *Med. praef.*; Cicero, *Or.* 2.9.

³⁰ S. Fernández, *Cristo médico* (1999), 16-20; M. Dörnemann, *Krankheit und Heilung* (2003), 8-57. Obviously, a rhetor could use medical imagery without possessing any sort of studied knowledge of medicine. And Tertullian was certainly no doctor. As we shall see, however, many of Tertullian's medical metaphors and arguments demonstrate that he went gone beyond a simple popular understanding of medicine; he actually understood some detailed concepts seen in Pliny and Soranus. See n.61 below.

IV. Non-Christian knowledge of and attitudes to medicine

One can appreciate Tertullian's knowledge and opinion of medicine only by placing him within his historical context. Medicine in the western parts of the Roman Empire scarcely possessed the same precision and respect as it does today. Folk-remedies and superstition abounded: Pliny's *Historia naturalis*, which was widely esteemed for its medical erudition, prescribed goose semen, sow feces, and magical amulets for women in labor.³¹ Alongside such questionable pharmaceuticals, Roman physicians also employed varied dietetic regimens and painful surgical techniques.³² Pre-Galenic doctors had a limited understanding of anatomy and physiology: *venae* carried blood, *arteriae* transported air, and *nerui* included tendons and ligaments.³³ Obviously, some physicians (*e.g.* Galen and Soranus) enjoyed successes, but one wonders whether many procedures (like bloodletting and clysterization) did more harm than good.

Given the limitations of Roman medicine, it is not surprising that many Romans held medical science and practitioners in low esteem. Rated below lawyers, physicians were usually slaves or foreigners.³⁴ Dio Cassius spoke for many when he exclaimed: "Things have come to a pretty pass when the son of a doctor can aim at empire."³⁵ Undoubtedly he – like Tertullian – remembered the unprecedented hemorrhagic smallpox epidemic of 166-189, and the powerlessness of physicians to stop it.³⁶ The folly, deadliness, and greed of physicians were common literary themes, and numerous epigrams speak volumes: 'Lately was Diaulus a doctor, now he is an undertaker. What the undertaker now does the doctor, too, did before.'³⁷ Authors such as Martial, Tacitus, Lucian, Cato, and Pliny the Elder disparaged physicians' dangerous remedies and pointless theories.³⁸ Indeed, the primary aim of Pliny's and Celsus' popular medical encyclopedias was to allow the *pater familias* to treat himself, free from the salves and scalpels of

³¹ Pliny, *HN* 28.77, 30.43; See Valerie French, *Midwives and Maternity Care in the Roman World: Helios* n.s. 13 (1986) 69-84.

³² G. Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care* (2009), 20.

³³ Ralph Jackson, *Doctors and Diseases in the Roman Empire* (London, 1988), 30.

³⁴ V. Nutton, *Ancient Medicine* (2004), 164-5.

³⁵ Dio Cassius 80.7.1, in V. Nutton, *Murders and Miracles* (1985), 40.

³⁶ R. J. and M. L. Littman, Galen and the Antonine Plague: *AJPhil* 94 (1973), 243-55.

³⁷ Martial, *Epig.* 1.47, in R. Jackson, *Doctors and Diseases* (1988), 57. See also John Scarborough, *Roman Medicine* (London, 1969), 97.

³⁸ R. Jackson, *Doctors and Diseases* (1988), 31-59; J. Scarborough, *Roman Medicine* (1969), 95-109; V. Nutton, *Murders and Miracles* (1985), 40.

the roving and rapacious *iatrosophoi*. No ‘proper Roman’ would ever become a physician outright.³⁹

On the other hand, Julius Caesar granted citizenship to Roman physicians, and certain writers showed more positive opinions of doctors.⁴⁰ Most notably, respect for medicine is seen among the Stoics, who show substantial parallels elsewhere to Tertullian. Although disease endured tranquilly could be ‘virtue’s opportunity’ for the Stoic, both Seneca and Cicero considered health a ‘preferable indifferent’ over disease; accordingly, they consulted physicians regularly, even giving doctors rare words of praise (although more for their friendship than for their medical expertise).⁴¹ Moreover, Seneca, Epictetus, and Cicero all studied some basics of medical science as part of their liberal education, and all of them were fond of using medical metaphors, drawing on a tradition developed by Plato and Aristotle.⁴² They described philosophy as the painful but necessary medicine for the passions and diseases of the soul.⁴³ As we shall see, Tertullian adopted and expanded this metaphoric tradition within the context of Christian argumentation. Furthermore, he showed greater respect for physicians than many of his pagan contemporaries did, and he at least matched their knowledge of two of the greatest medical minds of his time – Pliny and Soranus.

V. Christian knowledge of and attitudes to medicine

Tertullian’s interest in medicine becomes even more impressive when he is compared with other early Christian authors, whom Tertullian revered over all the learned pagans.⁴⁴ Most early Christian writers appear to be generally accepting of medicine (as long as it remained subordinate

³⁹ V. Nutton, *Ancient Medicine* (2004), 164.

⁴⁰ See V. Nutton, *Ancient Medicine* (2004), 162; R. Jackson, *Doctors and Diseases* (1988), 60.

⁴¹ See Seneca, *Prov.* 3.2; *Epp.* 50, 75, 78, 89; R. Jackson, *Doctors and Diseases* (1988), 60; Christopher Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1994), 52. I find Polito’s argument against Seneca unconvincing; see R. Polito, *Master, Medicine, and the Mind* (2006), 316.

⁴² S. Fernández, *Cristo médico* (1999), 16-26. Plutarch and writers of the Second Sophistic also used medical metaphors with frequency.

⁴³ S. Fernández, *Cristo médico* (1999), 24-5; R. Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (1986), 3:55; Robert Grant, *Early Christianity and Society* (San Francisco, 1977), 80.

⁴⁴ Tertullian, *An.* 15.3. I limit my discussion here largely to Tertullian’s predecessors and contemporaries.

to God) but ignorant of detailed medical science.⁴⁵ Irenaeus' one mention of anatomy is both rudimentary (listing only *uenae, arteriae, nervi, and inuiscera diuersa*) and careless (*sanguis* is mismatched with *arteriae*, and *spiritus* with *uenas*).⁴⁶ Except for Athenagoras of Athens and Clement of Alexandria, no Christian before Tertullian shows any medical erudition; and even Athenagoras speaks only briefly of digestion, while Clement discusses only dietetics (including baths and exercises).⁴⁷ If the early Apologists had studied medical science extensively, they likely would have drawn on it just as frequently as they alluded to secular philosophy and literature. However, the Fathers apparently had other concerns; indeed, some Christian writers censured those who replaced faith with medical theory.⁴⁸

At the same time, very few early Christians criticized the medical profession outright. Christian physicians (Luke, Alexander) are mentioned with respect, and medicine is never included in lists of professions forbidden for Christians.⁴⁹ Furthermore, respect for physicians is implied in the early Fathers' use of medical metaphors – joining the pagan metaphoric tradition with Christ's reported self-designation as a physician for the sick.⁵⁰ So Ignatius calls Jesus the true physician and compares a good bishop to a doctor who adjusts his remedies.⁵¹ Similarly, Justin once describes repentance as a 'medicine' and compares Jesus to a physician who resists the whims of patients.⁵² Irenaeus' exposition of the heresies is justified by the principle that a physician must study the diseases he will cure.⁵³ The Fathers would have scarcely compared Jesus or themselves to physicians if the occupation was despised. Indeed, the medical motif is used often by the 'Stoic' Clement of Alexandria,⁵⁴ who even gives specific dietetic recommendations

⁴⁵ On Christian acceptance, see D. Amundsen, *Medicine, Society, and Faith* (1996), and G. Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care* (2009).

⁴⁶ Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* V 3.2 (SC 153:46-8).

⁴⁷ Athenagoras, *Res.* 5-7; Clement, *Paed.* 2-3.

⁴⁸ The Galen-worshippers in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* V 28.14.

⁴⁹ *Col.* 4:14, see *1Tim.* 5:23; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* V 1.49; R. Grant, *Early Christianity and Society* (1977), 85-6.

⁵⁰ *Matth.* 9:12, *Mark* 2:17, *Luke* 5:31, see *Luke* 4:14. See G. Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care* (2009), 29-31 and M. Dörnemann, *Krankheit und Heilung* (2003).

⁵¹ Ignatius, *Eph.* 7.2, *Poly.* 1-2. See Ignatius, *Eph.* 20.2, *Trall.* 6.2, and Seneca, *Ep.* 64.

⁵² Justin, *Res. frg.* 10, *Misc. frg.* 9, 17 (in ANF). See Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* III 5.2.

⁵³ Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* IV 0.2. See *ibid.* I 2.2.

⁵⁴ P. Brown, *Body and Society* (1988), 128-33.

and states that sickness could be a distraction for ordinary Christians.⁵⁵ In short, permissiveness or approval seem to have been the dominant Christian attitudes to medical care.

At the same time, reservations about medicine can be seen in at least two Christian authors: Tatian and Origen.⁵⁶ Tatian, who predated and influenced Tertullian,⁵⁷ rejected the use of φαρμακεία, claiming that a Christian should resort to God for cures.⁵⁸ Less radically, Origen believed that medicine was a great gift of God permitted for Christians, but he also suggested that those who wanted ‘to live in way superior to that of the multitude’ should pray rather than resort to medicine.⁵⁹ As we shall see, Tertullian never argued that ‘superior’ Christians should forgo medicine, not even in his later, more elitist/Montanistic works. One reason for this respect of medicine, I shall argue, lies in his anthropology: Tertullian – unlike Tatian and Origen – possessed an elevated view of the body and a deep conviction in the indivisible unity of flesh and soul. Armed with this anthropology, Tertullian showed an esteem and knowledge of medicine that went beyond many of his non-Christian and Christian predecessors.

VI. The use of medical knowledge throughout Tertullian’s corpus

There are several possible approaches to examine Tertullian’s knowledge of medical science, thoughts on the appropriateness of medicine, and use of medical metaphors. The challenge is that all three are interconnected: his diverse medical imagery shows his growing medical knowledge and his high regard for medical practitioners. Thus, rather than group his metaphors thematically, I will progress chronologically through his corpus. Besides the stylistic advantages of narrative, this approach will also demonstrate a progression. Contrary to what one might expect, Tertullian employs (and probably learns) more detailed medical concepts precisely as he moves towards the ‘elitist’, ‘spiritualistic’ ideas of Montanism. I have sought as far as possible to

⁵⁵ Clement, *Paed.* 2-3; *Strom.* 4.24. But, like other Stoics, he believes that disease accepted tranquilly could be salutary: *Strom.* 2.7; 4.5; 7.11. See Seneca, *Prov.* 3.2.

⁵⁶ Ferngren has argued convincingly that Marcion and Arnobius did not reject medicine: G. Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care* (2009), 25-35. See Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* IV 11.3.

⁵⁷ Pierre de Labriolle, *History and Literature of Christianity from Tertullian to Boethius* (London, 1924), 59.

⁵⁸ I respectfully disagree with Ferngren that Tatian rejected only ‘compound drugs’ (*Medicine and Health Care* [2009], 52). Tatian scoffs at roots, herbs, and other remedies (*Orat.* 4, 17-18).

⁵⁹ Origen, *C. Cels.* 8.60 (SC 150:312), in D. Amundsen, *Medicine, Society, and Faith* (1996), 140. See 140-1 for Basil, who speaks similarly.

follow scholarly consensus on the dates; obviously, the debate on the chronology of each work lies beyond the scope of this paper.⁶⁰ For the sake of organization, I separate the corpus into early, middle, late, and final works. I will mention both the medical images that show a more detailed knowledge of medicine (likely reflecting the work of Pliny and Soranus), as well as the more general medical metaphors.⁶¹ After progressing through this corpus, I shall briefly explain how Tertullian's anthropology helps to explain his positive esteem for medicine.

VI.1 Medicine in the Early Works: 197-200

Tertullian shows little medical erudition in his earliest works (c. 197-200), although there is some indication of respect for the medical profession. We see few of the technical medical terms Tertullian will employ later. For example, *Ad nationes* uses *intestina* only as 'internal', and *Ad nationes* and *Apologeticum* give *cauterio* simply as Mercury's wand.⁶² Although these works twice mention the common theory that *aurae* (or *aeres*) *pestilentes* spread disease,⁶³ *Apologeticum* speaks more often of diseases caused or cured through supernatural (demonic and divine) causes.⁶⁴ Tertullian does not flaunt any medical erudition, as he will in later works. Only once or twice does Tertullian suggest familiarity with Pliny: the example of the cannibalistic pagans who use gladiators' blood for epileptics may derive from *HN* (or a second-hand compendium of *HN*).⁶⁵

⁶⁰ For example, it is generally accepted that Tertullian, *Nat.*, *Apol.*, and *Mart.* were written c. 197. See J.-C. Fredouille, *Tertullien et la Conversion* (1972), 487-88 (following R. Braun, *Deus Christianorum* (1977), 567-77); Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 2 (Notre Dame, IN, 1990) 255-316; and T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian* (1985²), 55, 325. Subsequently, these sections of these sources are understood whenever these authors' chronological theories are mentioned.

⁶¹ The distinction between a 'professional' and a 'popular' understanding of medicine (much less, the need for an academic degree to practice medicine) is, of course, more of a modern concept. So too the clear-cut distinctions between anatomy, physiology, surgery, pathology, pharmacology, chemistry, botany, herpetology, etc. All were related to *medicina* within the *artes liberales* (and all are discussed, for example, in Pliny); furthermore, all could fall under the purview of someone who might call himself 'doctor.' Thus, I include all those images and arguments that appear to reflect some understanding of medicine, whether rudimentary or more profound (e.g. something learned from reading Soranus).

⁶² Tertullian, *Nat.* 1.9.5, 1.10.47, 1.12.14 (CChr.SL 1:23, 29, 32); *Apol.* 15.5 (CChr.SL 1:114).

⁶³ Tertullian, *Nat.* 2.5.6 (CChr.SL 1:48); *Apol.* 22.5 (CChr.SL 1:129). See R. Jackson, *Doctors and Diseases* (1988), 172 and A. Viciano, *Cristo Salvador* (1986), 93-4.

⁶⁴ Tertullian, *Apol.* 23.1-16, 27.4-7. I shall not dwell on Tertullian's demonology, nor his etiology; suffice it to say that here, as elsewhere, he believes that physical disease can come through natural causes (*Adu. Marc.* I 24.7, *An.* 48.1, *Idol.* 12.5), demonic causes (*Bapt.* 5.3-4, *Spec.* 26, *An.* 57.4), or divine causes (or at least with God's permission, as in *Job*) (*Scap.* 3.4, *Pat.* 14.5, *Pud.* 6.13, 21.4, *Res.* 25.1, *Adu. Marc.* II 14.1, IV 39.3, V 16.1-7). But in none of these cases is medicine deemed inappropriate. See G. Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care* (2009), 13-63.

⁶⁵ Tertullian, *Apol.* 9.11; Pliny, *HN* 28.2. For the remainder of the paper, 'Pliny' thus includes the possibility that Tertullian read the *HN* second-hand, although the accuracy in numerous details strongly suggests first-hand knowledge.

