



Hereditary Diseases

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HG Bishop Serapion

Hereditary diseases are those which people are born with due to genetic disorders transmitted from their parents. There are many of these diseases such as some forms of diabetes mellitus, heart diseases, blood disorders, cancers, and immunodeficiency diseases.

These hereditary diseases are a big challenge to modern medicine. Medical research has been successful in diagnosing and identifying the responsible genes for many of the hereditary diseases. In addition, there has been great success in the treatment of many of them. For example, those who suffer from diabetes can be treated with insulin, diet, and exercise.

We need to distinguish between treatment and cure. For instance, diabetes mellitus is treatable, so that the diabetic does not suffer intolerably as long as he is on a certain medical regimen. While the illness is hereditary and treatable, the person needs to be medication compliant for life.

From the spiritual and pastoral aspects, hereditary diseases have a special importance. Those patients who suffer from these diseases are in need not only of

medical but also of spiritual care to help them endure the illness.

The parents of children who are born with these diseases suffer a lot of pain for their children. This requires extending the spiritual care to them to help them to cope. Here arises the question: What have these innocent children done to deserve this

suffering which they have inherited from their parents?

The human conscience becomes even more perplexed with regard to hereditary diseases especially when medicine has advanced and is able to diagnose and identify many of the hereditary diseases before birth. Hence the confusing question arises: Should there be abortion if the parents know that the fetus has hereditary disease, in compassion for the sibling and parents?

We have said and we say again that there should not be abortion even if we are sure of the diagnoses. This is because the fetus is a living being since the moment of fertilization. As we have no right to kill the baby after its birth should it be with hereditary disease, ir-



respective of its severity, because it is a living being, so we have no right to terminate the fetus's life in its mothers' womb, as it is also a living being.

As we cannot dispute the wisdom of God regarding babies born with hereditary diseases, then we have no right to interfere by using human methods and act against God's will if God permits us to discover the hereditary disease before birth.

In the same way as children suffering from hereditary diseases prompted medical researchers and doctors to work hard to specify these diseases and find ways for their treatment, also if we do not kill these fetuses, this will prompt the medical researchers and doctors to find treatment for these illnesses.

Until the middle of May 1993, the maximum medicine attained with regard to hereditary diseases was the early discovery and the treatment of some of these diseases. Beginning in May 1993 until present genetic engineering is being used and improved to cure children suffering from hereditary diseases such as immunodeficiency diseases.

The amazing medical achievements of

today led me to meditate upon the spiritual meaning of such accomplishments:

1. It is a message of hope for cure for those with hereditary diseases.
2. It led to the thought of children with hereditary diseases such as those of immunodeficiency diseases that were detected in the womb being cured at one day and three days old. What would have happened ✱ their parents had resorted to human methods?

