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Prayer

AND

The Healing of Disease

W. S. Plumer Bryan

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PRAYER

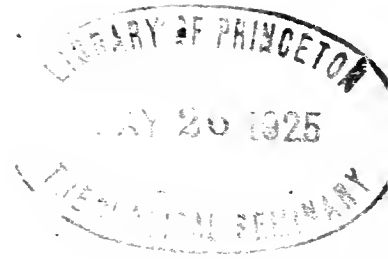
AND

THE HEALING OF DISEASE

BY

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Preface.

A recent series of studies of the Christian doctrine of prayer included these special themes:

The Prayer-Hearer.

Unanswered Prayer.

The Praying Son and the Model Prayer.

Prayer and the Healing of Disease.

The Triumphs of Prayer.

The following pages contain the fourth of these studies. It is submitted to the Christian public because of the deep solicitude awakened in many of our churches and communities by the loud claims to supernatural power put forth by men who cast themselves athwart the faith of the Church Universal. How deep that solicitude is will be appreciated in every circle in which one of these claimants has succeeded in attracting attention to himself; how groundless it is, I have endeavored in these pages to show.

Some of the most palpable *omissa* are dealt with in the unpublished studies; but some are left untouched altogether. The sacrifice of completeness has been made upon the altar of conciseness. The reader must judge whether the altar justifies the sacrifice.

The Church of the Covenant,
Chicago, March, 1896.

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In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die and not live. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, saying: I beseech Thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying: Turn again, and tell Hezekiah, the captain of My people, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David, thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up into the house of the Lord. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. And Isaiah said: Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. II. KINGS, xx: 1-7.

Prayer and the Healing of Disease.

Hezekiah, the king of Judah, in the times of Isaiah the prophet, was a man of prayer, and his prayers were not for himself alone, but for the people over whom he ruled. He was also a man of action with a serious view of life, and it was the great desire of his heart to carry out certain plans for the relief of his people and for the honor of God. But he was also a man subject to physical infirmity. At the age of thirty, when he had no heir to leave upon his throne and his work of reform was scarcely begun, he was taken sick. A carbuncle or imposthume began to form and with it came a message from God through Isaiah, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live."

We who live in the bright light of Christian immortality would be depressed by such a warning coming at such a time, and we can understand why Hezekiah turned his face to the

wall and wept sore, praying that his life be spared. His prayer reached the ear of God and Isaiah brought him the answer: "I have heard thy prayer; I have seen thy tears; behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years." At Isaiah's command, the attendants took a cake of figs and laid it upon the boil, and Hezekiah recovered; and his psalm of thanksgiving is recorded at length in these prophecies of Isaiah.

The Cure of Hezekiah.

This is but one instance among many reported in Scripture of the efficacy of prayer in the healing of disease; and it illustrates the well-nigh universal faith of Christian people upon this subject. In that faith they hold:

First, that God hears prayers for healing as for other blessings. One of his names is Jehovah-Rophi—the Lord our Healer, and the healing is not merely spiritual but includes the body, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost. The Prayer-Hearer listens to every item in that long catalogue of wants which His people pour continually into His ear. That ear catches the petition for deliverance from pain as quickly as the petition for deliverance from sin. When the Praying Son taught us to pray "Give us this day our daily bread," He must have intended us to include the body into which that

bread is to be received, for what good would bread do to one whose physical condition was such that he could not eat? We ought therefore to pray, Give us our health day by day. He who gives us the bread gives also the health, each in its own measure and according to His holy will. He who has power over the earth that it may bring forth seed to the sower and bread to the eater, has power also over the body and its ailments and infirmities. Every age of the Church, both before the time of Hezekiah and after, both in the days of Christ and up to the present day, has been full of instances in which God has heard prayer and has raised up His children from the verge of the grave. Thousands are living to-day in answer to prayer, and thousands more are full of gratitude to the prayer-hearing God who has heard their prayers for the life and health of those dear to them. To all such it is passing strange that one can doubt this precious truth, and they are filled with amazement when they are themselves reproached with unbelief in it, because they refuse credence to some passing claimant of divine authority and supernatural power. Yet for the sake of others it is need-

ful that we confess our faith anew in this fundamental truth and examine soberly in the light of Scripture the claims of these who, from their different standpoints, assail the faith of the Church.