More significant is the metaphor that shows the folly of deifying earthquakes, hail, or plagues: one does not praise the instruments of the physician – his bandages, medicines, and poultices (*lanis, antidotis, malagmatibus*) – but the man himself.⁶⁶ Tertullian thereby deems physicians worthy of praise. Respect for physicians is also implied in Tertullian's descriptions of Aesculapius: after he poisoned people for pay, he was 'deservedly stricken with lightning for his greed in practising wrongfully his art'.⁶⁷ Apparently, Tertullian expected physicians to act virtuously.⁶⁸ Thus, the early works use medical references to score a few points against pagan folly and cruelty, and they begin to suggest that a physician should be respected. However, one is rather surprised by the paucity of medical concepts, especially given the variety of aims pursued in the early works, and given that he takes up similar aims in later works – e.g. urging Christians to avoid paganism (*De spectaculis*, see the later and more medical *De corona*),⁶⁹ encouraging martyrdom (*Ad martyras*, see *De patientia, Scorpiace*), and exploiting basic psychology against pagan ideas (*De testimonia animae*, see *De anima*).⁷⁰ For whatever reason (perhaps because he had not yet read Soranus), Tertullian chose not to employ medical references next to his philosophical and literary ones.

VI.2 Medicine in the Middle Works: 200-207

With the passing of time, the medical motif became more important. Composed c. 203,⁷¹ *De praescriptione haereticorum*, *De patientia*, and *De baptismo* all begin and continue with images from medical science – a remarkable fact no scholar seems to acknowledge. *De praescriptione* opens by stating that heresy is as common as fever, although more dangerous:

[Fever is] appointed a place amongst all other deadly and excruciating issues (of life) for destroying man...Fever, as being an evil both in its cause and in its

⁶⁶ Tertullian, *Nat.* 2.5.10 (CChr.SL 1:49).

⁶⁷ Tertullian, *Nat.* 2.14.12 (CChr.SL 1:69); *Apol.* 14.5 (CChr.SL 1:113).

⁶⁸ See G. Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care* (2009), 94.

⁶⁹ The brief references in *Spec.* 2.8-10 and 27.4 are unspectacular.

⁷⁰ Regarding dates, Fredouille, unlike Quasten and Barnes, give the broader range of 198-206 for *Spec.* and *Test.*

⁷¹ Fredouille and Braun give 198-206. Barnes gives 198-203 for *Bapt.*, *Pat.*, and 203 for *Praescrip.*

power, as all know, we rather loathe than wonder at, and to the best of our power guard against.⁷²

Against the theory that Tertullian glorified disease, here he clearly considers it common sense for a Christian to make strong efforts to maintain health and avoid disease. As he continues, he claims (probably rhetorically) that argument over Scripture gives him *aut stomachi euersionem ... aut cerebri*.⁷³ Notably, *De baptismo* also begins with a pathological image: a heretical woman, or rather a viper, has spread *uenenatissima doctrina* trying to abolish baptismal waters, just as asps, vipers, and basilisks frequent only dry places.⁷⁴ Further erudition is seen in Tertullian's exposition of *Matth.* 3:16 to describe the Holy Spirit: 'Even physically the dove is without gall', a creature of innocence.⁷⁵ This technique – to use scientific knowledge to explain and expand a Scriptural text – is repeated throughout Tertullian's corpus. His facts about dry snakes and bile-less doves probably come from common bestiary knowledge, but he also displays deeper scholarship. It is apparent that water can heal humans because it can also hurt them, making them *esetos et lymphaticos et hydrophobas*.⁷⁶ *Hydrophobas* is found only in medical writers (including Pliny), *lymphaticos* (frenzied) is rare but attested in Pliny, and *esetos* (drowned) is a neologism.⁷⁷ Finally, Tertullian's repeated description of baptismal waters as *medicatae aquae* may reflect Pliny's descriptions of healing waters.⁷⁸ Written in the heat of North Africa, Tertullian's descriptions of heresies as fatal fevers, heretics as venomous vipers, and baptism as rejuvenating water not only suggested interest in science and familiarity with Pliny; they also made striking images against his opponents.

⁷² Tertullian, *Praescr.* 2.1-3 (CChr.SL 1:187).

⁷³ Tertullian, *Praescr.* 16.2 (CChr.SL 1:200). I here disagree with Eric Osborn, *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge, 1997), 50.

⁷⁴ Tertullian, *Bapt.* 1 (Ernest Evans, *On Baptism* [London, 1964], 4). For snakes, see Pliny, *HN* 8.33; Lucan, *Pharsalia* 8.849f; Nicander, *Theriaca* 396.

⁷⁵ Tertullian, *Bapt.* 8 (E. Evans, *On Baptism* [1964], 19). See *Matth.* 3:16; *Mark* 1:10; *Luke* 3:22; *John* 1:32. Pliny, *HN* 10.52[104] describes the innocence of doves, and *HN* 29.26 shows how doves can cure snakebites (snakes are full of gall: *HN* 11.75). But Tertullian is not strictly following Pliny, since *HN* 11.75 posits that doves do have gall/bile. Isidore, *Etymologia* 7.3 apparently copies Tertullian.

⁷⁶ Tertullian, *Bapt.* 5.4 (E. Evans, *On Baptism* [1964], 12).

⁷⁷ *Hydrophobia*: Pliny, *HN* 29.32[99]; Celsus, *Med.* V 27.2; Caelius (from Soranus), *De morbis acutis* III 9.98. *Lymphaticus*: Pliny, *HN* 26.34[52]. See Lewis and Short's *Latin Dictionary*. On *esetos*, see E. Evans, *On Baptism* (1964), 64.

⁷⁸ Tertullian, *Bapt.* 4-7, 9 (E. Evans, *On Baptism* [1964], 10-20). See Pliny, *HN* 2.95[207], 2.104[222]. See M. Dörnemann, *Krankheit und Heilung* (2003), 169-70. Similarly, Tertullian, *An.* 50.3; *Iud.* 13.26.

Medical ideas also helped Tertullian to describe vividly the importance of patience. He begins *De patientia* by confessing that he longs for patience all the more for not possessing it, just as a sick man craves health: ‘So I, most miserable, ever sick with the heats of impatience, must of necessity sigh after, and invoke, and persistently plead for, that health of patience which I possess not.’⁷⁹ But he is wary of invoking philosophy, lest it do further *iniuria*.⁸⁰ Again, Tertullian apparently sees health as a good that should be sought after. He continues by describing impatience as an infection the serpent breathes onto Eve,⁸¹ and he posits that only patience and penance can provide the remedy of amputating the poisonous outgrowths of impatience.⁸² Never shying away from overstatement, Tertullian adds colorful medical details to the story of Job: the invalid refused his wife’s proposed *remedium* (cursing God), and, to God’s delight, calmly scraped off the unclean overflow from his *ulceris*, even sportively calling the *bestiolas* back to fill again the pits in his flesh.⁸³ *Job* 2:8 says nothing of remedies, exudates, or vermin. Evidently, Tertullian is much more interested in pathology than the author of *Job*. Of course, one should remember that Tertullian’s goal is to instill patient courage in persecution (by praising *magna aequanimitas* and even humor in time of trial), not to laud masochism or to denigrate doctors.⁸⁴ Indeed, Tertullian’s final metaphors of God as *restitutor* and *medicus* build upon the Christian metaphorical tradition and reaffirm his positive attitude toward medical practitioners.⁸⁵

Other works from this middle period (200-207) incorporate scientific knowledge,⁸⁶ particularly from Pliny, to denigrate luxury and encourage penance. In *De cultu feminarum*, Tertullian uses Pliny at several points to disparage jewelry; for example, he ties jewels to the Serpent because ‘some say’ gems are found in the brains of snakes.⁸⁷ Also, he may be drawing

⁷⁹ Tertullian, *Pat.* 1.5 (CChr.SL 1:299).

⁸⁰ Tertullian, *Pat.* 1.8 (CChr.SL 1:300).

⁸¹ Tertullian, *Pat.* 5.10 (CChr.SL 1:304). See Pliny, *HN* 8.33.

⁸² Tertullian, *Pat.* 12.2 (CChr.SL 1:312), adapted from *Matth.* 5:25.

⁸³ Tertullian, *Pat.* 14.4-5 (CChr.SL 1:315).

⁸⁴ Tertullian, *Pat.* 14.5 (CChr.SL 1:315). See *ibid.* 14.3 (CChr.SL 1:315): *nec corporis quidem conflictationibus succidamus*.

⁸⁵ Tertullian, *Pat.* 15.1 (CChr.SL 1:315).

⁸⁶ Fredouille and Braun give 198-206 for *Or.*, and c. 204 for *Cult.* and *Paen.* Barnes posits 198-203 for *Or.* and *Paen.*, but 205/6 for *Cult.*

⁸⁷ Tertullian, *Cult.* I 6.2 (CChr.SL 1.349); Pliny, *HN* 37.56-7, 9.54; M. Turcan, *Toilette des femmes* (1971), 72. Turcan notes that Tertullian’s notion of pearls as defects or inflamed excretions of oysters is (probably unknowingly) quite an advance.

from Pliny's and Ovid's accounts of the dangers of hair dyes and white lead (*cerussa*) when he condemns hair bleaches and cosmetics as harmful to health.⁸⁸ In the process of moral exhortation, Tertullian reveals his respect for bodily health and his knowledge of pre-Galenic medical concepts. He is clearly unaware of Galen in *De oratione*, when he cleverly connects Jonah's prayer in the whale to Jesus' teaching on prayer: if God actually needed to hear our voice, what windpipes (*quantis arteriis*) would Jonah have needed to shout from the *uentre* through the *uiscera*?⁸⁹ Medical ideas are certainly on Tertullian's mind, but not as a preoccupation – he appears unaware of the work of his contemporary Galen (fl. 165-200), the first to distinguish veins, arteries, nerves, and windpipes.⁹⁰

Medicine features prominently in *De paenitentia*, where Tertullian argues that public confession (*exomologesis*) is necessary for post-baptismal sins, just as 'repeated sickness must have repeated medicine'.⁹¹ Perhaps recalling Justin's mention of the 'medicine of repentance' and Seneca's metaphors of philosophers as surgeons,⁹² Tertullian defends the necessary pain of penance:

[You are] just like men who, having contracted some malady in the more private parts of the body, avoid the privity of physicians, and so perish with their own bashfulness... *But you say*, 'It is a miserable thing thus to come to exomologesis': yes, for evil does bring to misery; but where repentance is to be made, the misery ceases, because it is turned into something salutary. Miserable it is to be cut, and cauterized, and racked with the pungency of some (medicinal) powder: still, the things which heal by unpleasant means do, by the benefit of the cure, excuse their own offensiveness, and make present injury bearable for the sake of the advantage to supervene.⁹³

⁸⁸ Tertullian, *Cult.* II 6.2-II 7.3 (CCL 1.359-361); Pliny, *HN* 34.54[175]; Ovid, *Am.* I 14.1-2. See Soranus, *Gyn.* I 19.61. I will use Oswei Temkin, *Soranus' Gynecology* (Baltimore, 1991).

⁸⁹ Tertullian, *Or.* 17.3-4 (CChr.SL 1.266-67); *Jonah* 2; *Matth.* 6:5-6.

⁹⁰ See V. Nutton, *Ancient Medicine* (2004), 50.

⁹¹ Tertullian, *Paen.* 7.13 (CChr.SL 1.334): ... *iterandae ualitudinis iteranda medicina est.*

⁹² Seneca, *Epp.* 50, 75, 89; *Prov.* 3:1-2.

⁹³ Tertullian, *Paen.* 10.1, 9-10 (CChr.SL 1.337-8).

The vividness of these surgical details – unprecedented in Christian writings – gives Tertullian’s exhortation to Christian repentance greater force than any previous writer on the subject. One need only see images of ancient surgical tools (such as the scalpels, cautery irons, and bone cutters, below),⁹⁴ all used without effective anesthesia, to realize the emotions they must have elicited. Furthermore, although the Stoics often used metaphors of amputation and cauterization, Tertullian appears unique in mentioning the stinging (perhaps antiseptic) powder, which is attested in Pliny and Celsus.⁹⁵ Tertullian thus shows impressive familiarity with medical treatments and positive estimation of them as a necessary, if painful, good. The need for cure justifies the use of harsh medicine. Whereas Tatian used animal remedies to show the foolishness of humans using medicine, Tertullian’s implication later in *De paenitentia* is quite the opposite:

Why are you tardy to approach what you know heals [*mederi*] you? Even dumb irrational animals recognise in their time of need the medicines [*medicinas*] which have been divinely assigned them. The stag, transfixed by the arrow, knows that ... he must heal himself with dittany [*dictamnium*]. The swallow, if she blinds her young, knows how to give them eyes again by means of her own swallow-wort [*chelidonia*].

The references almost certainly come from Pliny,⁹⁶ although Tertullian stretches the data for the sake of theological rhetoric; Pliny never suggested the swallow had done the damage herself, but this image reinforces the Christian theme of repentance. Theology is clearly more important than strict scientific accuracy. Thus, Tertullian’s examples of surgical and bestiary remedies in his middle works demonstrate his noteworthy, but hardly overwhelming, knowledge and appreciation of the medical art.

⁹⁴ Images of precise replicas of instruments from the House of the Surgeon in Pompeii are provided courtesy of Claudia Sueyras, University of Virginia Health System, 2009. Used with permission for publication. Note that photos are not printed to scale.

⁹⁵ E.g. mustard, garlic, pitch, or sulfur: Pliny, *HN* 20.22-23; Celsus, *Med.* III 21.9, see V 27-8. See Cicero, *Off.* I 38.136, Seneca, *Epp.* 50, 75, 89, *Prov.* 3:1-2, and examples in S. Fernández, *Cristo médico* (1999), 24-6 and M. Dörnemann, *Krankheit und Heilung* (2003), 53-6.

⁹⁶ Tertullian, *Paen.* 12.5-6 (CChr.SL 1:339); Pliny, *HN* 8.41[97], 25.50[89]; W. Le Saint, *Treatises on Penance* (1955), 185. See Lewis and Short and CLCLT. *Chelidonia* for swallows is only in Pliny. Against Le Saint, I disagree that Aristotle and Cicero are likely sources here; *chelidonia* neither mention, and their dittany is for goats, not stags: Aristotle, *Hist. An.* 9.6, 6.5; Cicero, *Nat. D.* 2.50.

Medical imagery was helpful, but not always necessary or appropriate. Thus, artistic rather than medical metaphors are used *Aduersus Hermogenem* (the painter); *cauterio* is the artistic cautery iron.⁹⁷ Furthermore, *humor* and *elementi* in this treatise have nothing to do with Galenic humoral theories.⁹⁸ *Aduersus Iudaeos* too speaks little about medicine, although it does insist on the physical reality of Christ's healings in fulfillment of the prophecies.⁹⁹ Thus, in his early and middle works Tertullian employs both basic and more detailed medical knowledge (especially from Pliny) to expand upon the medical motif inherited from his Christian and Stoic sources. His metaphors, which imply a respect for medicine, describe heresy and vice (e.g. impatience) as diseases, penance and baptism as medicines, and God as the *medicus*. Medical knowledge is used in a variety of ways, including creative exegesis of Scriptural passages and particular attacks against paganism and luxury.

VI.3.1 Medicine in the Later Works: Against the Gnostics and Marcionites: 207-212

The numerous medical images in Tertullian's later refutations of the Gnostics and Marcionites display more knowledge of and respect for medicine than any work except *De anima*. References to *Deus* or *Christus medicus* are used effectively to defend the goodness of the just God, and Tertullian's concrete medical examples mock the ethereal, sarcophobic theories of his opponents. His medical scholarship appears deeper than before, suggesting that Tertullian's acquaintance with Soranus went beyond simply using the *Περὶ Ψυχῆς* for *De anima*, as Waszink suggests.

Scholars generally agree that all but the introduction of Tertullian's *Aduersus Valentinianos* (207-212) is a creative paraphrase of Irenaeus' *Aduersus haereses*,¹⁰⁰ but they rather overlook Tertullian's remarkable expansion on Irenaeus' medical motif. Before he reaches and recounts Irenaeus' first medical metaphor, Tertullian gives his own, suggesting that he will show but not

⁹⁷ Tertullian, *Herm.* 1.2 (SC 439:78). See Pliny, *HN* 35.2.

