

ARTICLE IV.

WHAT DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACH
ABOUT HEALING?

BY THE REVEREND FRANK FOX, D.D., SIOUX FALLS,
SOUTH DAKOTA.

INASMUCH as a number of religious sects have arisen in these last days claiming omnipotence for the curative powers of their systems, and each maintaining that his or her religion represents the true teaching of Jesus and the apostles, it behooves every Christian, and especially the regularly ordained leaders of our churches, to examine carefully the teaching of the New Testament on the subject of Healing.

The country is flooded with millions of tracts and booklets on this subject. But, so far as I have examined, one and all have the same defect—they present a biased and superficial view of this subject. Thousands of anxious inquiries are being made for the scriptural teaching about healing.

Since there are not more than a half-dozen noted cases of healing recorded in the entire Old Testament, and since it contains little or no teaching on the subject of healing that does not receive fuller amplification in the New, we can confine our examination to the New Testament.

It is not in the scope of this paper to discuss mental healing or the false philosophy of many modern healers; but by a careful examination of every passage in the New Testament which touches in any way on the subject of healing, to find what is the unquestioned teaching of the New Testament about healing.

For convenience our investigation may follow three lines:
1. The Practice of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels; 2. The Practice of the Apostles, as recorded in the Book of Acts; 3. The Teaching of the Epistles.

THE PRACTICE OF JESUS.

According to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus began his public Galilean preaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. In that service, Jesus, for the first time, healed a demoniac. From the synagogue service he went to Peter's home and there wrought his first cure of ordinary disease, by healing Peter's mother-in-law (Matt. viii. 14, 15; Mark i. 29-31; Luke iv. 38, 39). In the evening of the same day Jesus healed many sick at Peter's door (Matt. viii. 16, 17; Mark i. 32-34; Luke iv. 40, 41). From this time forward, physical healing occupied an important place in the ministry of Jesus. He toured Galilee, teaching, preaching, and healing (Matt. iv. 23-25; Mark i. 39). He healed the leper who came to him, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" (Matt. viii. 1-4; Mark i. 40-45; Luke v. 12-16). Returning to Capernaum, he healed the centurion's servant (Matt. viii. 5-13; Luke vii. 2-10).

Returning from across the sea, he healed the paralytic, saying, as he did so, "Son, be of good cheer: thy sins are forgiven" (Matt. ix. 1-8; Mark ii. 1-10; Luke v. 17-26). The thing that excited the most wonder and called forth the greatest comment was not the healing of the paralytic, but the statement of Jesus that the man's sins were forgiven. The healing seemed to have been performed for the purpose of illustrating and proving the doctrine of the forgiveness of sin.

He healed the man with the withered hand on the Sab-

bath, and shattered the Pharisaic ideals of the day, restoring the true spirit of the Sabbath (Matt. xii. 9-13; Mark iii. 1-6; Luke vi. 6-11). Later he healed a woman who had suffered from an infirmity eighteen years. This also was in the Sabbath synagogue service, and led to a sharp controversy (Luke xiii. 10-17). While dining in the house of a Pharisee on the Sabbath, seeing a man with the dropsy present, Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees present if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. They would not answer. Jesus healed the man, saying to his critics, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a well, and will not straightway draw him up on a Sabbath day?" (Luke xiv. 1-6). The healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda (John v. 1-10) and the opening of the eyes of the man who was born blind (John ix. 1-14) were both on the Sabbath. They were evidently performed for the purpose of teaching the duty of deeds of mercy at all times.

It is very significant that five of the most noted miracles of healing wrought by Jesus were on the Sabbath and in public places, calling forth the sharpest controversy, the final result being the complete shattering of the Pharisaic theories of the Sabbath. On his way to the house of Jairus, the woman who had suffered from an issue of blood for twelve years touched the hem of his garment and was healed. Jesus used the occasion to emphasize the power of faith, saying, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole" (Matt. ix. 20, 21; Mark v. 25-34; Luke viii. 43-48). About this same time two blind men came to Jesus, crying, "Have mercy on us, thou son of David." They followed him into the house, and he said to them, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" They answered, "Yea, Lord." "Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it done unto you" (Matt. ix.

27-31). Jesus said to blind Bartimæus of Jericho, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And straightway he received his sight, and followed him in the way" (Mark x. 46-52; Luke xviii. 35-43).

On other occasions compassion seemed to be the impelling motive in the healing work of Jesus. At Bethsaida they brought a blind man, beseeching him to touch him. Taking the blind man by the hand, he led him out of the village. When they were alone he restored the man's sight (Mark viii. 22-26). Matthew records the healing of two blind men by Jesus as he was leaving Jericho. These men cried, "Lord, have mercy on us." Jesus called them to him, saying, "What will ye that I should do unto you? They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. And Jesus, being moved with compassion, touched their eyes: and straightway they received their sight, and followed him" (Matt. xx. 29-34).