Second, that God's answers to prayers for healing ordinarily come, as His answers for other blessings ordinarily do, through the natural order. He is not bound down to means. He could have healed Hezekiah by a word without the medicinal agency of the lump of figs, even as He has healed many others by the naked exercise of divine power. But what God can do is some times a different question from what He does. In the case of Hezekiah, God put His blessing upon the established remedial agency of the time, a lump of figs, which hastened the rising of the swelling and thus brought the process of mattering to its conclusion. Under God's blessing upon this remedy the royal patient recovered. This remedy, so effective in Hezekiah's case, was recognized by medical authorities in the times

of Dioscorides, Pliny and St. Jerome, and it is highly esteemed by medical authorities to-day.

The divine method in the case of Hezekiah showed not only that God works through means, but also that He uses the means which are at hand in the provisions of nature, and as the result of human experiment. Naaman the Syrian, and the man born blind in the days of Christ, are both instances of God's blessing upon means. Naaman was only healed of his leprosy when, at the command of Elisha, he washed in the river Jordan seven times. The man born blind only began to see after his eyes had been anointed by Jesus with clay made of spittle and he had washed in the Pool of Siloam. But in neither of these cases was a recognized remedial agency used, so that the cure of Hezekiah stands forth as reflecting the divine blessing upon those medicinal preparations which experience has shown to be effective. It is not disbelief, therefore, to use these preparations. It is rather sinful presumption to refuse or to neglect them. One might as well refuse to eat, expecting that God would miraculously sustain his life; or to study, expecting that God would miraculously endow him with learn-

ing; or to work and to save, expecting that God would miraculously endow him with wealth, as refuse the means appointed for the maintenance and recovery of health, expecting that God will honor our daring presumption in defying that order of nature which His own wisdom has appointed.

Third, that Hezekiah's recovery shows that health is not the highest blessing which man can have. In his case, recovery was most unfortunate; for the moral catastrophe of his life occurred after it and largely in consequence of it. Had he died when the summons was sent him first, his record as a sincere and consistent servant of God so far as we have it would have been unblemished; but during the fifteen years which, in answer to prayer, God had added to his life, his heart was lifted up in pride and self-glory. He entered into alliance with Merodach-baladan, king of Babylon, and received his presents and rendered not unto God for the benefits which God had done him. His

sin brought its doom in the captivity of his people, and there was wrath upon him and upon Judah and upon Jerusalem. Though the captivity was postponed until after his death, yet death to him must have been bitter indeed, for it was clouded with the consciousness that his own pride had brought ruin upon the people whom he loved and whom he sought to serve.

Sickness and death in the Christian view are not the greatest evils one can undergo. Out of them have come some of God's richest blessings. The man that was born blind, through no sin of his own nor through any sin of his parents, could look back, after he had been healed, upon his years of darkness with rejoicing, and see wherein by his darkness God had been glorified. The man who had an infirmity for thirty-eight years, and who year after year lay at the pool of Bethesda, hoping in vain that he might reach the pool, could look back upon those thirty-eight weary years without regret after he had been given sight by the Lord Jesus. Lazarus, when dying, doubtless felt grieved, as his sisters certainly did, that his Friend and Lord had not come to save

him from the bitterness of death. And yet when after four days that Lord raised him from the dead, how glad they were that He and not they had ordered the issue of the sickness! They saw then that the glory of God shines even through death. Paul's thorn in the flesh, which probably was some physical infirmity, called forth from him three earnest prayers for relief, none of which were answered; but that thorn became a blessing, even while it rankled, in that it brought with it the promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And the reverent reply of the sorely-afflicted apostle separates him from the modern claimants to supernatural power in the healing of disease, for, instead of making a clamorous demand that the thorn be removed, he patiently submitted to the divine will and said, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." The power of Christ! this was his great desire and the thorn that brought it was a blessing in disguise.

The Christian life is something more than physical health. Prayer has a higher and

nobler purpose than mere freedom from pain. Some of the brightest lights in the kingdom of God have for years been never free from pain. Their prayers for health, like Paul's, have not been answered; but God has given them something better than physical health, and they have been willing patiently to submit to His will. Sickness is not a mark of the divine displeasure. Death to the Christian is not a bugbear. The grave has been entered by One who as He lay in it spoiled its victory. He has made it the entrance-way to the heavenly home and the eternal glory. These comforting truths are in marked contrast with the teachings of some who assume to speak by divine authority, and they show how far astray these teachers are. To the sick and the dying and the bereaved the Scripture comes soothingly. The anguish and horror occasioned by these claimants to divine authority prove that they are not sent by Him who does not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax.

These features of the cure of Hezekiah illustrate the Christian doctrine of prayer in its

relation to health. It expresses the faith of thousands of Christians who act upon it year after year, without ever questioning it. These are of many names and of various creeds, but they are all at one in their faith in the God who hears prayers for health as for all other blessings.