⁹⁸ Tertullian, *Herm.* 29.1-2, 31.5 (SC 439:154-6, 164).

⁹⁹ Tertullian, *Ind.* 9.30. See also 9.28, 14.2, see *Isa.* 53.

¹⁰⁰ M. T. Riley, *Adversus Valentinianos* (Stanford Dissertation, 1971) 7. I use Riley's translation. Regarding dates, Barnes gives 207 while Braun and Fredouille posit 208-212.

inflict *uulnera*.¹⁰¹ Tertullian's possible neologism *transpunctoria* is found again only later, most notably in Caelius Aurelianus' rendition of Soranus' lost work,¹⁰² making it at least possible Tertullian adapted it from Soranus. Regardless, medicine was clearly on Tertullian's mind. Irenaeus, in *Adu. haer.* I 2.2, simply asserts that Sophia had an 'agony of mind', but Tertullian elaborates and prolongs this metaphor: she caught the disease that was 'epidemic among Nus' associates' just as diseases spread within the body.¹⁰³ Tertullian describes Sophia's vain search for remedies and cures; her symptoms include 'paleness, thinness, and neglect'; she has a 'feverish delirium [*motiunculis*]'; and her Enthymesis is an *impetum Aeonis* with an *adpendicem passionem*.¹⁰⁴ Later, Tertullian uses his erudition – perhaps derived from Pliny and Ovid – to mock Sophia: if all waters come from her tears, what accounts for the poisonous waters of Nonacris, Lyncestia, and Salmacis?¹⁰⁵ Did the world's mud originate from the rheum and sand (*pituitis et gramis*) of Sophia's tears?¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, Tertullian here avoids a physiological mistake implied by Irenaeus – that sweat carries no salt.¹⁰⁷ Later, he adds further medical detail to Irenaeus, saying that the untimely *abortus* named Achamoth breathed a soul into Adam through his *canalem animae* – Pliny's circumlocution for 'windpipe'.¹⁰⁸ Clearly, Tertullian shows greater interest in and knowledge of medicine than his Gallic predecessor, and he employs it adroitly to show the Gnostics' foolishness. Put flesh on Sophia's bones, and she becomes laughable.

Like *Adversus Valentinianos*, Tertullian's *Scorpiace* (c. 211) is directed against the Gnostics,¹⁰⁹ but here the medical element – and Tertullian's respect for medicine – is even more explicit. From preface to conclusion the work is framed as a medical metaphor: the Gnostics are

¹⁰¹ Tertullian, *Val.* 6.2 (SC 280:90).

¹⁰² Caelius, *De morbis chronicis* 3.4.66. See M. T. Riley, *Adversus Valentinianos* (1971), 132, who rejects *transpunctoria*. *Transpunctus* is also seen in Cyprian and Ambrosiaster.

¹⁰³ Irenaeus, *Adu. haer.* I 2.2 (SC 264:38); Tertullian, *Adu. Val.* 9.2 (SC 280:100). See 1*Cor.* 12:26.

¹⁰⁴ Tertullian, *Adu. Val.* 10.1-5, 23.3 (SC 280:100-4, 128). See Irenaeus, *Adu. haer.* I 2.3. Riley (M. T. Riley, *Adversus Valentinianos* [1971], 140), agreeing with Burchet, sees these as medical terms, e.g. Caelius, *De Morbis Chronicis* II 8.114 and Pliny, *HN* 20.97[259]. See SC 281:253. *Motiunculis* for fever is attested in Seneca, *Ep.* 53.

¹⁰⁵ Tertullian, *Adu. Val.* 15.3 (SC 280:116); Pliny, *HN* 2.106; Ovid, *Met.* 4.271-388. See SC 281:282-3.

¹⁰⁶ Tertullian, *Adu. Val.* 24.2 (SC 280:130). See Irenaeus, *Adu. haer.* I 5.5. *Gramiae* (rheum in eyes) is in Pliny, *HN* 25.96[155], *pituita* in *HN* 22.40[83].

¹⁰⁷ Irenaeus, *Adu. haer.* I 4.4; Tertullian, *Adu. Val.* 15.3.

¹⁰⁸ Tertullian, *Adu. Val.* 14.1, 25.2, 30.1 (SC 280:112, 132, 140). See Irenaeus, *Adu. haer.* I 5.6; Pliny, *HN* 8.10[29]. *Abortus* is attested in *HN* 14.19[110], Cicero, *Att.* 14.20.

¹⁰⁹ Tertullian, *Scorp.* 1.5 speaks of both Gnostics and Valentinians. Braun and Fredouille are for 211-2, de Labriolle for 221-2, and Barnes for 203. Arnaldo Momigliano's review in *JRS* 66 (1976) 273-6 dismisses Barnes' early date.

creeping scorpions that have stung Christians with the claim that the suffering of innocent is pointless, and now Tertullian and God must provide the cure. Using details from Pliny, Tertullian begins with the frightening picture of scorpions of various colors emerging from the sands and flying upon the African winds, ready to strike with their poison-filled *fistulae*.¹¹⁰ Besides incorporating Jesus' promise of treading on scorpions,¹¹¹ Tertullian actually expands on Pliny's symptoms: 'chills' become *sensus retorpescunt, sanguis animi gelescit, ... nausea nominis [Christi] inacrescit*, ending in a disgusted vomiting of the Christian faith.¹¹² Perhaps the North African is including his own accurate observations: numbness, blurry vision, malaise, hypotension, nausea, and emesis are some of the more severe symptoms of scorpion stings.¹¹³ Tertullian also adds the medical concept (found in Soranus and others) that ejaculation weakens the man; just so, sexual intercourse will make Tertullian's remedy less effective.¹¹⁴ At the same time, despite some scholars' assertions, I cannot discern any profound reliance upon Galen's *On antidotes* or Nicander's *Theriaca*.¹¹⁵ Tertullian never shows any knowledge of Galen's advances, and he scarcely agrees with Nicander's symptoms and directives.¹¹⁶ Tertullian's assertion that Nicander *scribit et pingit* about scorpions (a fascinating detail for medical and classical historians alike) suggests that he either heard of Nicander's pictures or saw them himself,¹¹⁷ but it is not proof that he read the text. Personal knowledge and Pliny probably would have sufficed for Tertullian's vivid attack on the Gnostics.

Tertullian's attitude toward medicine as a necessary good, but one still subordinate to theological argumentation, becomes explicit in his longest medical metaphor. To explain God's

¹¹⁰ Tertullian, *Scorp.* 1.2 (G. A. Bernardelli, *Scorpiace*, 1991, 60). For these and other details: Pliny, *HN* 11.30, 34, 87; 21.92 (see 9.51; 10.35; 20.22; 35.2). See Ovid., *Met.* 15.370. See A. Viciano, *Cristo Salvador* (1986), 94-5.

¹¹¹ G. A. Bernardelli, *Scorpiace* (1991), 179; *Luke* 10:18. As we have seen, Tertullian is expert at weaving together without seam his different Scriptural, Patristic, and medical sources.

¹¹² Tertullian, *Scorp.* 1.10 (G. A. Bernardelli, *Scorpiace*, 1991, 64); Pliny, *HN* 21.92, see Celsus, *Med.* V 27.3.

¹¹³ True too is the scorpion's affinity for darkness and raising of its tail.

¹¹⁴ R. Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (1986), 3.118, 3.235; P. Brown, *Body and Society* (1988), 19; Soranus, *Gyn.* 17.30.2.

¹¹⁵ G. A. Bernardelli, *Scorpiace* (1991), 169; G. Rialdi, *Scienza medica di Tertulliano* (1970), 94; see Timothy D. Barnes, Tertullian's *Scorpiace*: *JTS* 20 (1969), 105-125, 109.

¹¹⁶ E.g. Nicander's red scorpion causes burning thirst rather than brain freeze (*Theriaca* 770f). I use A. S. F. Gow and A. F. Scholfield, *Nicander: The Poems and Poetical Fragments* (London, 1997).

¹¹⁷ Tertullian, *Scorp.* 1.1 (G. A. Bernardelli, *Scorpiace*, 1991, 58). See also Tertullian, *An.* 57.10 and J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 585. For beautiful Byzantine zoological illustrations based on Nicander and others, see Zoltan Kádár, *Survivals of Greek Zoological Illuminations in Byzantine Manuscripts* (Budapest, 1978), 37, pl. viii, 12-3, 42-8.

preference for martyrdom, *Scorpiace* 5 portrays God as the physician and Adam (or humanity) as the foolish patient. As in *De patientia*, Tertullian explains that *medicina* has only an ‘apparent cruelty’ in the *scalpello*, *cauterio*, and *sinapis incendio*; the cutting and burning are actually *dolores utiles*.¹¹⁸ *Horrorem operis fructus excusat*, and the man who before moaned and bellowed will afterwards gladly pay the physician. Such words undoubtedly had a sharper edge in the era before anesthesia. More than paternal, judicial, or pastoral metaphors, medical imagery vividly portrays the stark paradoxes of human joy in suffering and divine love in justice. To justify why God ‘dispels tortures by tortures’, Tertullian proceeds with an account of popular homeopathy: the physician will attack *calores* with heat, *ardores siti* with dry torments, *fellis excessus* with bitter potions, and *sanguinis fluxus* with blood-letting.¹¹⁹ Few of Tertullian’s medical sources would have accepted all of these dangerous remedies,¹²⁰ reaffirming that Tertullian’s focus is theological rhetoric rather than medical prescriptions. Still, the sting/antidote metaphor continues to resurface, and at one point Tertullian even draws on dietetics: Adam suffered from indigestion (*cruditauiit ... feruura*, both neologisms) for eating what was prohibited by his *Domino medico*.¹²¹ If Tertullian thought that medicine was an evil that superior Christians should avoid, as some scholars have suggested, his entire treatise would fall apart. At the same time, medical advice was subordinate to the importance of theological argument. These arguments employed medical science to besmirch the Valentinians, defend God’s goodness, and impress the audience.

By far Tertullian’s longest extant work, and perhaps the first example of methodical scriptural exegesis, *Aduersus Marcionem* (207-212) demonstrates Tertullian’s special aversion to ‘his most dangerous enemy.’¹²² It also shows both Tertullian’s high esteem for the medical profession and his impressive (and perhaps increasing) use of the medical motif to attack those who

¹¹⁸ Tertullian, *Scorp.* 5.6 (G. A. Bernardelli, *Scorpiace* [1991], 90).

¹¹⁹ Tertullian, *Scorp.* 5.8 (G. A. Bernardelli, *Scorpiace* [1991], 92). Aristotle and Themison, against Soranus, advised bloodletting for haemorrhage (see Soranus, *Gyn.* 3.42). See Celsus, *Med.* IV 12; III 4.2 on thirst/fever. Likely many potions, whether for excess bile or no, tasted bitter.

¹²⁰ See above. I can find no ancient medical recommendation to treat fever with heat. But perhaps *calores caloribus amplius onerando compescit* is a reference to giving blankets to a febrile patient who feels cold.

¹²¹ Tertullian, *Scorp.* 5.12 (G. A. Bernardelli, *Scorpiace*, 1991, 94); see 15.7.

¹²² Hans von Campenhausen, *The Fathers of the Latin Church*. Translated by Manfred Hoffman (Stanford, 1969), 25; E. Osborn, *Tertullian* (1997), 90. However, P. de Labriolle, *History and Literature* (1924), 87 goes too far. Braun and Fredouille give 207 for books 1-4 and later for 5, and Barnes posits 207 for 1-5, see T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian* (1985), 327.

opposed the flesh and its one creator and redeemer. The medical motif is used primarily in two ways: to show the goodness of God the physician, and to demonstrate Christ's bodily existence and his concrete fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.¹²³ Explaining God's justice, Tertullian begins with a juridical metaphor, but then switches to and persists with a surgical one. Just as one cannot call God just and simultaneously condemn his punishments, so is it folly to rebuke the surgeon's instruments:

A case in point: suppose you allow that the surgeon [*medicum*] has the right to exist, yet lodge a complaint against his instruments because they dissect and cauterize and amputate and constrict – although he can be no surgeon without the tools of his trade. Complain, if you like, when he dissects badly, amputates at the wrong time, cauterizes without need, [but his instruments are only servants].¹²⁴

The image of a physician's instruments had been used in *Ad nationes* 2.5.10, but here Tertullian has adjusted his rhetoric by adding accurate knowledge of the terrifying proceedings of surgery. Against his squeamish and overly optimistic opponent, Tertullian shows that the painful reality of God's justice is unavoidable. Divine justice (just like penance in *De paenitentia*) is like surgery: unpleasant, but good. In I 22.9, Tertullian adapts the *Deus medicus* motif to show the malice of Marcion's 'better god', the god who had done nothing to aid man for thousands of years:

What would you think of a physician who, from desire for wealth or fame, delayed treatment and remedy and so strengthened the sickness and prolonged the peril? Just so must you judge Marcion's god, for permitting evil, fostering injustice.¹²⁵

¹²³ More rarely, Tertullian calls Marcion diseased/venomous: Tertullian, *Adu. Marc.* I 2.3, I 24.7, and III 8.1. The last speaks of the asp borrowing poison from the viper, an idea I cannot find in Lucan, Nicander, or Pliny; the closest seems to be Aristotle, *Hist. an.* 8.28

¹²⁴ Tertullian, *Adu. Marc.* II 16.1-2 (Ernest Evans, *Adversus Marcionem* [Oxford, 1972], 130). See *Adu. Marc.* I 26. I use Evans' text and translation. See René Braun, *Contre Marcion II*, SC 368 (Paris, 1991), 100-1 on Tertullian's originality here.

¹²⁵ Tertullian, *Adu. Marc.* I 22.9 (E. Evans, *Adversus Marcionem* [1972], 60), my translation. See Origen, *C. Cels.* III 13 for an interesting contrast.

In these two metaphors, we see glimpses of the popular disgust at the greedy, foolish, and murderous physicians of Tertullian's time, but we also sense that his own attitude is significantly more positive: a physician had a special calling, and those who fell beneath the high standard deserved scorn.¹²⁶ Furthermore, in his discourse on the *Christus medicus* of *Luke* 5:30, Tertullian assumes that physicians provide a necessary service for the sick.¹²⁷ Apparently, his respect for the medical art has in no way diminished since his early attacks on Aesculapius' murderous greed. Equally importantly, it is clear that Tertullian creatively employs the *Deus/Christus medicus* metaphor to explain to the Gnostics and Marcionites the plaguing quandary of the coexistence of divine goodness and justice.

Aduersus Marcionem also draws on medical metaphors to defend Christ's true tangibility against his more docetist opponent. Using the neologisms *remediator* and *medicator* (*ualetudinum*), Tertullian describes at length how Christ truly healed the sick and therefore fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament.¹²⁸ He insists that Christ did not disdain the work of the Creator, and he emphasizes physical ailments and healing. He even adds a graphic detail to *Gen.* 49:6 to make the text prefigure Christ's death: 'They have severed the sinews [*neruos*] of a bull' just as Christ's *nerui* were torn by nails.¹²⁹ To defend creation and the body, Tertullian grounds his arguments in physical, even anatomical realities.

More impressively, the so-called 'Puritanical Montanist' begins to show his (perhaps growing) acquaintance with gynecological knowledge.¹³⁰ As we see the evidence accumulate, it seems more and more probable that Tertullian read or used parts of Soranus (Περὶ Ψυχῆς, Γυναικολογία, one of his other lost works,¹³¹ or a second-hand source) outside the context of

¹²⁶ Interestingly, this respect comes alongside references to plagues permitted by God (V 16.1-7). See n. 64 above.

