

1st September 2024

Inoculation

“The controlling of modern disease is being handled by modern medicine primarily in three ways: through the science of sanitation, through preventive medicine, and through inoculation.”

Alice Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (1953)

Having reached seventy-five, I got a letter from the NHS inviting me to get my “free respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine.” The letter continued:

The RSV vaccine is being introduced in Scotland from August 2024. RSV is a common respiratory virus. Cases peak every winter, although can occur at any time of the year. It can be serious for people aged 75 and over.

So, I am now inoculated against RSV, thanks to the NHS. Job done!

But is it? Inoculations are never 100% effective. There could be an adverse reaction to the vaccine itself, of course, and I was given a booklet explaining all of that. But I also might be the one in several thousand who *still* contracts RSV, despite the vaccination. Such is the way of things.

It's worth pondering Alice Bailey's assertion from the 1950s. Alongside inoculation, there's the importance of good sanitation and preventive medicine. You can have the most effective vaccines in the world, but if the environment isn't right, and you don't take personal responsibility for prevention, then you open yourself to a greater risk.

So I got to thinking, and recalled baptising a baby years ago, from a family who didn't come to church much, but who wanted to “get the bairn done.” I worked hard with the parents on the meaning of baptism and some Christian teaching. But I doubted the effectiveness of that, when, after the service, the baby's father said, “Well, that's the wee one had her divine inoculation!” Here was the expectation that baptism, this “divine inoculation”, would be enough for the child to live by – for ever! But where was the right environment? Where was the parental responsibility?

If we believe that faith at any level – from infant baptism to adult confirmation – is the be-all-and-end-all of good living, and that being “inoculated” by God needs nothing further, we are in trouble. Aren't the “sanitation” of an environment and the “preventative medicine” of righteous living not equally important? After all, even aged seventy-five, I can't expect the RSV vaccine to keep me safe from *everything*, can I?

A prayer for today

All in your hands, Lord, or some of it in mine? Ah, I know. We're in it together!

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