The Claimants to Supernatural Power.

The cure of Hezekiah is very unsatisfactory to different classes of men. There are those who do not believe in a personal God, or in the power of prayer; and for these reasons they reject the cure. There are others who believe in prayer for some things, but not for such a definite thing as health; and they also reject the cure. There are others who believe that God can do some things, but that the miraculous sign given from heaven to confirm this cure is too heavy a strain upon their faith; and they also reject the cure.

Our concern is with none of these, but with another class, many of whom believe in God and in His power and in the Holy Scripture; yet who find the cure of Hezekiah by the lump of figs a fact very damaging to their favorite theories. This class has very serious internal differences, but it is a class nevertheless. The various types all hold the belief that

physical health is always and everywhere God's will for us and that it is to be procured and maintained not by the use of remedial agencies but by various devices. As to what these devices are, they are in violent antagonism among themselves; but they all alike endeavor to perform cures by flouting the natural remedies and claiming a power and authority more or less supernatural.

This class is not confined to any one section nor yet to any one religion of the world. It appears, however, to thrive under the ample folds of the name of Christianity and in Christian countries its representatives claim the sanction of the religion of Jesus for their practices. The Mormons who call themselves the Latter-Day Saints in the seventh of their articles of faith claim the gift of healing, and their success in gathering converts is in part due to the exercise of this gift. Among the Roman Catholics holy persons and holy places are supposed to be able to work wonderful cures. Prince Hohenlohe, bishop of Sardica, who was born in 1794, began at the

age of twenty-six years to heal the sick. And Father Mathew was so successful in relieving pain that after his death multitudes visited his grave, many of whom were helped and left their crutches there. Every one has heard of the cures which were effected at the chapel of Knock, in Ireland, and at Lourdes, in France, where the Virgin Mary is believed to have revealed herself to a peasant girl in 1858, and of recent years in a chapel at Montreal, Canada. At all of these places the inevitable pile of crutches attests the faith of the pilgrims.

Within the last twenty years there has been another type. It is a body, or rather a series of bodies, known by the name of "Christian Science." These bodies do not dwell in peace with one another, and it is not just to attribute the views of one school to the members of another school; but the following statement of one of their teachers may be taken as substantially true of all the schools. "God is supreme; is mind; is principle, not personal; includes all, and is reflected by all that is eternal; is spirit, and spirit is infinite; is the

only substance; is the only life; man was and is the idea of God. Therefore, mind can never be in man; divine science shows that matter and mortal body are the illusions of human belief, which seem to appear and disappear to mortal sense alone. When this belief changes, as in dreams, the material body changes with it, going wherever we wish and becoming whatever we may decree. * * * Anatomy, physiology, treatises on health, sustained by what is termed 'material law,' are the husbandmen of sickness and disease. * * * Because the muscles of the blacksmith's arm are strongly developed, it does not follow that exercise did it, or that an arm less used must be fragile. * * * If you believed in inflamed or weak nerves, you are liable to an attack from that source. You call it neuralgia; but I call it illusion. * * * When treating the sick, first make your plea in behalf of harmony. * * * Then realize the absence of disease. * * * Use such powerful language as a congressman would employ to defeat the passage of an inhuman law."

This statement is not true of all types of

Christian Science. One holds that "it is not necessary to deny either the personality or the persistent individuality of the human spirit." This also adds, very sensibly, but in apparent violation of the doctrine of Christian Science, "It is not necessary to tell a man dying of consumption that he is not sick, for that is not true."*

Another type of these claimants to supernatural power is for the day represented in that mysterious individual, Schlatter, whose cures in the state of Colorado have been so widely published. A cousin of his is at this time operating in an adjacent state, while, in Chicago, a young man named Gregoriwitsch has been giving exhibitions of his curative powers.

The last type to be mentioned is made up

* For these quotations, as well as for many instances cited hereafter, I am indebted to Dr. J. M. Buckley, of New York, whose careful treatise on "Faith Healing, Christian Science and Kindred Phenomena," deals with these various claimants to supernatural power on grounds which are at once scientific, philosophical and Scriptural.

of men who have begun their careers as ministers of the Gospel, holding the evangelical faith. Their views upon God and Christ and the atonement do not vary greatly from those held in the Church Universal, but as soon as they pass beyond these fundamental themes, and undertake to deal with disease, they show that for practical purposes they must be classed along with those I have described above rather than with the great body of the Christian Church; and that a wall of partition divides them off from the Christian Church, which is higher and broader than any of the walls which divide the various branches of the Church of Christ from one another.