¹²⁷ Tertullian, *Adu. Marc.* IV 11.1-3 (E. Evans, *Aduersus Marcionem* [1972], 304); *Luke* 5:30. On Tertullian's different rhetorical adaptations of *Luke* 5:30, see Geoffrey D. Dunn, *The Sick and the Healthy: Tertullian's Interpretation of Lk. 5:30-32: Society for Biblical Literature: Annual Meeting* (2007).

¹²⁸ Tertullian, *Adu. Marc.* III 17.5, IV 8.4, and throughout IV 8-35 (E. Evans, *Aduersus Marcionem* [1972], 222, 284). *Isa.* 50:10; 53:4. See A. Viciano, *Cristo Salvador* (1986), 142, 339; O'Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible* (1967), 102; R. Braun, *Deus Christianorum* (1977), 522, n. 3; M. Dörnemann, *Krankheit und Heilung* (2003), 166-9.

¹²⁹ Tertullian, *Adu. Marc.* III 18.5 (E. Evans, *Aduersus Marcionem* [1972], 226). See *Iud.* 10.9 (CChr.SL 2:1377). Tertullian's use of *iecora* (liver) here, unattested in *Vetus Latina*, might seem novel as well, but it is likely a translation of the LXX ἥπατα.

¹³⁰ Igino Giordani, *The Social Message of the Early Church Fathers* (Paterson, NJ, 1944), 237

¹³¹ For example, Soranus, *De generatione*.

De anima. For example, in III 11.6 Tertullian drops a gratuitous feminine fact as he disproves the notion of a phantasmal birth or death of Christ: ‘Young women sometimes think themselves pregnant, either because their periods fall late, or because they are swollen up by some distemper [*aliqua ualetudine inflatae.*]¹³² Tertullian thereafter mocks Marcion for despising his own origins: *Cloacam uoca uterum, [persequere ...] puerperii spurcos, anxios, ludicros exitus.*¹³³ Although the Cloaca Maxima had been compared to the digestive tract before, Tertullian was the first to compare it to the uterus.¹³⁴ Perhaps Tertullian had learned of these gynecological subjects with his wife; in any case, it is uncertain that he needed Soranus here. But by *Adu. Marc.* IV 21 (as in *Carn.* 4, 20 and *An.* 25, 37, below), Tertullian’s examples do suggest real familiarity with Soranus. The orator flings the dirty facts of life at his squeamish opponent and his phantasmal Christ:

Your Christ... was not *coagulatus* in the *vulva* of the woman yet virgin – since Christ did not come from *semine*, then he came from the law of corporeal substance, from the *humore feminae* – but your Christ was not deemed flesh *ante formam*, nor called *pecus post figuram*, nor delivered after ten months’ torments, nor in sudden pain with the filth of those months ejected onto the ground through the *corporis cloacam*, nor did he immediately cry prophetic tears in the daylight, nor suffer his first *uulnere* at the severing of the cord, nor washed, nor treated with *sale ac melle*, nor swaddled in sheets foreboding the shroud. Nor did he wallow in the uncleanness of the mother’s lap, or tire her breasts...no, your Christ was born out of heaven.¹³⁵

Tertullian brandishes his erudition to expose Marcion’s ridiculousness. Interestingly, the parallels to Soranus are striking. Scholars have been perplexed by the use of salt and honey,¹³⁶ but the

¹³² Tertullian, *Adu. Marc.* III 11.6 (E. Evans, *Adversus Marcionem* [1972], 202).

¹³³ Tertullian, *Adu. Marc.* III 11.7 (E. Evans, *Adversus Marcionem* [1972], 202).

¹³⁴ See Emily Gowers, *The Anatomy of Rome from Capitol to Cloaca: JRS* 85 (1995) 23-32, n. 42; and René Braun, *Contre Marcion III*, SC 399 (Paris, 1994), 114. Of course, it is possible that Marcion himself discussed childbirth and used some of these medical terms, but it seems rather unlikely; we have no proof that the docetist Marcion himself was interested in medicine, whereas Tertullian clearly reflects concepts seen in Soranus.

¹³⁵ Tertullian, *Adu. Marc.* IV 21.11 (E. Evans, *Adversus Marcionem* [1972], 374); for brevity, I use my translation/paraphrase (using Evans).

¹³⁶ E.g. Peter Holmes, ANF 3 (1885) n. 622. Braun’s commentaries in SC make little mention of Soranus (or other medical sources) both here and throughout *Marc.* I-V.

Γυναικολογία accounts for this and other points; it describes the ablution of the infant with salt and honey (or oil), the careful swaddling, the severing of the cord, and the ten (or seven or nine) month gestation.¹³⁷ Pliny's popular folk remedies include wine and less pleasant things, but not salt and honey.¹³⁸ We can therefore conclude either that the rare salt and honey ablution began independently in Carthage (for which we have no evidence), or that Tertullian here reflects Soranus, even outside the text of *De anima*. It is also quite possible that the embryological concept of *caro ante formam* but human *post figuram* derives from Soranus as well.¹³⁹ It seems possible that, having used (or intending to use) Soranus for one treatise, Tertullian would find the physician's medical work useful in a treatise against Marcion as well.

At the same time, Tertullian is clearly no slave to Soranus: unlike his account in *De anima*, Tertullian here references the common (Aristotelian) account of conception, rather than Soranus' theory that the semen becomes the embryo on its own, without the woman's blood.¹⁴⁰ Soranus' idea here would completely undermine Tertullian's argument, because there was no semen for Christ to come from. In the *De anima*, by contrast, Soranus' theory comes in handy to defend traducianism (the new soul travels with the semen).¹⁴¹ Tertullian esteems Soranus, but his focus is theology, not obstetrics. For example, in *Aduersus Marcionem* he prefers a ten month gestation, whereas it is nine in *De carne* and seven or nine or ten (but not eight) in *De anima*.¹⁴² Unlike Pliny and Aristotle, Soranus had specifically favored these numbers,¹⁴³ but Tertullian's preference for one number over another appears to be dictated by his particular argument, e.g. when he connects seven and ten to the Sabbath and Decalogue.¹⁴⁴ In sum, Tertullian has a noteworthy knowledge of and respect for medicine, but he follows his typical polemical method

¹³⁷ Soranus, *Gyn.* 2.3, O. Temkin, *Hippocrates* (1991), 82-3. See Tertullian, *Adu. Marc.* IV 23.7 (10 months again).

¹³⁸ See V. French, *Midwives and Maternity Care* (1986), 69-84.

¹³⁹ J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 424-7 (who seems to overlook *Adu. Marc.* IV 21 here), see Tertullian, *An.* 37; Muscio, *Gyn.* II 13.37 (derived from Soranus), Soranus, *Gyn.* 3.47, and Pliny, *HN* 30.44-7, 7.5. Tertullian's unusual use of *pecus* for fetus may come from Soranus (Muscio, *Gyn.* II 13.47). Note, however, that Aristotle argued similarly about conception/formation; also, Tertullian forbade early embryocide as abortion, whereas Soranus seemed to permit it as a contraceptive (Tertullian, *Exb. Cast.* 12.5; J. Scarborough, *Roman Medicine* [1969], 102).

¹⁴⁰ J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 344-6; Pliny, *HN* 7.13, 28.23, 30.43; Aristotle, *Gen. an.* 2.4. Although perhaps Waszink oversimplifies: see Soranus, *Gyn.* I 10.38-9.

¹⁴¹ J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 344-6; Tertullian, *An.* 5.4, 19.6-9.

¹⁴² *Carn.* 20 (below), *An.* 37.

¹⁴³ See Pliny, *HN* 7.5; Aristotle, *Gen. an.* 4.4; Soranus, *Gyn.* 2.6.

¹⁴⁴ Tertullian, *An.* 37.4.

to employ an authority when it best suits his case – here, to ridicule Marcion. Moreover, the gynecological examples from III 11 and IV 21 could suggest that Tertullian had acquainted himself with Soranus' ideas and incorporated them in his final edition of *Aduersus Marcionem* (including book IV), and possibly even before (for book III).¹⁴⁵ In short, Tertullian's medical erudition may have increased with age.

VI.3.2 Medicine in the Later Works: On the Incarnation and Resurrection: 209-211

It is difficult to separate *De carne Christi* and *De resurrectio mortuorum* from *Aduersus Marcionem*, as all were written at similar times against similar errors.¹⁴⁶ All three demonstrate deeper medical knowledge than his early and middle works, and all three imply a respect for the physician's art. *De carne* and *De resurrectio* were equally attacks on Marcion, and they employed similar arguments that displayed Tertullian's medical (particularly gynecological) expertise against the sarcophobic Gnostics and Marcionites. To begin with the speech-like *De carne*: Tertullian here flashes medical knowledge against the fools who attack their own origins – origins that Christ himself loved and imitated:¹⁴⁷

Attack now, the nastiness of genital elements in the womb, the *humoris et sanguinis foeda coagula*, and the flesh to be for nine months nourished in that same mire...

[Then follows a very intimate description of woman and child in pregnancy]. You think it shameful that [the infant] is straightened out with bandages, that he is licked into shape with applications of oil, that he is beguiled by coddling... You hate man during his birth: how can you love any man? ... Christ, there is no doubt of it, did care for the sort of man who was curdled in uncleannesses in the womb.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ For the debate on editions, see J. Quasten, *Patrology* (1990), 274-5; J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 7*; T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian* (1985²), 326-7. Gilles Quispel, *De bronnen van Tertullianus' Marc* (Leiden, 1943) argued that books 1-3 were written as a prior edition to the full 1-5.

¹⁴⁶ J. Leal, *Antropología de Tertuliano* (2001), 7f. Braun and Fredouille date the works 208-12, Barnes to 206-7.

¹⁴⁷ T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian* (1985²), 208.

¹⁴⁸ Tertullian, *Carn.* 4.1 (Ernest Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise on the Incarnation* [London, 1956], 12).

The use of oil (along with the salt and honey), the tight swaddling, and special coddling are specifically prescribed by Soranus,¹⁴⁹ adding evidence to the possibility that c. 208-212 Tertullian is employing the Ephesian's works – perhaps even beyond Περὶ Ψυχῆς (which may or may not have included such gynecological details).¹⁵⁰ Perhaps Tertullian turned to one of the greatest physicians of the day in order to refute more effectively various erroneous opinions about the body.¹⁵¹ Tertullian asks Apelles and Marcion: you who denigrate both birth and flesh, what do you even know of the body or its workings?

His physiological argumentation becomes more convincing in *Carn.* 20, when he uses obstetrical information to show how Christ's physical birth fulfils *Ps.* 22:9. First, he elaborates the 'drawing' from the womb (LXX ἐκσπασσας) to mean a violent rending (*auellere*) of the umbilical cord (*neruum umbilicarem*) and placenta (*folliculi*).¹⁵² Then follows an ingenious argument that shows how 'at my mother's breasts' must predict gestation and parturition:

Let midwives, physicians, and biologists [*obstetrices et medici et physici*] bear witness concerning the nature of breasts, whether they are wont to flow except at the genital experience of the womb, from which the veins pay over into the teat that cess of the lower blood, and in the course of that transfer distill it into the more congenial material of milk. That is why, during lactation, the monthly periods cease.¹⁵³

Jean-Pierre Mahé here points to Aristotle, but neither he nor Pliny gives these details;¹⁵⁴ Soranus, who wrote copiously on breastfeeding and menses, and whom Tertullian designated throughout *De anima* as the representative of the *medici*, seems a more likely source.¹⁵⁵ Regardless of the exact

¹⁴⁹ Soranus, *Gyn.* 2.13.

¹⁵⁰ J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), *passim*. N.B., however, how Tertullian again sides with the Aristotelian idea of conception.

¹⁵¹ Tertullian also used obstetrics for criticizing adulterous young women who attempted to destroy *conceptum* with *medicaminibus*: *Exh. Cast.* 12.5 (SC 319:110), *Virg.* 14.7 (CSEL 76:99) (significantly, both are dated the same time as *Adu. Marv., Val., Carn., Res., and An.*). Soranus, *Gyn.* 1.60f describes abortifacient contraceptives in detail.

¹⁵² Tertullian, *Carn.* 20.5 (E. Evans, *Incarnation* [1956], 68).

¹⁵³ Tertullian, *Carn.* 20.6 (E. Evans, *Incarnation* [1956], 68).

¹⁵⁴ Jean-Pierre Mahé, *La Chair du Christ*, SC 216 (Paris, 1975), 418; Pliny, *HN* 7.13, 28.23, 30.43. Aristotle, *Gen. an.* 2.7, does speak of the umbilical cord.

¹⁵⁵ Soranus, *Gyn.* 2.5. See J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 23*-37* and Blake Leyerle, *The Blood Is Seed: JR* 81 (2001) 26-48, 36.

source, the concrete and effective argument implies a respect for physicians and reveals a medical knowledge unprecedented in Christian writers.

Moving from gynecology to anatomy in the *De carne*, Tertullian continues to employ physiological facts against the Gnostics. Immediately after Tertullian's famous rhetorical paradoxes, including *mortuus est dei filius: prorsus credibile est, quia ineptum est*,¹⁵⁶ he turns to concrete anatomical knowledge to show how truly incredible, impossible, and immaterial the Gnostic alternative was. The phantom Christ would have been a deceiver, only appearing to have healed, died, and risen; in truth, these actions must have required a flesh that was *sanguine suffusam ossibus substructam nervis intextam uenis implexam*. Otherwise, Christ's own body was lying: *ut carnem gestaret sine ossibus duram, sine musculis solidam, sine sanguine cruentam, sine tunica uestitam, sine fame esurientem, sine dentibus edentem, sine lingua loquentem*.¹⁵⁷ A phantom body would shatter the natural order – something Tertullian takes quite seriously.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, Tertullian draws upon nature to give a novel anatomical-geological metaphor to demonstrate the earthly origin and substance of Christ's body and our own:

Consider its attributes one by one, the muscles as turf, the bones as rocks, even a sort of pebbles round the nipples [*papillas*]. Look upon the clinging bands of the sinews [*neruorum*] as the fibres of roots, the branching meanderings of the veins [*uenarum*] as the twistings of rivers, the down as moss, the hair as grass, even the very treasures of the marrow in its secret place as the goldmines of the flesh.¹⁵⁹

Tertullian poetically and accurately draws on accepted anatomy (*uenae* as blood vessels, *nerui* as tendons: found in Pliny and Soranus but countered by Galen) to counter his ethereal opponents, claiming that a look at Christ's body proves its earthly origin.¹⁶⁰ I can scarcely agree with Mahé and others who posit that Tertullian here and elsewhere reflects the four-humor theory of

¹⁵⁶ Tertullian, *Carn.* 5.4 (E. Evans, *Incarnation* [1956], 18). See James Moffatt, Aristotle and Tertullian: *JTS* 17 (1916) 170-1 and Robert Sider, 'Credo quia absurdum': *Classical World* 73 (1980), 417-9, both of whom see parallels to Aristotle.

¹⁵⁷ Tertullian, *Carn.* 5.9 (E. Evans, *Incarnation* [1956], 20).

¹⁵⁸ J. Alexandre, *Chair pour la gloire* (2001), 107; E. Osborn, *Tertullian* (1997), 81.

¹⁵⁹ Tertullian, *Carn.* 9.3 (E. Evans, *Incarnation* [1956], 36); see *Song* 5-7; Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I 5.5; and particularly Seneca, *Naturales quaestiones* III 15.1f.

¹⁶⁰ Pliny, *HN* 11.88-9; R. Jackson, *Doctors and Diseases* (1988), 62.

Hippocrates, Aristotle, and Galen;¹⁶¹ nowhere in his writings does Tertullian even name all of the four humors or elements, much less discuss their import.¹⁶² Perhaps he had little acquaintance with the humoral theory, or perhaps he followed Soranus and the Methodists who disbelieved it.¹⁶³ Tertullian's medical knowledge was certainly noteworthy, but it should not be exaggerated.