On several occasions friends brought diseased ones to Jesus, imploring his help. They brought one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech: "and they beseech him to lay his hand upon him." Taking him on one side, Jesus healed him (Matt. ix. 32, 33; Mark vii. 31-37; Luke xi. 14). They brought to him "one possessed with a demon, blind and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the dumb man spake and saw" (Matt. xii. 22, 23). Several times parents came to Jesus, imploring his help for their afflicted children (Matt. xvii. 14-20; Mark ix. 14-29; Luke ix. 31-42 and Matt. xv. 21-28; Mark vii. 24-30). Among these were the father of the epileptic boy at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration, and the Syrophenician mother.

Sometimes Jesus made healing the condition of obedience. Such was the case in the cure of the ten lepers whom he sent to show themselves to the priests. As they went in obedience

to his command they were cleansed (Luke xvii. 11-19). In the garden Jesus restored Malchus' ear, a rebuke to his unbelief and to the rashness of the disciple who struck him (Matt. xxvi. 51-56; Mark xiv. 46, 47; Luke xxii. 49-51; John xviii. 10, 11).

Besides these specific cases of healing recorded by the Synoptic Gospels, there are several general statements involving the cure of many sick persons at different times. Matthew twice speaks of Jesus' curing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Mark makes two statements of general cures after that evening when the sick of Capernaum were brought to Peter's door. Luke also refers to this general work of healing (Matt. iv. 23; ix. 35; Mark iii. 7-10; vi. 53-56; Luke vi. 19).

When Jesus landed at Gennesaret, as soon as the people knew who he was, they "ran around about that whole region, and began to carry about on their beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. And wheresoever he entered, into villages, or into cities, or into the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole" (Matt. xiv. 34-36; Mark vi. 53-56). At the foot of a mountain near the sea of Galilee, "there came unto him great multitudes, having with them the lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and they cast them down at his feet; and he healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb speaking, the maimed whole, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing: and they glorified the God of Israel" (Matt. xv. 29-31; Luke vi. 17, 18). He also healed many beyond the Jordan (Matt. xix. 1, 2). When the messengers of John came to Jesus it is recorded that "In that hour he cured many of

diseases and plagues and evil spirits; and on many that were blind he bestowed sight" (Matt. xi. 2-6; Luke vii. 21). In the last days of his ministry Jesus healed the blind and the lame in the temple (Matt. xxi. 14).

The charge to the twelve and to the seventy included healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing the lepers, and casting out demons (Matt. x. 1, 7, 8; Mark vi. 7-12; Luke ix. 1, 2; x. 1-11). When the multitude came to Jesus after the return of the twelve, "he had compassion on them, and healed their sick" (Luke ix. 11; Matt. xiv. 14). Certain women that had been healed followed Jesus and ministered to him (Luke viii. 1-3).

So bitter was the feeling in Nazareth against Jesus that he could do no mighty works, "save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them" (Mark vi. 1-6). Jesus said to the Pharisees, "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke v. 31).

When the Pharisees told Jesus that Herod would like to kill him, he told them to say to Herod, "Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am perfected" (Luke xiii. 32, 33). In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke x. 33-35), when the Samaritan "saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them *oil* and *wine*." Jesus said to the people of Nazareth, "Doubtless ye will say unto me this parable, Physician, heal thyself" (Luke iv. 23-27). In addition to the foregoing, we may append the healing of the Gerasene and the three recorded cases where Jesus raised the dead (Matt. viii. 28-34; Mark v. 1-20; Luke viii. 26-39; Matt. ix. 18-26; Mark v. 21-23, 35-43; Luke viii. 41, 42, 49, 56; vii. 11-16; John xi. 1-46).

There is a shock of surprise to the student to find that the Gospel of John, the last written and the one giving the fullest proof of the divinity of Christ, should say the least of all the Gospels about his works of healing. There are only three specific cases of healing recorded by John, and a few shadowy references to signs which may be inferred as acts of healing. John emphasizes the fact that Jesus wrought his signs and miracles solely to lead men to believe that he was the Son of God sent to redeem the world. "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, during the feast, many believed on his name, beholding his signs which he did" (John ii. 23). Nicodemus came to Jesus, saying, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him" (iii. 2). Jesus took no apparent notice of what Nicodemus said about the signs, but declared at once the necessity of the new birth. He said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life" (iii. 14). He said to the nobleman who asked him to heal his son, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe" (iv. 48). "And a great multitude followed him, because they beheld the signs which he did on them that were sick" (vi. 2). "But of the multitude many believed on him; and they said, When the Christ shall come, will he do more signs than those which this man hath done?" (vii. 31). Referring to Jesus' work in Peræa, John says, "Many came unto him, and they said, John indeed did no sign: but all things whatsoever John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him there" (x. 40-42).