All the great centers of English and American life have representatives of this type of claimants. In London, an institution known as "Bethshan" reported wonderful cures a few years ago; "Old Orchard," Maine, has acquired a reputation second only to Lourdes or the chapel of Knock, by reason of the results of the efforts of a Boston representative of this type; in New York City, remarkable results are claimed in the "Homes" of the "Christian Alliance"; while Chicago has three or four

establishments under one control all of which are called "Zion's Tabernacles." This type is very careful about the title given to it, but its different representatives would perhaps all agree to be classed as practising "divine healing." A recent issue of one of the numerous publications of this type contains a statement of "God's way of healing," in which it is said that this is "a person and not a thing; that the Lord Jesus Christ is still the healer; and that 'divine healing' rests on Christ's atonement." Understood in their historic sense, these principles will be readily agreed to throughout the Christian world. The statement, however, proceeds to the very dangerous position that 'disease can never be God's will, that the gifts of healing are permanent, and that the four methods of "divine healing" are, the direct prayer of faith, the intercessory prayer of two or more, the anointing of elders with the prayer of faith, and the laying on of hands of those who believe and whom God has prepared and called to that ministry.'

These various types are all in the most violent antagonism. The "divine healer" just

quoted concludes his statement by denouncing as "diabolical" all of his rivals, viz.: "Christian Science, Mind-healing, Spiritualism and Trance-evangelism." These retaliate in like terms and "expose" the "divine healing" as a fraud and a humbug. Indeed, one need not go beyond this acute intestine controversy to find ample evidence on which to discredit these claimants one and all. They discredit one another far more effectively than one unversed in their peculiar methods could hope to do.

This is true not only of the different types, but of the members of the same type. Dr. Buckley reports an experience of his with a somewhat famous Dr. N., who had healed a Dr. B. of a malignant disease, and had employed him as his amanuensis for a time. When, however, B. left N. and set up in opposition to him, N. instantly denounced him as an unmitigated fraud, who had no genuine healing power; and accounted for his cures on the ground that they were caused by the faith of the people and the concentration of their minds upon his operations, with the expectation of being cured. When he was asked, however, if it was not in this manner that he

performed his works, he said, "Oh, no; the difference between a genuine healer and a quack, like B., is as wide as the poles." This same N. was obliged to confess with regard to his daughter, whom he had taken to Havana, hoping the climate would benefit her, "It seems as if we can not always affect our own kindred."

Points of Likeness Among These Types.

In spite of all their differences, however, and their dissensions, it is quite possible to unify these different types into one class with well-defined characteristics. This has not been done to any large extent for the reason that it has been felt needful to deal with each type by itself. And, if the purpose in view were to reclaim to sane views of health and religion the believers in any one of these theories, it would be necessary patiently to deal with its peculiarities. Such a purpose, however worthy, is secondary to the larger purpose of protecting Christian people from the influence of these views, one and all. With this in view, the individual peculiarities may be passed by and attention fixed upon those points in which these various claims of supernatural power are at one. Among these are:

Their Rejection of Remedial Agencies.

They all confessedly stand together on this basis. Had any one of them been charged with the cure of Hezekiah, he would have waved away the lump of figs and proclaimed his ability to effect a cure by his own private method, which might be a prayer alone, or a manipulation of a handkerchief he had blessed, or a solemn gaze into empty space.

In this, they all alike array themselves against the divinely appointed order of the world. They make the healing of disease a process entirely out of harmony with other processes of nature. They wrench it out of relation to the ordinary methods of daily life. For every other end which these healers of disease may have in view, they are very ready to employ the means sanctioned by experience; but when suffering is to be relieved and disease is to be cured, they turn from the teachings of experience and from the remedial agencies which God has always blessed. In their contempt for these agencies they tear away, with great dramatic effect, the bandages which medical skill has wrapped around open wounds; they take the crutches of the cripple to hang

them as trophies upon their walls; and they excite the victim of sore disease until in his imagination he thinks himself well. These they point to as evidences that remedial agencies are valueless. God's law, they assert, is against human sickness, and sickness can be cured by bringing the patient into harmony with that law. Yet they deal in the rational way with human hunger and human poverty, which are as much "against" God's laws as human sickness. They do not refuse to eat the bread which God has graciously provided as the means of relieving hunger, nor do they decline the warm clothing which God has also provided as the means of protection against suffering. The use of means for the cure of disease involves no more unfaith in God than the use of means to promote the other ends of daily life, and none are more quick to employ all these means than these various claimants of supernatural power. They use means to advertise themselves such as books, periodicals and pamphlets, which they circulate by business methods, and with the most persistent energy. They use means to confirm themselves in their

powers by piling up their collections of crutches and bandages and splints, accumulating photographs of persons cured, with glowing testimonials as to the efficacy of the cure. They use the means of worldly support also, whether these come in the way of fixed fees, or of what some of them call "free will offerings for the Lord's work"; and these funds they invest in real estate and other substantial forms of security. In all of these particulars they are as shrewd and worldly-wise as the vendor of any patent medicine, or the merchant in any line of business. Their distrust of physicians, their contempt of nursing, and their defiance of the laws of medication constitute a solitary exception to their use of means in the prosecution of their work.