The *resurrectio mortuorum* had been a stumbling block for learned Greeks from the beginning,¹⁶⁴ and in his work devoted to the subject, Tertullian surpasses his predecessors in using medical science to defend the Christian position. Near the beginning of his *De resurrectione*, he shows that he understands the question and subject matter even better than his opponents:

[At the resurrection of the dead, will...] the lame and the one-eyed and the blind and the leprous and the palsied...revert, so as to wish they had not returned, to what they were before? [...Will the flesh again] have to breathe with lungs [*pulmonibus*] and heave in its intestines [*intestinis*] and be shameless with its private parts [*pudendis*] and have trouble with all its members? Must it again expect sores and wounds and fever and gout [*podagra*] and death?¹⁶⁵

Besides demonstrating his education, Tertullian's rhetorical questions effectively illustrate the folly of positing a Paradise full of hungry and diseased cripples. Tertullian proceeds to show how Christ's healings of such diseases prefigured our final state, and how his incarnation demonstrated his love for the human body – a key idea, as I will discuss later, for explaining why Tertullian respects medicine.¹⁶⁶

Tertullian also uses medical concepts in *De resurrectione* to interpret biblical texts to support his arguments. The fact that Jonah was not digested after three days in the whale's belly shows God's power to preserve the body.¹⁶⁷ God's restoration of Moses' hand – called simply 'white as snow' by Scripture but expanded to *exsanguis et exalbida et frigida* by Tertullian – also

¹⁶¹ J.-P. Mahé, *Chair du Christ* (1975), 361; G. Rialdi, *Scienza medica di Tertulliano* (1970), 94; G. A. Bernardelli, *Scorpiace* (1991), 169; See T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian's Scorpiace* (1969), 109.

¹⁶² Tertullian never speaks of *phlegma*, and *felle* generally refers to 'bitterness'.

¹⁶³ O. Temkin, *Hippocrates* (1991), xxvii.

¹⁶⁴ *Acts* 7:32.

¹⁶⁵ Tertullian, *Res.* 4.4-6 (Ernest Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise on the Resurrection* [London, 1960], 14). *Pulmonibus nitendum* is from E. Evans, *Incarnation* [1956], 206, although *pulmonibus natandum*, i.e. lungs floating in the thorax, also works.

¹⁶⁶ Tertullian, *Res.* 20, 38, 57.

¹⁶⁷ Tertullian, *Res.* 32.3.

prefigures the resurrection.¹⁶⁸ Tertullian again gives an extended anatomical metaphor to display his intelligence and refute his opponents, who wonder whether there will be functioning of:

... this cave of the mouth and guardroom of the teeth and precipice of the throat [*gulae*] and crossways of the gullet [*stomachi*] and cesspool of the belly [*alvei*] and intricate length of the intestines [*intestinorum*] ... To what purpose do members like these take in, break up, swallow down, divert [*diuidunt*], digest, eject?¹⁶⁹

Tertullian's details are remarkably accurate: Pliny too gives *gula* for the throat, *stomachus* for the lower esophagus and upper stomach (GE junction), *alveus* (or *uenter*) for the stomach, and *intestini* for what comes after.¹⁷⁰ Interestingly enough, however, there is no mention of the liver or other indications of Galenic digestion (as in Athenagoras).¹⁷¹ Instead, Tertullian proceeds to include a topic he knows more about: the reproductive organs and their function. Where there is no hunger or death there will clearly be no need for digestive or reproductive functioning; furthermore, it is foolish to presume that the bodily organs have only degrading, licentious functions. Thus, the mouth is used for speech (not just eating); the 'lower parts' are 'perforated' for helpful excretion (not just copulating); and the womb is used for the necessary discharge of blood (not just childbearing).¹⁷² Rather than gratuitous details, this final display of erudition is another effective rhetorical stab: you who disparage the body, who claim it will not be raised – what do you even know about it? Although Tertullian is developing theology rather than medicine, he shows how well he understands and esteems medical science. Throughout these later works, he uses the medical motif powerfully and repeatedly: Sophia is a sickling, the Valentinians are scorpions, Marcion's God is an evil physician, and the true *Deus medicus* uses the painful remedies of justice and martyrdom. He elaborates on Scriptural passages and ridicules

¹⁶⁸ Tertullian, *Res.* 55.8 (E. Evans, *Resurrection* [1960], 166), *Ex.* 4:6. See also a medical argument in *Res.* 42.7-9, perhaps reminiscent of Pliny, *HN* 7.16 or Aulus Gellius, *NA* 3.10.

¹⁶⁹ Tertullian, *Res.* 60.2 (E. Evans, *Resurrection* [1960], 176-8). Evans says nothing here, and remarkably little in the other anatomical passages.

¹⁷⁰ Pliny, *HN* 9.11, 11.66-8, 76-8.

¹⁷¹ Athenagoras, *Res.* 5-7; V. Nutton, *Ancient Medicine* (2004), 233.

¹⁷² Tertullian, *Res.* 60.3, 61.3-5 (E. Evans, *Resurrection* [1960], 176-80); Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity 200-1336* (New York, 1995), 37. See Soranus, *Gyn.* 1.23.

those who disbelieve in Christ's body or the bodily resurrection, flourishing his respect for and knowledge of (although not over-adherence to) Pliny and Soranus.

V.3.3 Medicine in the Later Works: *On the Soul*: 208-211

Although theological argumentation against pagans and heretics is again the focus of *De anima* (c. 208-211),¹⁷³ this is clearly the most speculative and scientific of Tertullian's works. Drawing largely on Soranus' Περί Ψυχῆς, Pliny's *HN*, and Hermippus' *On dreams*, Tertullian contends against numerous philosophers – the 'patriarchs of heretics' – to show that the soul is corporeal, indivisible, incorruptible, immortal (but not eternal), free, and inextricably linked to the body from conception to death.¹⁷⁴ Following Soranus and the Stoics to a large degree, Tertullian's *anima* is the life-breath, possessing the *sensus*, *animus*, and *intellectus* in an indivisible unity; it is a second *corpus* occupying the same physical place as the *caro*, but providing it with warmth and life and direction; it is airy, 'soft and transparent and of an ethereal colour.'¹⁷⁵ Tertullian's theological aim is to refute the Epicurean denial of immortality and to undermine the Gnostic belief in a divine *pneuma* acting separately from the prison of the body or transmigrating after death.¹⁷⁶ However, the work also exposes in detail Tertullian's remarkable attitude to and knowledge of medicine, such that a few pages can scarcely do it justice. Here I will focus upon the noteworthy esteem – but not outright devotion – given to physicians, particularly Soranus, the 'great rival' of Galen.¹⁷⁷ Also, I will show how Tertullian's detailed, synthetic, creative, yet occasionally inconsistent use of medical knowledge – particularly drawn from Pliny and Soranus – demonstrates both the growth and limitations of his medical erudition.

From beginning to end of the *De anima*, Tertullian shows a high respect for physicians and the art of restoring health. Whereas he begins by attacking philosophers, who have infected

¹⁷³ Dated 208-212 by Braun and Fredouille, 206-7 by Barnes, and 210-213 by Quasten.

¹⁷⁴ Tertullian, *An.* 3.1 (CChr.SL 2:785); J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 22*-47*.

¹⁷⁵ Tertullian, *An.* 9.4 (CChr.SL 2:793); J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 182. Perhaps the best visual comparison is Obi Wan Kenobi's ghost from *Star Wars*, although it is unlikely that *aerii* here means 'blue' (*pace* P. de Labriolle, *Physiologie de Tertullien* [1906], 1321).

¹⁷⁶ J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), *passim*.

¹⁷⁷ L. Edelstein, *Ancient Medicine* (1967), 343.

with errors the few truths that they accidentally found,¹⁷⁸ medical doctors come under no such attack. In fact, he admits that he has studied medicine and surmises that medicine and philosophy oppose each other primarily because the former ‘knows the soul better by visiting it, as it were, in its own domicile [of the body.]’¹⁷⁹ Later, he praises physicians because they *omne contrarium vitali salutari auxiliari extra naturales cardines* [gates of nature] *relegant*; Tertullian claims, as most physicians would, that disease is a harmful excess or deficit contrary to nature.¹⁸⁰ As in *De paenitentia*, he again argues that even animals employ their proper *remedia*.¹⁸¹ Hicesius the fool and Herophilus the vivisector are attacked not for being doctors, but for falling below the high standard Tertullian maintains: they were merely impostors or butchers.¹⁸² Whereas *philosophus/i* is generally used in a negative way to denigrate Plato, *medicus/i* often refers to *mitior Soranus*, and it does so in a positive light.¹⁸³ Indeed, Tertullian references *Sorano methodicae medicinae instructissimo auctore*, and he says he will defer to doctors on the details of death and the conditions of the body; but at no point does he lavish such praise on any man for his deep philosophical scholarship.¹⁸⁴ Notwithstanding his high regard for medicine, Tertullian still considers Scripture as the only infallible authority, and he is not afraid to counter certain ideas held by Soranus or Erasistratus.¹⁸⁵ Still, one can scarcely agree with Nutton, who, looking at a single rhetorical text in *De anima* that suggests that famines or plagues could be seen as remedies for overpopulation, argues that Tertullian believed that medicine was unacceptable for Christians.¹⁸⁶ It is one thing to view famines or plagues as part of God’s plan, another to thereby refuse to feed the hungry or treat the sick.

Tertullian’s high, but not exalted, respect for the medical art is reflected in his knowledge and use of medical science to define and defend the unified and corporeal soul. Noteworthy is

¹⁷⁸ Tertullian, *An.* 2.5 (CChr.SL 2:784).

¹⁷⁹ Tertullian, *An.* 2.6 (CChr.SL 2:784), following the translation of R. Polito, *Master, Medicine, and the Mind* (2006), 312.

¹⁸⁰ Tertullian, *An.* 43.8 (CChr.SL 2:846-7).

¹⁸¹ Tertullian, *An.* 24.5 (CChr.SL 2:817).

¹⁸² *praenaricator, lanius*: Tertullian, *An.* 25.2, 10.4 (CChr.SL 2:819, 794).

¹⁸³ J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 647, 207.

¹⁸⁴ Tertullian, *An.* 6.6, 53.1 (CChr.SL 2:789, 859), see 25.5 (CChr.SL 2:820).

¹⁸⁵ Tertullian, *An.* 14-5 (CChr.SL 2:800-802).

¹⁸⁶ Tertullian, *An.* 30.4 (CChr.SL 2:827); see above. Pagans too believed that natural disasters could be divinely sent: J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 375-76.

Tertullian's impressive and repeated use of Pliny – an area somewhat neglected by modern scholars. To show that *spiritus* is inseparable from *anima*, Tertullian must refute the notion that insects, which apparently lack the *organa spiritus – pulmones et arterias*, cannot breathe (*spirare*).¹⁸⁷ In a discussion with remarkable parallels to Pliny, Tertullian addresses the objection by showing how many other entomic organs are invisible – and yet insects still see, chew, digest, and buzz.¹⁸⁸ Thus, insects can also breathe, and their *animae* must also include *spiritus*. His terminology, including *fistulis arteriarum* and *digestu sine alueis*, likely derives from Pliny, although he weaves in Soranus' attack on Herophilus as well.¹⁸⁹ So too does Tertullian almost 'certainly' draw on Pliny's diverse animal physiology to show the folly of metempsychosis: fish have no blood, chameleons drink no water, salamanders flee from fire; therefore, it is impossible for one to become the other.¹⁹⁰ As in *Aduersus Valentinianos*, Tertullian also uses Pliny to mock the Gnostic idea of immortalizing waters: he lists different waters that make men *lymphaticos*, but points out that none are known that can make humans immortal.¹⁹¹ In addition to various other arguments from animals and a citation of caesarean sections,¹⁹² Tertullian may rely on Pliny (and perhaps Aristotle) to address the objection that the growth of hair and nails after death implies that part of the soul remains behind. Tertullian explains that the nails are simply relaxed extensions of the *nerui* and the hair is an exudation (*affluit*) of the brain.¹⁹³ Finally, Pliny may be the source for the anatomical information in Tertullian's remarkable description of the process of a prolonged death, in which the soul slowly withdraws from the body as its constitutive parts – *fellis, sanguinis,*

¹⁸⁷ Tertullian, *An.* 10.2 (CChr.SL 2:794).

¹⁸⁸ *NH* 11.2, see 11.112.

¹⁸⁹ J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 189; Tertullian, *An.* 10.7 (CChr.SL 2:795). *HN* 11.1, 1.66, 9.11; see *HN* 11.10, 18, 27.

¹⁹⁰ Tertullian, *An.* 32.1-3 (CChr.SL 2:829-30); J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 386-87; *HN* 8.51, 9.44, 10.2, 10.86, 11.1, 11.30, 11.52.

¹⁹¹ Tertullian, *An.* 50.3 (CChr.SL 2:856), see *Bapt.* 5.4. I disagree with J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 522 that Tertullian needed to go beyond *HN* (2.106, 30.53) here. See *Val.* 15.

¹⁹² Tertullian, *An.* 24.5, 25.8; *HN* 8.19, 7.9. Also, see *An.* 9.6, 33.4; *HN* 37.51.

¹⁹³ Tertullian, *An.* 51.3 (CChr.SL 2:857), *HN* 11.101 (see 47, 94). J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 530. For the hair, either Soranus (Περὶ Ψυχῆς) or Aristotle, *Part. an.* 2.14, *Gen. an.*, 5.3, or *Problemata* 2.10.

cordis, iecoris, uenarum, arteriarum – are ruined.¹⁹⁴ Either Tertullian’s knowledge of Pliny has increased, or he is drawing on numerous details he decided not to mention in earlier works.

Although the exact degree of Tertullian’s dependence on Περὶ Ψυχῆς remains a matter of speculation and debate,¹⁹⁵ there is no doubt that Tertullian – with his characteristic creativity and occasional inaccuracy – has incorporated a great deal from Soranus. In both particular and broader arguments Tertullian reflects Soranus’ opposition to vivisection of humans, allowance for surgery,¹⁹⁶ recommendation of virginity, interest in etymology and physiology, affinity for Scepticism and Stoicism, opposition to Dogmatic theorization, doxographical critiques of previous authors, and especially his defense of the corporeal soul.¹⁹⁷ Soranus is certainly the source for the idea that food nourishes the (corporeal) soul, and probably the source for the pathological terms for diseases affecting sleep: *phreneticus* (madness), *cardiacus* (heartburn), and *lethargus* (lethargy).¹⁹⁸ The fascinating discussion of dreams, including the idea that sleeping on the right side compresses the liver and so disturbs the mind, also seems derived from Soranus.¹⁹⁹ Certainly from Soranus is the doxography for possible locations of the seat of the soul (ἡγεμονικόν), including the cerebrum, cerebellum, cerebral meninges, forehead, or heart/pericardia.²⁰⁰ Tertullian, citing Soranus and (more importantly) Scripture, chooses the last.²⁰¹ Moreover, Tertullian here (and only here) sides with Soranus’ unusual theory that conception requires only semen – not the woman’s blood. Clearly, Soranus’ theory here is useful to support Tertullian’s traducianism: all bodies and souls are passed from father to child (so they

¹⁹⁴ Tertullian, *An.* 53.2 (CChr.SL 2:859). See *HN* 7.51, 11.89. Even though different limbs die as the soul recedes from the body, Tertullian still considers the person alive as long as part of the body is animated with the warmth of the soul. Since he saw no middle ground between dead and alive, one might (somewhat anachronistically) conclude that Tertullian would have rejected brain death as actual death.

¹⁹⁵ See R. Polito, *Quattro libri sull'anima di Sorano* (1994).

¹⁹⁶ I cannot agree with J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 28* (and M. Perrin, *Exemple de l'utilisation de la médecine*, 1991, 105) on Soranus’ ‘aversion from surgery’; he wrote an entire treatise on the subject. See also Soranus, *Gyn.* 4.7.

¹⁹⁷ J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), *passim*, esp. 24*-37*; R. Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (1986), 3.122.

¹⁹⁸ Tertullian, *An.* 6.6, 43.8 (CChr.SL 2:789, 847); Caelius, *De Morbis Acutis* 2.1, 2.30; Soranus, *Gyn.* 3.1; J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 467. Although *HN* 11, 23 and particularly Celsus, *Med.* III 18-9 are possible.

¹⁹⁹ Tertullian, *An.* 48.2 (CChr.SL 2:854); J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 509-11; Soranus, *Gyn.* 1.10.41, 2.48; Caelius, *De Morbis Chronicis*, 3.4.51. Tertullian correctly rejects this idea.

²⁰⁰ Tertullian, *An.* 15.5 (CChr.SL 2:802); J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 228.

²⁰¹ As usual, theological argumentation takes precedence: see *Res.* 15.5, where Tertullian considers the ἡγεμονικόν question unimportant, because there he does not need to show that the soul pervades the blood.

derive from Adam and share in his sin).²⁰² Just look at babies, Tertullian says: they show the physical and psychological characteristics of their parents, and they recognize lights, smells, and their mothers; therefore, their bodies must have *animae* (with *sensus*, *animi*, and *intellectus*).²⁰³ One might ask how the semen-only theory fit with the fact of maternal resemblance, but – despite his respect for and knowledge of Soranus – Tertullian has greater priorities than exploring him further to create a systematic theory of generation.²⁰⁴

The most remarkable use of Soranus comes in the proof (against the Stoics and Plato) that the soul is present at conception. *Respondete, matres, uos quae praegnantes*, Tertullian says, proceeding to give an intimate account of pregnancy: every pregnant woman knows that the fetus has a life-force (*anima*) separate from her own: ‘Your bowels tremble, your sides shake, your entire womb throbs, and [the fetus] constantly changes its position ... Should his restlessness cease, your first fear would be for him.’²⁰⁵ The fetus is aware of sounds, and ‘you and he, in the closeness of your sympathy, share together your common ailments [and bruises,]’ and of course disease or bruising is only possible where there is a vital principle (blood, soul) for the disease to attack. Then comes a historic and gruesome description of embryotomy:

Sometimes, an infant is killed in the womb by cruel necessity, because the oblique presentation makes delivery impossible and so kills his mother unless he dies. So among physicians’ tools there is first an instrument of a well-proportioned twisting frame for forcing open the *secreta*; next an *annulocultro* for cutting up the limbs inside with careful mastery; next a blunt hook for pulling out the entire violated thing [*facimus*] with a violent delivery. There is also a copper spike, for the dark [*caeco*] killing, it is called ἐμβρυοσφάκτην for its infanticidal function, because of course the infant was alive. Hippocrates, Asclepiades, Erasistratus,

²⁰² Tertullian, *An.* 5.4, 19.6-9 (CChr.SL 2:787, 811); see *Test.* 3; J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 276. To see the beginnings of modern genetics (‘*anima cromosomica di Tertulliano*’, the ‘evoluzionisti’) in Tertullian’s traducianism goes too far, see G. Rialdi, *Scienza medica di Tertulliano* (1970), 144, 96.

²⁰³ Tertullian, *An.* 5.4, 10.7-8, 19.6-9, 25.2-9 (CChr.SL 2:787, 795, 811, 819-21); Soranus, *Gyn., passim*; J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 276. His details suggest accurate observation of infants, or perhaps even a child of his own; see esp. Tertullian, *An.* 49.1 (CChr.SL 2:855).

²⁰⁴ J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 425-6. I believe Soranus’ answer is in *Gyn.* 1.38.

²⁰⁵ For the following: Tertullian, *An.* 25.3-5 (CChr.SL 2:819-20), see Soranus, *Gyn.* 1.39.1, 44.3, 48-53.

Herophilus (the vivisector of adults), and even the gentler Soranus had this instrument; of course they knew that a living being [*animal*] was conceived and pitied its luckless state, which required murder so as not to be torn apart alive.²⁰⁶

Again, Tertullian shows that the physician performs a necessary, albeit horrific, function. More impressive and unprecedented is Tertullian's detailed knowledge of this perhaps rare procedure. As it turns out, Tertullian unwittingly bequeaths accurate details that are scarcely preserved even in medical texts. To demonstrate Tertullian's originality, and to dispel the general confusion (even in Waszink) about this passage,²⁰⁷ some analysis of the procedure and instruments is warranted. I interpret the procedure as follows: cervical dilation with a screw-speculum [Fig. 1],²⁰⁸ feticide with a sharp spike to the skull (the ἐμβρουσοφάκτην) [perhaps resembling Fig. 2],²⁰⁹ then (if needed) amputation with the *anuloculter* [Fig. 3] and extraction of either the entire fetus or its parts with hooks [Fig. 4]. Soranus' Γυναικολογία gives a similar procedure, using a speculum (διόπτρα), hooks (ἐμβρουσολκός), and, (if needed) a leaf-shaped polyps knife (ἐμβρουσοτόμος) [Fig. 5a, 5b] for the opening and emptying of a hydrocephalous fetal skull.²¹⁰ Celsus speaks only of hooks, including some with sharp points, and one sharpened on one side (for fetal decapitation [resembling Fig. 7]).²¹¹ Clearly, Tertullian is not relying primarily on Celsus.

But Waszink supposes *anuloculter* means 'curved blade', believing it to be the same as Celsus' decapitating hook; and he directs the reader to an image of a blade rather resembling a

²⁰⁶ Tertullian, *An.* 25.3-5 (CChr.SL 2:819-20), my translation (Peter Holmes' ANF, worse than Waszink, misunderstands the instruments). See John Milne, *Surgical Instruments in Greek and Roman Times* (Oxford, 1907), 158.

²⁰⁷ J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 317f.; M. Perrin, Exemple de l'utilisation de la médecine (1991), 105-6; Holmes, ANF; J. Milne, *Surgical Instruments* (1907), LI.

²⁰⁸ Fig 1, 2 and 4 used with permission of C. Sueyras, UVA Health System, 2009. Fig. 3, 5, and 7 (no longer under copyright) are from J. Milne, *Surgical Instruments* (1907), pl. VII-VIII, L. See also the impressive collection in Lawrence Bliquez, *Roman Surgical Instruments and Other Minor Objects in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples* (Mainz, 1994), 162-4. Note that figures are not printed to scale.

²⁰⁹ Any picture of a sharpened copper spike would be a good guess. See also Konstantinos Kapparis, *Abortion in the Ancient World* (London, 2002), 224 and J. Milne, *Surgical Instruments* (1907), 157-8. Note that Milne's depiction of the ἐμβρουσοφάκτην (pl. LI) is probably incorrect; see L. Bliquez, *Roman Surgical Instruments and Other Minor Objects in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples* (1994), 53. At the same time, Bliquez himself apparently neglects two instruments (76).

²¹⁰ Soranus, *Gyn.* 4.10-11 and Muscio, *Gynecology* 2.94 (lost in Soranus' original), J. Milne, *Surgical Instruments* (1907), 30-1, 148f.

²¹¹ Celsus, *Med.* VII 29.

scythe [Fig 6].²¹² But such a long and broad blade would be useless in the confines of obstetrics, and could not possibly be meant by Celsus or Tertullian. More plausible is John Milne's theory, that Tertullian is describing a different instrument, an *anulus + culter*, a small blade attached to a ring on the finger, allowing the physician to cover the blade as he inserted his hand and to feel what he was dismembering [Fig. 2].²¹³ As ἐμβρουσοφάκτην and *anuloculter* are unattested in Γυναικολογία, *De medicina*, and earlier works, it seems that Tertullian learned of these instruments (and the physicians who had them) from Περί Ψυχῆς, or perhaps another lost work by Soranus (e.g. *De generatione*). Alternatively, Tertullian may have learned of them independently,²¹⁴ but abortion instruments seem an unlikely topic for dinner conversation. Regardless, Tertullian's macabre and meticulous account – given to refute those who refused to believe in an ensouled fetus (a body-soul union from conception) – has actually gone beyond extant medical texts to preserve valuable historical information.

The limit of Tertullian's knowledge of and interest in medical science is seen in his occasional errors, particularly when he uses more abstruse medical terms. For example, when Tertullian attempts to prove how accidents of health can affect the mind, he seems to misunderstand *phthisis* (tuberculosis): '*Paralysis mentem prodigit* [wastes], *phthisis* [sic] *seruat*.'²¹⁵ No medical author, including Soranus and Pliny, who mentions *paralysis* or the very rare term *phthisis* claims that one destroys the mind while the other saves it.²¹⁶ Similarly, when Tertullian discusses death as a complete separation of soul from body, he gives two examples of rapid death: *cervicum messis* [decapitation] and *apoplexis*.²¹⁷ Celsus and Soranus/Caelius, the only early authors to speak of *apoplexia*, compare it to a sudden stroke of paralysis or epilepsy, but (at least in their extant works) they do not describe it as fatal.²¹⁸ It is possible that Tertullian has more accurately

²¹² J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 324-5. The image (out of copyright) comes from T. Meyer Steineg, *Chirurgische Instrumente des Altertums*, Jenaer Medizin-historische Beiträge 1 (Jena, 1912), 4.12.

²¹³ J. Milne, *Surgical Instruments* (1907), 31, confirmed by a Pseudo-Hippocratic work (i.463). See Soranus, *Gyn.* 4.11.

²¹⁴ J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 319.

²¹⁵ Tertullian, *An.* 20.4 (CChr.SL 2:812).

²¹⁶ See *HN* 26.21, 20.59; Caelius, *De Morbis Chronicis* 2.1, 14; Celsus, *Med.* III 22. See also Bruno Meinecke, Consumption (Tuberculosis) in Classical Antiquity: *Annals of Medical History* (1927), 379-402.

²¹⁷ Tertullian, *An.* 53.4 (CChr.SL 2:860).

²¹⁸ Caelius, *De Morbis Acutis* 3.5; Soranus, *Gyn.* 2.19-38; Celsus, *Med.* III 26.

observed that a stroke/apoplectic attack (*interior ruina*) is often fatal, but perhaps more likely that he simply misunderstands the term. It seems most probable that the orator uses impressive, technical terms he is unfamiliar with. But perhaps we should credit him for knowing the terms at all.

Nonetheless, one should not exaggerate Tertullian's medical knowledge or interest. Against Rialdi, it is clear that the list of physicians Tertullian cites – including Hippocrates, Asclepiades, Erasistratus, Diocles, Andreas, Herophilus, Hicesius, and Strato – derives from Soranus rather than personal knowledge.²¹⁹ *Pace* several scholars' suggestions, I see no indication whatsoever that Tertullian has read any Galen or Hippocrates; Rialdi's crucial translation of both *liquor* and *uirus* as 'umore' is unwarranted.²²⁰ Furthermore, Rialdi and Polito go too far in suggesting that Tertullian was a Methodist (like Soranus).²²¹ Quite to the contrary, *De anima* refutes Epicurus' atomist theory, Asclepiades' materialist psychology, and Soranus' divisible and mortal soul,²²² and Tertullian uses *uiae uitales* to mean veins and arteries rather than *πόροι*.²²³ As we have seen, Tertullian's willingness to agree with Soranus' theory of conception depends on the rhetorical/theological context. Clearly, Tertullian was neither Soranist nor Methodist; Scripture, Christian authors, and Montanist visions trumped any medical source.²²⁴ Furthermore, he did not restrict himself to the medical knowledge of others; when needed, he drew from his own knowledge (*e.g.* the woman with quintuplets),²²⁵ observations (*e.g.* all things taste bitter to those with jaundice/excess bile),²²⁶ and experience (*e.g.* ejaculation in coitus feels like one loses

²¹⁹ G. Rialdi, *Scienza medica di Tertulliano* (1970), 133f; J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), *passim*. See P. de Labriolle, *Physiologie de Tertullien* (1906), 1328.

²²⁰ G. Rialdi, *Scienza medica di Tertulliano* (1970), 94; Tertullian, *An.* 27.7 (CChr.SL 2:823) (miscited by Rialdi as *An.* 25).

²²¹ G. Rialdi, *Scienza medica di Tertulliano* (1970), 102f; R. Polito, *Master, Medicine, and the Mind* (2006), 321; see M. Perrin, *Exemple de l'utilisation de la médecine* (1991), 103.

²²² Tertullian, *An.* 32.4, 15.2, 38.1, 14.2.

²²³ Tertullian, *An.* 53.2 (CChr.SL 2:859). J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 541.

²²⁴ Tertullian, *An.* 9.4, 15.3 (CChr.SL 2:792, 801). Of course, whether or to what extent Tertullian was a Montanist lies beyond the scope of this paper.

²²⁵ Tertullian, *An.* 6.8 (CChr.SL 2:789).

²²⁶ Tertullian, *An.* 17.9 (CChr.SL 2:805), an accurate observation; moreover, *auruginare* is a neologism. See J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* (1947), 248.

part of one's soul) to defend his traducian ideas.²²⁷ Thus, although in many ways *De anima* is Tertullian's most medical work – relying on Soranus and Pliny to prove that the *anima* is the immortal, corporeal life-breath inextricably united to the flesh from conception to death – it remains clear that Tertullian was no physician, nor a physician-devotee. He professed service to only one Physician.

VI.4 Medicine in *De pallio*

De pallio, the shortest, most florid, and most enigmatic of Tertullian's works,²²⁸ is difficult to group with his other writings. So too is it difficult to date; scholars have suggested dates between 193 and 222, although there seems to be some consensus for a date after 206.²²⁹ The amount of medical detail also recommends a later date, when Tertullian's writings used such imagery more frequently. To defend his change from the toga to pallium, Tertullian almost flaunts his erudition, employing both a prolonged medical metaphor and various scientific facts from Pliny. From *HN* come details showing how Nature itself changes: Tertullian discusses snakes, hyenas, stags, peacocks, and chameleons;²³⁰ furthermore, he uses descriptions of wool, flax, and silk to help prove the pallium's superiority.²³¹ Tertullian certainly uses Pliny for the details of a prolonged medical metaphor, in which he (in somewhat Stoic fashion) figuratively performs surgery against Roman prodigal luxury:

I spare no dirt or *impetigo*. I apply the *cauterem* to the desires that led M. Tullius to buy a table ... for 500,000 *sestertii*. So do I drive the *scalpellum* into the severity that induced Vedius Pollio to feed his slaves to *murenas* ... I cut into the gluttony that made Hortensius ... kill a peacock. ... I administer a *catharticum* for Scaurus' impurity. ... This civic *purulentia* – who will bring it out and *exuaporabit* it, except a

²²⁷ Tertullian, *An.* 27.6 (CChr.SL 2:823). See P. Brown's clever rendition: *Body and Society* (1988), 17. On Tertullian's possible pre-conversion adultery, see *Res.* 59.

²²⁸ G. L. Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God* (1979), 8; P. de Labriolle, *History and Literature* (1924), 82.

²²⁹ Braun and Fredouille opt for 217, Barnes for 205 or 209, Labriolle for 206. See J. Quasten, *Patrology* (1990), 316. See also Marie Turcan, *Tertullien: Le Manteau*, SC 513 (Paris, 2007), 19-27.

²³⁰ Tertullian, *De pallio*, 3.1-3. With some rhetorical elaboration, he seems to use *HN* 8.30, 8.35, 8.50, 8.51, 10.22. See A. Gerlo, *De Pallio* (1940), 74. See Aristotle, *Hist. an.* 8.17.