The identity of their cures. Their cures are often real. It is a waste of time and a sacrifice of sense to deny this. These cures include such diseases as paralysis, convulsions, tumors, spinal disease, rheumatism and neuralgia, with occasional instances of lost hearing or sight. Each type, of course, claims that its

cures are peculiar and distinctive; but an examination of these will show that one type possesses no advantage over any other. They cover the same range of diseases, and they accomplish about the same general result.

The influence which any one of these methods of healing acquires arises out of its success in fixing attention upon its own line of results to the exclusion of the results of its rivals. Each method develops in its disciples a very pronounced partizanship which leads them to discredit every other method, and to believe that it has about it something miraculous and hitherto unheard of. But if one will pass under review in succession the line of results presented by each of these methods, he will be struck by the likeness they sustain to one another and a common origin for them all will be suggested to him.

The character of their testimonials. The disciples, like the healers, are in most cases sincere men and women, who verily believe that their cures are due to miraculous agencies. Their testimonials accordingly express the

deep convictions of relief and gratitude which they feel that these agencies have been invoked in their behalf. It would be not only a waste of time, but a most ungracious task to question the sincerity with which these testimonials are written. Each type, of course, claims that its distinctive testimonials are invincible, and ought to produce conviction in the minds of all candid investigators. The difficulty with the testimony, however, is not that it fails to prove, but that it proves entirely too much. Christian scientists prove their claims by their testimonials and divine healers proves their claims by their testimonials, and Schlatter proves his claims by his testimonials. The testimony in any one case is quite as good as in any other; and when we have it all before us we are just as far from knowing which is the true and the only method of healing as we were at the beginning. Furthermore, this testimony simply puts these methods of healing on the same level with the various patent-medicines of which the world is so full. None of them can produce a richer or more varied or more wonderful series of testimonials than some of the time-honored patent-medicines.

Indeed, we might substitute in any of these testimonials as to healing the name of some patent-medicine, and find that it would read quite as well as a testimonial to the efficacy of the medicine. They are couched in the same extravagant language, and they recite the same marvelous cures, and express the same deathless gratitude to the particular agency to which they attribute their cure.

These points are sufficient to show wherein these different and antagonistic claimants to supernatural power in the healing of disease stand together, and wherein they may fairly be treated as belonging to one class.

Explanation of Their Cures.

That these cures are real ought to be freely conceded; that the explanations which the healers give of the cures are correct must be emphatically denied. It is a principle of sound philosophy as well as of true religion that while God is present in all His works, and His personal agency is in the world, the presumption is always that God acts in accordance with the laws which He has established. This presumption is overthrown only when those laws fail to account for the facts. It is a mark of barbaric superstition to invoke the divine agency at every point, and to inveigh against those who seek to inquire candidly and reverently into the truth of any claim to divine power. Upon this principle, the cures wrought by these healers must be carefully examined; and when so examined, it will be found that they are accounted for by:

The healing power of nature, technically called *vis medicatrix naturae*. All candid physicians confess that they rely more upon this than they do upon their own wisdom or their medicines; and they administer their medicines very often not to heal but to let nature heal. This healing power of nature is frequently exhibited in that dread disease, consumption. The late Prof. Austin Flint, of New York, in his clinical report on consumption, describes sixty-two cases in which an arrest of the disease took place. In seven of these cases the arrest took place without any special medical or hygienic treatment; and in four of the seven, recovery was complete. Prof. Bennett, of the Royal Infirmary, at Edinburgh, says that morbid anatomy has demonstrated that tuberculosis or consumption in the early state degenerates and becomes abortive, with extreme frequency, in the proportion of one-third to one-half of all the incurables who die over forty, and the *London Lancet* endorses this conclusion.

Before the claim to miraculous power in the cure of disease can be conceded to any or all of these healers, they must be able to show

that this healing power of nature has not been at work. This is illustrated in the case of a lad sadly afflicted with curvature of the spine. He was placed in a plaster cast and the healing process was, by the testimony of his physician, practically completed. Out of abundant caution the plaster cast was not removed at once; and, the lad becoming impatient, his friends placed him under the care of one of these healers, who at once broke the cast, ordered the lad to stand up and pronounced him cured by miraculous power. And the lad, with many of his friends, was firmly convinced that he was cured, not by the healing power of nature, but by the agency of the "divine healer." This healing power of nature is so entirely unknown to many credulous persons, that, if they come under the influence of any one of these methods of healing, and are benefited at all during that period, they are almost forced to concede its claims to miraculous power.

The power of concentrated attention, whether it be called faith or will power.

This is recognized in all medical practice. At the seige of Breda, in 1625, scurvy prevailed to such an extent that the Prince of Orange was about to capitulate. Three small bottles of medicine were given to each physician, which did not contain enough for the recovery of two patients; and it was oracularly announced that three or four drops from one of these vials was sufficient to impart a healing virtue to a gallon of liquor. The effect was astonishing. Many recovered quickly and perfectly; and men who had not moved their limbs for a month walked the streets in perfect health.

The efficacy of the touch of a king to cure scrofula is authenticated beyond question, says Dr. Buckley. Charles II. touched nearly a hundred thousand people. James, in one of his journeys, touched eight hundred persons. And when William III. refused to exercise this power, it brought upon him an avalanche of tears from parents of children who were suffering from this disease.

An eminent practitioner in this country reported several years ago his experiments in this direction. He was approached by a lady, a

devout Catholic, who needed treatment and desired to try the waters of Lourdes in France, which has been mentioned as one of the holy places at which cures were wrought. The physician told her—what was true—that he had a vial of that water, and that he was perfectly willing to give her some of it. But he asked her as a favor if she would try another water which he had found efficacious for various ailments, and which he called *Aqua Crotonis*. In New York this means common hydrant water. Not being versed in medical terms or in the sources of the water supply of the city, the lady consented to try the famous *Aqua Crotonis*. The practitioner took a bottle, labeled it *Aqua Crotonis*, put into it some of the water of Lourdes, and told the lady to use it for a week and report the results to him. She faithfully followed the directions, not knowing that it was the water of Lourdes she was using, and at the end of the week she reported to the doctor that the *Aqua Crotonis* had done her no good. The physician then labeled a bottle *Water of Lourdes*, put into it some common hydrant water and gave it to his very

devout patient. In a week she returned entirely restored by the efficacy of this wonderful water and confirmed in her faith in the healing power of the virgin of Lourdes.

Dr. Dixon, of Brooklyn, relates a case, for which, however, he does not vouch, in which this will power or imagination produced not life, but death. A criminal was under sentence of death, and some physicians obtained permission to try the effect of mind upon body. They informed the criminal that they were ordered to bleed him to death in his cell, and save him from the disgrace of a public execution. He readily consented and was blindfolded. The physician pierced his arm with a lance, and poured warm water over it from a basin so that the prisoner could distinctly hear the water drip, but could not see the nature of the wound. He received the impression that the dripping water was his life blood pouring out. After awhile one of the physicians said, "He will live five minutes," "four minutes," "three minutes," "two minutes," "one minute," "half a minute," "fifteen seconds," and when the time expired the man was dead.

If physicians were only willing to speak out they could tell of many prescriptions of rose water and bread pills, which are administered with a view not of affecting the physical condition, but simply the faith or will power of the patient. It is a perfectly legitimate method of treatment. And if these various types of healers were only willing to put themselves on a level with our physicians in their use of these devices, they would free themselves from the charge of imposture, in their use of powers which medical practice has always recognized, and at the same time render immense service to humanity.

Exaggerations of human testimony. There is no more unreliable witness than he who attempts to describe his own physical condition. His testimony is almost irresistibly in the line of his favorite belief. And when a cold-blooded and disinterested outsider passes upon this testimony he is forced, without any discredit to the sincerity of the witness, to reject the larger portion of it. This is even true of physicians themselves.

Not many years ago one died from what he supposed to be consumption. But the post-mortem examination showed that his lungs were perfectly sound, and that his death resulted from disease caused by the quantities of food and stimulants he had taken to ward off the disease. A famous female evangelist, whose cure has attracted great attention, refused to mention a surgical operation by which her friends know she was greatly benefited, because, she said, she did not wish to divert attention from the great work that God had really wrought in her.

When one definitely places himself under the influence of any one of these methods of healing, he is disposed very naturally to justify himself by justifying the method. Hence, his testimony is liable to error as to his condition previous to his cure, which he will present as most dangerous; as to the results of the cure, which he will take at the highest possible value; and as to his present state, which, if favorable, he will attribute to the continuing effects of the cure. Little credence can be given to the testimony of men exposed to such temptations as these.