²³¹ Tertullian, *De pallio* 3.5; *HN* 11.26-7. Tertullian and Pliny's accurate description of the silkworm is rare.

speech with the pallium? ... 'With speech', it is said, 'the wisest medicine, you persuaded me.'²³²

These and numerous other gratuitous details are remarkably, although not perfectly, accurate to Pliny's account.²³³ The extremely rare medical term *impetigo* likely comes from Pliny as well.²³⁴ Indeed, although Tertullian's metaphor has precedents in Seneca and the Stoics, it takes a step beyond any Latin author before him: *catharticum*, *cauter*, *purulentia*, and *exuaporare* are apparently all neologisms.²³⁵ Even the Greek καθαρκτικόν is rare outside of medical literature,²³⁶ suggesting that Tertullian may have translated it from Soranus.²³⁷ As we have already seen, he clearly used Soranus for other works around 209. Regardless, Tertullian again proves his ability to expand upon the tradition of medical metaphors. Moreover, *De pallio* reaffirms Tertullian's noteworthy interest in medical knowledge and a respect for medicine: Pliny's *HN* is crucial to his argument, and he even boasts that Aesculapian devotees and *medici* wear the pallium.²³⁸

VI.5 Medicine in the Final Works: 211-c.220

Even in his last and most violent works, in which the apparently Montanistic Tertullian takes a more severe stance towards remarriage, penance, fasting, fleeing from persecution, and serving in the military, he continues to show respect for medicine. Directed against the 'psychics', *De ieiunio* (211-217) is perhaps Tertullian's most violent and vulgar work,²³⁹ but his prescription to fast is scarcely a call to forswear medicine and harm the body. Tertullian insists only on slightly longer *stationes* (on Wednesday and Friday) and on two weeks of xerophagies (abstaining from meat, wine, and baths; Sabbaths excluded).²⁴⁰ The implication is that Tertullian sees bathing and

²³² Tertullian, *De pallio* 5.5-7, 6.1 (SC 513: 210-8); my translation, relying on Vincent Hunink, *Tertullian, De Pallio* (Amsterdam, 2005). I note, however, that Hunink's medical translation of 4.3 ('leonine scabies') seems unwarranted.

²³³ E.g., Tertullian adds the gruesome detail that Vedius ate the eels that had devoured his servants (see *HN* 9.39). See A. Gerlo, *De Pallio* (1940), 188-90; *HN* 8.24, 9.31, 10.23, 10.72, 13.29 (Bostock's translation here is incorrect), 33.52.

²³⁴ *HN* 20.2[4], 20.33[83], 23.64[129]; Celsus, *Med.* Celsus, *Med.* 28; Scribonius Largus, *Compositiones* 249.

²³⁵ Although *puruleta* is in *HN* 20.5[10], and *euaporare* is used by Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, 19.5.7.

²³⁶ According to Liddell-Scott-Jones, *Greek English Lexicon*, the single exception is Plutarch, *Platonic Questions*, 1.1 (999 E). Jerome follows Tertullian (*Ezek.* 7.23).

²³⁷ Soranus, *Gyn.* 1.4 is dedicated to cathartics.

²³⁸ Tertullian, *De pallio* 1.2, 4.10, 6.2.

²³⁹ Braun and Fredouille place it after 213 (217?), Barnes 210-211.

²⁴⁰ Tertullian, *Iei.* 2.3 (CChr.SL 2:1258).

otherwise taking care of the body as acceptable during the rest of the year, and he even argues that Olympic athletes perform xerophagies.²⁴¹ More importantly, he discusses the wine for Timothy's ailed stomach to demonstrate that fasts could be broken 'on a ground of necessity.'²⁴² Also, he specifically condemns Tatian and Marcion's total renunciation of meat, wine, and sex.²⁴³ Ironically, he thereafter draws on anatomical imagery (perhaps from Seneca) to condemn the worship of the body: *Deus enim tibi uenter est et pulmo templum et aqualiculus altare.*²⁴⁴ More impressively, Tertullian incorporates scientific knowledge (probably from Pliny) to embellish the account of Israelites dying from gluttony on pigeons: *ad choleram ortyometras cruditando.*²⁴⁵ *Cholera* and *ortyometra* (pigeon) are not found outside of Pliny,²⁴⁶ and *cruditare* (suffer from indigestion) is a neologism. Thus, even when Tertullian passionately proclaims that fasting is a *remedium* that brings spiritual rather than physical vigor,²⁴⁷ he still shows knowledge of and respect for the 'necessity' of medicine.

Even in the merciless *De fuga* (c. 213),²⁴⁸ where a refusal of medical treatment would fit well with his description of Job,²⁴⁹ medicine is nowhere proscribed. Tertullian forbids Christians to flee the persecution: 'It is a sin to refuse what is good', and he claims that God uses persecution as a trial.²⁵⁰ But Tertullian is no more forbidding medical treatment during a plague than he is condemning roof repairs after hailstorms. Indeed, continued respect for proper medical practice is implied in his comment about the danger of giving wine to febrile patients.²⁵¹

²⁴¹ Tertullian, *Iei.* 17.7 (CChr.SL 2:1276). See Alois Koch, *Die antike Athletik und Agonistik im Blickpunkt der Kritik des Tertullian von Karthago: Begegnung* (2005) 11-32.

²⁴² Tertullian, *Iei.* 9.9 (CChr.SL 2:1266-7).

²⁴³ Tertullian, *Iei.* 15.1 (CChr.SL 2:1273).

²⁴⁴ Tertullian, *Iei.* 16.8, see 2.8 (CChr.SL 2:1275, 1258). The very rare *aqualiculus* (paunch) is attested in Seneca, *Ep.* 90.

²⁴⁵ Tertullian, *Iei.* 16.1 (CChr.SL 2:1274).

²⁴⁶ Excepting Celsus, *Med.* II 13, which speaks of cholera. Pliny, *HN* 10.33[66], 20.93[252], although see *Num.* (LXX) 11:33.

²⁴⁷ Tertullian, *Iei.* 6.2, 7.4, 17.7-8.

²⁴⁸ So Fredouille and Braun; Barnes for 208-9.

²⁴⁹ Tertullian, *Fug.* 2.3.

²⁵⁰ Tertullian, *Fug.* 4.4 (CSEL 76:24).

²⁵¹ Tertullian, *Fug.* 13.3, see D. Amundsen, *Medicine, Society, and Faith* (1996), 90. See Celsus, *Med.* III 4, IV 12, Seneca, *On Firmness* 12.

Tertullian's hardening of opinion against anything tied to paganism is most obvious in his *De idololatria* (c. 212),²⁵² but even here medicine is not attacked. Whereas Tertullian had previously boasted of Christians in the senate-house and army,²⁵³ now he prohibits all professions that imply cooperation with paganism; moreover, he dismisses the excuse that a loss of livelihood could lead to starvation.²⁵⁴ Thus, he forbids Christians to become administrators or soldiers (who had to take oaths), as well as incense-sellers, schoolteachers, and astrologers (*mathematici*). Interestingly, however, he never attacks medicine or physicians, a fact that supports the theory that the Hippocratic Oath (sworn to Apollo) was not universally required of ancient physicians.²⁵⁵ Tertullian continues to use medical metaphors: Christians are not allowed to teach, but they are allowed to study – just as one could accept a poison without drinking it.²⁵⁶ Indeed, Tertullian's exhortations to avoid idolatry like a *pestis* and *contagio* imply a positive attitude towards those who fought disease.²⁵⁷ Finally, Tertullian refuses to rescind his earlier acceptance of bathing (a practice recommended by ancient physicians), even though the baths may contain idols.²⁵⁸

Tertullian's unflinching acceptance of medicine for health is most apparent in *De corona* (c. 211),²⁵⁹ a tractate that overturns his previous acceptance of military service.²⁶⁰ More important than Tertullian's use of Pliny for facts about ivy and snakes is the text cited previously by Amundsen and Ferngren;²⁶¹ indeed, when it is put in its original context, the passage becomes even more impressive. Tertullian begins by claiming that anything unsanctioned in Scripture or contrary to nature is prohibited,²⁶² but he thereafter shows that sailing (practiced by Jonah),

²⁵² So Braun, Fredouille, and, more sceptically, the later Barnes, see T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian* (1985²), 325.

²⁵³ Tertullian, *Apol.* 37.4, 42.2-3.

²⁵⁴ Tertullian, *Idol.* 8-12. A significant section revealing one of Tertullian's shifts; Osborn (anxious to prove Tertullian's consistency) never mentions it.

²⁵⁵ L. Edelstein, *Ancient Medicine* (1967), 63; G. Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care* (2009), 110.

²⁵⁶ Tertullian, *Idol.* 10.6 (CChr.SL 2:1110).

²⁵⁷ Tertullian, *Idol.* 8.5, 12.5 (CChr.SL 2:1107, 1112).

²⁵⁸ Tertullian, *Idol.* 8.4, 15.6 (CChr.SL 2:1107, 1116). Bathing is permitted in *id.*, *Apol.* 42.2, *Or.* 25.6, *Bapt.* 15.3, *Cor.* 3.3. See A. Koch, *Athletik und Agonistik* (2005).

²⁵⁹ So Barnes, Fredouille, and the later Barnes.

²⁶⁰ Tertullian, *Apol.* 37.4, 42.3. In his attempt to show that Tertullian did not change, Osborn miscites Jean-Michele Hornus: see E. Osborn, *Tertullian* (1997), 84.

²⁶¹ Tertullian, *Cor.* 7.5, 10.7 (CChr.SL 2:1048, 1055), see *HN* 8.33, 24.47. See n. 11 above.

²⁶² Tertullian, *Cor.* 2.4, 5.4 (CChr.SL 2:1042, 46). Except the additional fasts and rejection of remarriage, one supposes.

music (by David), and medicine (by Isaiah and Paul) are all permitted in Scripture.²⁶³ In a crucial passage, Tertullian elaborates: he will accept only those things that ‘meet the necessities of human life [and] supply what is simply useful and affords real assistance and honourable comfort... [They come] from God’s own inspiration.’²⁶⁴ Thus, medicine is allowed both because Scripture permits it and because it is a necessity of life.

In *De pudicitia* (c.217),²⁶⁵ an aging Tertullian admits that he has changed his mind on the unforgivable nature of certain sins, but he shows no shift in his attitude toward medicine. The science and practice of medicine remain in high esteem, although still subordinate to his theological arguments. He opens by comparing the ‘psychics’ to bad physicians: they amputate too deeply, destroying modesty, and they foolishly prescribed fire for fire: remarriage for lust.²⁶⁶ Of course, Tertullian had approved exactly such homeopathy in *Scorpiace* 5.8; clearly, his interest lies in his argument rather than in precise medical theories. Indeed, while his unforgiving position here relies on the maxim that ‘remedies will be more effective on their first application’, in *De paenitentia* he had argued that ‘repeated sickness requires repeated medicine’.²⁶⁷ Despite such rhetorical shifts, Tertullian continues to admire medicine; in one last medical metaphor, Christ is described as the physician and sinners as the contaminated.²⁶⁸ Indeed, Tertullian argues that the revered confessors are no more than human because they too must call the doctor when ill.²⁶⁹ Perhaps a sickly, slightly embittered old man is reflecting his personal experience. In any case, in all of these latest works, Tertullian’s arguments have continued to employ the medical motif, constructing metaphors and explaining Scripture, and he has nowhere disparaged doctors.

VII. Explaining Tertullian’s acceptance of medicine: His anthropology

From *Ad nationes* to *De pudicitia* and through metaphors and direct affirmations, Tertullian shows a consistently high respect for medicine. Before drawing conclusions from my findings about his

²⁶³ Tertullian, *Cor.* 8.2 (CChr.SL 2:1051), see *2Kgs.* 20:7, *Isa.* 38:21, *1Tim.* 5:23.

²⁶⁴ Tertullian, *Cor.* 8.5 (CChr.SL 2:1052).

²⁶⁵ Braun and Fredouille opt for 217, Barnes for 211.

²⁶⁶ Tertullian, *Pud.* 1.14-16 (SC 394:148-50), see *1Cor.* 8:9.

²⁶⁷ Tertullian, *Pud.* 10.6 (SC 394:198), *Paen.* 7.13.

²⁶⁸ Tertullian, *Pud.* 9.12, 20.12-3 (SC 394:192, 266-8).

²⁶⁹ Tertullian, *Pud.* 22.3 (SC 394:276).

knowledge and use of medicine, I wish to focus briefly on his approbation of the medical art, particularly the question of why he held it in such esteem. Tertullian remained amazingly consistent, even when a prevailing opinion among numerous Roman writers was one of antipathy, and even when certain Christians (*e.g.* Tatian, who shared Tertullian's hatred of paganism; or Origen, who shared his approval of miracles) showed real reservations with medicine.

Why was Tertullian's view so positive? Undoubtedly there are numerous factors, such as his respect for charity or for Nature,²⁷⁰ or the positive precedents in parts of Scripture and the earlier Fathers. But I will focus on the key factor that separates him from Origen, Tatian, and others; namely, his unique anthropology, particularly his idea of the intimate and indivisible unity of an admirable body with a corporeal soul. As scholars have shown, Tertullian sees the body (*caro, corpus*) as a great good, not a Neoplatonic or Gnostic prison.²⁷¹ More than 'any other early Christian writer' Tertullian defends *caro*,²⁷² not only because it is *imago Dei* and *templum Dei*, but because God himself grew in the flesh, healed diseases of the flesh, died in the flesh, and will raise the flesh again.²⁷³ Adam was called *homo* when he was only *caro* (before he had even received his *anima*), and Paul's foul 'works of the flesh' refer actually to the irrational choices of the *soul*.²⁷⁴ Only a fool would denigrate or damage the body, as it is only through the flesh that man can embrace good deeds, baptism, asceticism, and martyrdom – *caro salutis est cardo*.²⁷⁵

Here we come to the crux: *anima* and *caro* are indivisibly united from conception to death, so an affliction of the body must affect the soul, and vice versa.²⁷⁶ The unity of these *sorores*

²⁷⁰ Tertullian, *Ux.* II 4.2, II 8.8, *Cult.* II 11.2. See G. Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care* (2009), 106-7.

²⁷¹ E. Osborn, *Tertullian* (1997), 237; Jean Daniélou, *Origins of Latin Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1977), 397; J. Alexandre, *Chair pour la gloire* (2001), 526-7.

²⁷² E. Osborn, *Tertullian* (1997), 237.

²⁷³ G. L. Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God* (1979), 163; J. Leal, *Antropología de Tertuliano* (2001), 188. Tertullian, *Adu. Marc.* III-V (especially V 7.4-5), *Pud.* 16.6-8; *Ux.* II 3.1; *Cult.* II 9.8; *Spec.* 18.1-2; *An.* 53; *Adu. Prax.* 16.4; see *Carn.* 5; Irenaeus, *Adu. haer.* I 5.5.

²⁷⁴ Tertullian, *Adu. Marc.* I 24.5, 5.9.5; *Res.* 17, 40.3, 53.4-9; *Carn.* 8.6; *Bapt.* 4.5; *An.* 40, 52.3; R. Braun, *Deus Christianorum* (1977), 301-3; J.-C. Fredouille, *Observations sur la Terminologie Anthropologique* (2005), 324. However, I agree with Waszink (against J. Leal, *Antropología de Tertuliano*, 2001, 17): Tertullian's anthropological terminology is far from consistent (J. H. Waszink, *De Anima* [1947], 263-4, 431-3).

²⁷⁵ J. Leal, *Antropología de Tertuliano* (2001), 186; *Res.* 7-11 (especially 8.3), 15; *Adu. Marc.* V 7.4-5.