The Silence as to Failures.—This is one of the saddest aspects of the work of these healers. They verge upon heartlessness as they vainly endeavor to explain away their failures and the relapses of their patients, for they visit the failure of their method upon the unfortunate victim of that method.

Lord Gardenstone, a learned Englishman, spent a great deal of time inquiring for those persons who had actually attested marvelous cures, and found that more than two-thirds of the number died very shortly after they had been cured. If the healers were as frank in their practice as our physicians are, we would be better able to estimate their results; but, with their avoidance of all reference to deaths, relapses and failures, it is impossible to give any opinion favorable to their methods, while the train of darkened homes and broken lives points to their gross incompetency, and to the baselessness of their claims.

The Difference Between These Cures and Miraculous Cures.

The fact of these cures has been admitted and an adequate explanation upon natural grounds has been advanced. It remains, however, to point out wherein the claim of special supernatural power, made on the ground of these cures, must be denied.

First. If these healers exercise supernatural power, our physicians are endowed with the same. It is, of course, easy for a healer to say that he does his works by the power of God, and that his opponents work by the power of the devil. But as each healer makes the same claim for himself, we are just as far from determining which is the work of God and which is the work of the devil as before we listened to their claims. The most effective *expose* of spiritualism is that given by prestidigitateurs like Hermann, who is able to duplicate the curious tricks of spiritualists, by sleight-of-

hand and without aid from the spirits. So when our physicians, many of them irreligious men, are able to parallel the cures wrought by the healers, it goes to show that the healer simply used the same natural forces which the physican used. The difference is that the physician confesses that it is but a natural force, while the healer claims some marvelous agency behind it. Sober-minded men who reverently recognize God's supernatural power in human life are not to be deterred from exposing shams by the fear of the charge of Atheism. They recall the admonition of the loving yet discriminating John, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

Second. These methods fail to accomplish cures which would require a supernatural or miraculous agency. There is not one instance upon record in which these healers gave sight to a man born blind nor one in which they have restored a limb which has been amputated, nor one in which they have

given an idiot his senses, or restored a lunatic to sanity, nor one in which they have raised the dead to life again. If they stood upon the basis of our ordinary medical practice, this would be no discredit to them. Every candid physician is free to confess the failure of his methods and the limitations which environ his processes. But it is different with one who claims supernatural power. There is no limit to divine power. There is nothing which the arm of God cannot do. And therefore if these healers be invested with divine power, they must accomplish results which cannot be explained upon natural grounds; and their failure to do so convicts them either of a wilful ignorance or else of the deepest insincerity. There is no escape from this dilemma.

Third. The miracles of Christ and the apostles as manifestations of divine power, stand out in clear contrast with the works of these healers. These miracles consisted in raising the dead such as Lazarus and the son of the widow of Nain, in restoring sight to men born blind, and hearing to the deaf.

The last miracle which our Lord wrought before his death was when Peter had drawn his sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. The great Physician simply touched the ear, and it was made whole as the other. We look in vain among modern healers for any parallel to these miracles.

Further, in Christ's miracles, there was no purpose of display, no collection of trophies, no angry denunciation of rivals, no jealousy, no bitterness, no rancor. His miracles were wrought for the purpose of establishing His claims in connection with the spiritual ends which He had in view. The gratification of curiosity, or even the relief of suffering were not in themselves sufficient to induce Him to exert this power. And besides all the miracles of Christ and His apostles were free from the suspicion of money-getting. When Simon Magus came to the apostles to purchase the gift of the Holy Ghost, they were horrified, and turned from him, saying, "Thy money perish with thee." Unfortunately the odor of money lingers strong around these modern healings. With the exception of the Colorado healer Schlatter, I know of no one

of them who refuses money, and none will tell the amounts which pass into their treasuries as so-called "free will offerings." What a contrast to the miracles of the Master! What a contrast also to the methods of the Christian Church which, while it lays upon its members the duty of maintaining God's ordinances; accounts for every cent received and explains every disbursement made!

Effect of These Claims.

The sad results which attend these various claims to healing are only too well known.

Error in itself is mischievous, and if I have correctly stated the case these various methods of healing are permeated with error. Neither a sound philosophy nor an established science nor a spiritual religion can tolerate any one of them. Christian science with its doctrine that that there is no such thing as disease, and the divine healer with his doctrine that disease can never be God's will, set themselves not only against the appointed forces of the intelligent and civilized world, but also against historic Christianity. As far as their views spread, just so far they do damage to the cause of civilization and Christianity. Phrases and prayers cannot conceal the dangerous heresies of these healers. They separate themselves alike from all branches of the Christian Church and from all the forces of our modern civilized life,

by a wall which can never be broken, save as they come to sane and wise views of health and religion.