²⁷⁶ Tertullian, *An.* 5.3-6, 25.1-5, 43.5-8; J. Alexandre, *Chair pour la gloire* (2001), 275.

substantiae is particularly intense because the soul itself is a *corpus*,²⁷⁷ inhabiting the same place as the flesh, and actually capable of pain and pleasure.²⁷⁸ Thus, a decent diet can nourish the *anima*, whereas overindulgence in food, drink, or sex will weaken it.²⁷⁹ Furthermore, because physical disease is an excess or deficit opposed to nature,²⁸⁰ it too affects the soul through the body: sicknesses, including *febris*, *phrenesis*, *lethargia*, or *paralysis*, can debilitate the *anima*.²⁸¹ Obesity and sickness can both impede judgment; thus, contrary to what one might think, asceticism and medicine apparently have a common goal: facilitating spiritual health.²⁸² Although physical health is neither the primary priority nor an absolute necessity, it appears that one should avoid disease at least in part because it is more difficult to pray with a perturbed mind.²⁸³ Unlike Origen, Tertullian gives no evidence for the ethereal notion that truly ‘spiritual men’ should forswear physicians. The pragmatic preacher was too well grounded in the salt-sown, scorpion-infested sands of Carthage.

VIII. Conclusions

Tertullian’s esteem for the physician’s art is confirmed by his impressive knowledge and use of medical science and metaphors. Given the sheer size of Tertullian’s corpus, a number of recapitulative conclusions are certainly warranted. Regarding *scientia medica*, Tertullian’s medical erudition goes beyond any previous Christian writer, putting him at least on par with many of the famous Roman writers of his time. As we have seen, he follows accepted medical theory to describe *nerui* as sinews, *uenae* as blood vessels, and *arteriae* as air vessels (supplied by *pulmones*). His understanding of the digestive tract is similarly accurate but not profound: food passes from *gula* to *stomachus* to *aluens* to *intestinae*. Along with his considerable knowledge of nature and

²⁷⁷ But to call Tertullian a materialist goes too far (*e.g.* n. 21); ‘realist’ or ‘corporealist’ are more accurate terms. See J. Alexandre, *Chair pour la gloire* (2001), 187; J. Daniélou, *Origins of Latin Christianity* (1977), 217; J. Leal, *Antropología de Tertuliano* (2001), 43. Here one sees similarity to Stoicism.

²⁷⁸ Tertullian, *An.* 7-10, 52.3, 58.3-5; *Res.* 17.3-5.

²⁷⁹ Tertullian, *Iei.* 6.2-7; *An.* 25.3-4, 6.6, with clear parallels to Soranus.

²⁸⁰ Tertullian, *An.* 43.8, see 20.4.

²⁸¹ Tertullian, *Apol.* 17.5; *Praescr.* 16.2; *Scorp.* 9.13; *An.* 5.5, 17.9, esp. 20.4, 25.4, 43.8.

²⁸² Tertullian, *An.* 20.4; *Mart.* 3.4; *Iei.* 17.7-8; *Apol.* 46.2-15. Indeed, Montanists are not masochists. See A. Koch, *Athletik und Agonistik* (2005) and *Fug.* 1.7; *Res.* 8.2-4.

²⁸³ Tertullian, *Or.* 12.1.

animals, Tertullian probably learned this anatomy from Pliny.²⁸⁴ For his deeper pathological and surgical knowledge, Tertullian appears to draw from Pliny, Soranus, and his own observations: *lymphaticus*, *impetigo*, *cholera*, and surgical *sinapis* probably come from Pliny; *phthisis* could come from Pliny or Soranus, while *apoplexis*, *cardiacus*, *transpunctoria*, and *catharticum* seem derived from Soranus. In addition, Tertullian may have added his own (fairly accurate) observations about scorpion stings, fatal apoplexy, bitter jaundice, and parasite-infested ulcers. With few exceptions, his use of medical terms is quite consistent with accepted pre-Galenic science (unlike Irenaeus, who suggested that *uena* transported air). Furthermore, Tertullian is one of the few writers to labor to read and deliver a considerable amount of Soranus' obstetrical and gynecological knowledge, including menstrual fluctuations, pregnancy symptoms, gestation periods, abortion procedures, and post-natal washing, swaddling, and breast-feeding. Although Tertullian was no physician, he clearly spent a substantial time studying medical science.

Indeed, we have seen several signs that Tertullian became more knowledgeable of and interested in medicine during his later writing period. Although one should be wary of Patristic statistics, it is worth noting that, of the anatomical terms catalogued above,²⁸⁵ Claesson's *Index Tertullianeus* gives nine 'hits' among Tertullian's early works (using my chronology above),²⁸⁶ nine in the middle works, twenty-one in the later works – not including an additional twenty-three in *De anima* alone – and seventeen in the final works; similarly, all save one of the pathological terms listed above are found *only* in the later and final writings.²⁸⁷ Rather than simply recycle old data for his later works, Tertullian seems to employ additional material from Pliny for his newer arguments (e.g. discussing insect anatomy, *cholera*, *impetigo*). When Tertullian revisits a topic he had discussed before, he shows greater interest in and knowledge of medicine: for example, when he encourages martyrdom (*Ad martyras* vs. the later and more medical *De patientia* and *Scorpiace*), when he attacks paganism (*De spectaculis* vs. *De corona*), and when he uses psychological concepts

²⁸⁴ Interestingly, Tertullian apparently ignores (perhaps wisely) Pliny's more fantastic remedies for humans.

²⁸⁵ Namely, *aluus/ens*, *arteria*, *cerebrum*, *iecor*, *intestina*, *mamilla*, *nerui*, *pulmo*, *stomachus*, *uena*; but *gula* (often used as 'gluttony') excepted.

²⁸⁶ And, for simplicity's sake, I place *Adu. Marc.* books 1-3 as middle, 4-5 as late, and *De pallio* as final.

²⁸⁷ *Impetigo*, *cholera*, *phthisis*, *apoplexis*, *lethargus*, *phreneticus*, *cardiacus*, *lymphaticus*. The last (and most common) is found in *Bapt.* 5.4.

against pagan ideas (*De testimonia animae* vs. *De anima*). Moreover, signs of Soranus appear suddenly and simultaneously: the lactation argument in *De carne*, the salt and honey in *Aduersus Marcionem* 4,²⁸⁸ much of *De anima*, and (perhaps) *transpunctatoria* in *Aduersus Valentinianos* and *catharticum* in *De pallio*. These works are all generally dated together (around 207-211), adding weight to the idea that Tertullian read Περὶ Ψυχῆς (and perhaps other parts of Soranus) at this time and incorporated the medical knowledge into several of his works.²⁸⁹ Apparently, Tertullian found Soranus useful to attack not only pagan and heretical ideas about the soul, but also Gnostic/Marcionite ideas about Christ and the human body. As happens with many people today, Tertullian's medical interest and knowledge apparently grew as he aged.

However, we can scarcely claim with Labriolle that medicine is 'une obsession' for Tertullian. There is no evidence that Tertullian's medical reading progressed far beyond Soranus and Pliny: he makes no mention of Hippocrates' or Aristotle's humors, Rufus' or Galen's anatomy and physiology, or Nicander's or Scribonius' therapeutics; moreover, all of Tertullian's medical facts attested in Celsus can also be found in either Pliny or Soranus (whereas the reverse is not true). Furthermore, we have seen that Tertullian is not an absolute devotee of Pliny or Soranus; he is willing to opt for one, the other, or neither when argument demands it.

Clearly, Tertullian did not study medicine primarily for medicine's sake – he used it in various ways for theological argumentation. Tertullian adopted the tradition of medical metaphors from his Christian and non-Christian (particularly Stoic) predecessors, and he expanded it to numerous areas of Christian life and theology. The degree of precise detail of some of his metaphors (e.g. the *chelidonia*, *sinapis*) is quite an achievement, as are his numerous neologisms: *remediator*, *medicator*, *purulentia*, *feruura*, *catharticum*, *transpunctatoria*, etc. Medical imagery pervades his work and is directed towards every conceivable audience: orthodox Christians (*Pat.*, *Paen.*, *Iei.*, *Pud.*), heretics (*Adu. Val.*, *Adu. Marc.*, *Scorp.*, *Carn.*, *Res.*), and pagans (*Nat.*, *An.*). Going beyond his predecessors, he describes heresy, pride, impatience, idolatry, luxury, passion, and sin

²⁸⁸ And perhaps the menses/swelling in book 3.

²⁸⁹ As further evidence, *Exb. Cast.* 12.5 and *Virg.* 14.7 (both dated as 208-12) speak of attempted contraception (*dissoluas medicaminibus conceptum*), a major topic in Soranus' *Gyn.*

as debilitating diseases; patience, martyrdom, fasting, penance, celibacy, and baptism as necessary remedies; Marcion's God, Aesculapius, and psychic Christians as false physicians; and God, Christ, and Tertullian as proper doctors.²⁹⁰ Several of his treatises begin with medical metaphors, and several persist with this medical motif.

Medicine helps Tertullian make a plethora of theological points that are difficult to epitomize; broadly speaking, medical images help to portray in vivid terms the frightening danger of spiritual evils and the desirable effects of painful goods.²⁹¹ Of particular importance is the *Deus/Christus medicus* motif, which is used against heretics to explain the coexistence of divine goodness and human suffering/punishment. Moreover, medical and Scriptural details of disease and healing are invoked powerfully to mock and refute the Marcionite and Gnostic disparagement of the body, particularly Christ's body. Medical details are infused particularly into Scriptural exegesis, supporting various arguments: the true prophecies about Christ, the impressive patience of Job, the dove-like purity of the Holy Spirit, the quiet prayers of Jonah, the dramatic cure of Moses' hand, and so on. Finally, medicine is crucial in proving the corporeality of the soul, which is united with the body from conception to complete death.²⁹² While rhetoric and Scripture remain the blood and brain of Tertullian's theology, medicine certainly provides a good deal of muscle.

Whether Tertullian can be deemed a schismatic, Stoic, chauvinist, relativist, Protestant, or Catholic may remain a matter of debate. However, there is almost no indication that he 'delighted exuberantly in famine and plague' as part of the 'Christian or Romantic glorification of disease'.²⁹³ And, quite against the idea that the early Christians 'hastened the decline of medicine',²⁹⁴ Tertullian lauded physicians more than his contemporaries and even preserved medical facts that they neglected. That Tertullian should subordinate medical theory to

²⁹⁰ See M. Dörnemann, *Krankheit und Heilung* (2003), 169-70.

²⁹¹ Obviously, a detailed look at the theological and rhetorical context and implications of each medical metaphor within each of Tertullian's works is beyond the scope of this paper. But I hope I have laid some foundation for such work in the future.

²⁹² Thus, it seems scarcely true that biological science is 'of no importance in a discussion of human nature' for Tertullian (G. L. Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God* [1979], 66).

²⁹³ V. Nutton, *Murders and Miracles* (1985), 45 and L. Edelstein, *Ancient Medicine* (1967), 387.

²⁹⁴ Victor Dawe, *The Attitude of the Ancient Church Toward Sickness and Healing* (Harvard Dissertation, 1955), 78, largely refuted by G. Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care* (2009).

theological argumentation is hardly surprising; that he would employ medical concepts as frequently and intelligently as he did is more so. As Tertullian was the most prolific Latin Father before Nicaea, and as he was the first Christian with substantial interest in medicine, a single article can scarcely do him justice. But, considering the dearth of scholarship on the topic, this initial investigation should be most welcome. What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem? What does science have to do with religion? Opinions vary widely. What does Tertullian have to do with medicine? A great deal indeed.

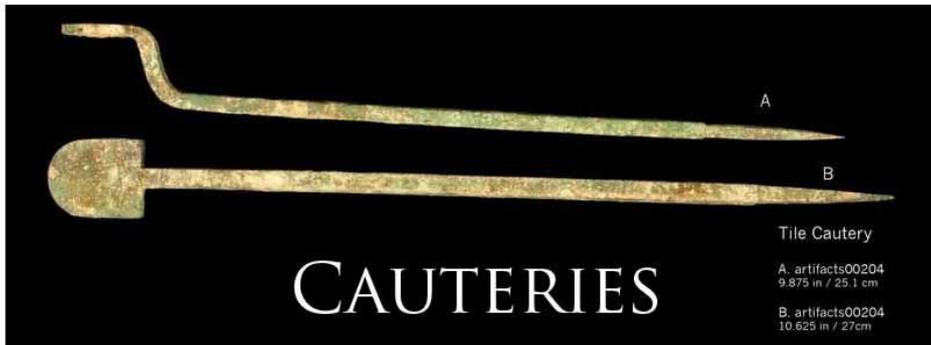
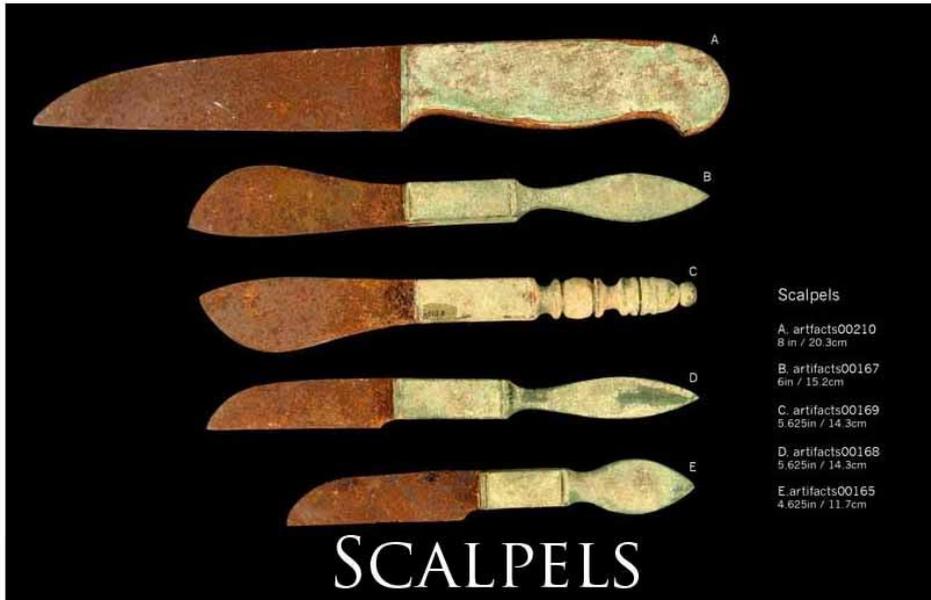


FIGURE 1: SPECULUM



Vaginal Speculum
artifacts00154
8.125 in / 20.6 cm

FIGURE 2: POSSIBLE ἔμβρουσφάκτην



Needle Probe
artifacts00207
11.875 in / 30.2 cm

FIGURE 3:
ANULOCUTLER

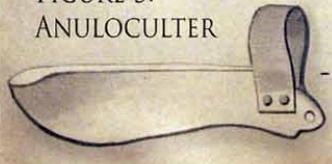


FIGURE 5A: ἔμβρουστόμος



FIGURE 5B: ἔμβρουστόμος

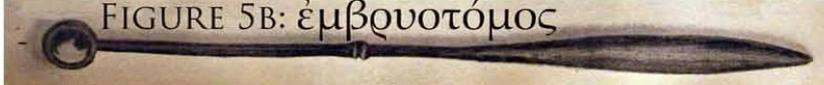


FIGURE 4: HOOKS



Obstetrical Hooks/Sharp Hooks
A. artifacts00196
11.875in / 30.2cm
B. artifacts00196
7in / 30.5cm

FIGURE 6: PURPORTED
ANULOCUTLER/DECAPITATOR



FIGURE 7: CELSUS' DECAPITATOR