The sufferings caused by the belief in these views are sometimes pathetic. When Bishop William Taylor, of Africa, was in the midst of his work, he had with him a young man who fanatically refused to take any medicine, and died a martyr to the superstition which he mistook for faith. The last entry he made in his diary was, "I haven't a fever but a weak feeling; but I take the promise, 'He giveth power to the faint,' and I do receive the fact." The testimony of his medical adviser is: "Charlie, your temperature is 105, and pulse 130; normal is 98; the dividing line between life and death is 103. You are now dying; it is only a question of time, and if you don't take something to break up this fever it will surely kill you." To which the poor misguided youth replied, "Well, then, I will die, for I won't take any medicine." And he died convinced that his faith in his theory of disease was faith in God Himself.

For sixty years or more there has lived not far away a woman whose life was full of the joy and sunshine of the Christian hope as that hope is expressed in the faith of the Methodist church. Jesus was her Saviour and her Lord, and her hope in Him led her to a consistent and useful life in her church. Within a few years she became afflicted with a dropsical affection, which medical skill found to be incurable. With that desperation which is willing to try anything, she put herself under the influence of a "divine healer," and went to his establishment for treatment. The usual creed was announced to her that disease can not be God's will, and that God is willing to heal every one who has faith enough, that true prayer leaves out "if it be possible,"* and expects immediate restoration, and that if she was not restored it was proof that she had not

* "There has arisen of late a professed teacher of "divine healing," who is said to urge his hearers that true prayer leaves out the "ifs." It is difficult to credit the statement concerning one who calls himself, even in a general way, a Christian. To him the agonies of Gethsemane must be meaningless, for the Son of God offered His unanswered prayer, "Oh, My Father, *if it be possible*, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done."—*From the Study on Unanswered Prayer.*

faith enough. The suffering disciple entered upon this fearful test. Day by day she prayed and watched, and as her disease grew worse, her fears arose, not for her physical health, but for her spiritual safety. She had never before doubted her acceptance in the Lord, but if her physical condition was an index to her spiritual state, what must her state be? The sunshine went out of her soul and she wandered in spiritual darkness, while day by day the cruel test was held over her head, "You can be healed if you have faith enough." Her mind began to give way and her friends insisted on removing her to her home. Within a few days after she was stricken with apoplexy, and to-day she lingers in great pain from her disease and with a mind enfeebled by the awful strain through which she passed. Her sun is going down in darkness, yet when the gracious Master whom she served for so many years gathers his distressed disciple to Himself He will show her that faith in Him is not to be tested by one's physical condition, but by the love and joy and reverence we feel for Him and by our readiness to suffer His righteous will.

The daily papers are full of cases in which parents have refused treatment to their children for diphtheria and scarlet fever and broken limbs, on the idea that they would be cured either by Christian Science or divine healing or some other miraculous method. Who can tell the length and depth of the misery caused by this defiance of the established laws of health?

These views make shipwreck of home, of fortune and of religion. Once possessed by any one of them, the claims of husband, wife, children, father, mother seem as naught; and the earthly tie established by God is broken up. Cases are frequent in which men and women literally have impoverished themselves in obedience to their teachers. One of them not long ago reported with great joy a collection taken up at a meeting in Maine, amounting to a hundred thousand dollars, for what was called foreign missions, when men and women fell over one another in their eagerness to give their money and jewels and even deeds conveying their real property. The

work of foreign missions must surely suffer from such perverted claims as these. But the worst shipwrecks are those which are wrought in the faith and in the religious life. The delusion can not last always, and the awakening is sometimes perilous. God and Christ have been so closely interwoven with the claims of the healer that when the healer is repudiated, there is imminent danger that God and Christ will in like manner be lost to that soul. From this catastrophe Christian teachers would save the deluded.

Our attitude towards these misguided men and women should be one of kindness and of patience. Many of them have been great sufferers, ready to lay hold of anything that promised relief. More of them still are ignorant men and women, untrained in the methods of real cure. It is impossible to argue with them, for the beliefs which they hold are beyond an intelligent statement. And it is generally impossible to break by reasoning the infatuation in which they are

held. We can only wait until they wake and strive as far as we may to shield them from the force of that awakening and to save them from making shipwreck of home, of fortune and of religion as well as of health.