After the resurrection of Lazarus (xi. 45-47), many Jews who saw it believed. The chief priests and Pharisees said to the council, "This man doeth many signs. If we let him thus

alone, all men will believe on him." Again, just before the crucifixion, John says, "Though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him" (xii. 37-40).

Besides these general references to the healing work of Jesus, John records the following specific cures: The healing of the nobleman's son, with the very significant conclusion, "and himself believed, and his whole house" (iv. 46-53). At the beginning of the interview with this nobleman, Jesus said, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe." The purpose of Jesus in healing the child was that the household might believe. After healing the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda (v. 1-17), Jesus said unto him, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee." After the Jewish authorities cast out the man whose eyes Jesus had opened (ix. 1-7), Jesus, finding him, said, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him" (ver. 35-38).

THE PRACTICE OF THE APOSTLES.

The book of Acts is the most instructive book in the New Testament on the subject of healing. In it we see how the men who had been with Jesus throughout his entire ministry applied his teaching under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. From their practice and teaching we may learn how they interpreted the teaching of Jesus on this subject.

In the upper room (John xiv. 12) Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father." If healing was the great work of Jesus, then we

should expect the apostles to perform more and mightier works of healing than Jesus did.

The ministry of the apostles recorded in the book of Acts covers a period of time more than ten times as long as that covered by the ministry of Jesus. The ministry of Jesus was confined to the province of Palestine, a territory embracing not more than 12,000 square miles, while the apostles in their ministry covered a territory probably 150 times as great. Jesus preached in the villages and rural districts. Probably Jerusalem and Capernaum were the only places where he preached which could properly be called cities. The apostles labored in Cæsarea, Antioch, Ephesus, Athens, Corinth, and Rome. Where Jesus met thousands they met millions. Remembering the much greater length of time covered by the ministry of the apostles as recorded in Acts and the greater extent of territory covered by their labors, the record of healing in the Gospels should be greatly eclipsed by this record of the deeds of the apostles. But such is not the case. The records of healing in Acts are very meager. All of the specific cases of healing and most of the general are connected with the ministry of Peter and Paul.

In the ministry of Peter there are two specific cases of healing and one of raising the dead. The healing of the lame beggar at the Beautiful gate of the temple (Acts iii. 1-21; iv. 5-31), and Æneas at Lydda (ix. 32-35), covers the specific cases of healing by Peter. The raising of Dorcas from the dead may be added to the list (ix. 36-42).

There are also the following general statements: "And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles" (ii. 43); "Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women; inso-much that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and

laid them on beds and couches, that, as Peter came by, at the least his shadow might overshadow some of them" (v. 14, 15). They brought the sick from the surrounding cities, "and they were healed every one" (ver. 16).

It is said that Stephen, "full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people" (vi. 8).

Seemingly the false work of Simon Magus made it necessary that Philip should exercise healing power in Samaria. Evidently the greater work than healing was the converting and regeneration of the Holy Spirit.

In the ministry of Paul three specific cases of healing are recorded. On his first missionary journey he spent about two years. He traveled the length of Cyprus and through a considerable portion of Asia Minor, preaching in Perga and Antioch in Pisidia, from which city they were driven and shook off the dust of their feet against it. In Iconium, where the Jews stirred up opposition to their work, it is recorded, "Long time therefore they tarried there, speaking boldly in the Lord, who bare witness unto the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (xiv. 3). At Lystra Paul healed a lame man, which is the only specific case of healing performed, so far as the record shows, during the first missionary journey. This was after he had been driven out of two cities.

We read that many believed wherever they preached; but nothing is said about healing, except at Lystra and the shadowy reference at Iconium. In reporting the work of this journey to the council at Jerusalem, Barnabas and Paul rehearsed "what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles through them." This undoubtedly refers to conversions rather than to works of healing.

Though the second missionary journey covered a period

of three years there is not a solitary case of healing mentioned, except that of the demented girl at Philippi (xvi. 16-18).

The third missionary journey covered a period of about four years. We are told that God wrought special miracles in Ephesus by the hands of Paul. These were evidently needed to confirm his work (xix. 11-20) in the city of Diana's temple and worship. On the return journey, while Paul was preaching at Troas, the young man Eutychus went to sleep, and fell from the third-story window to the pavement, and was taken up dead. "And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Make ye no ado; for his life is in him" (xx. 9-12).

On the journey to Rome, when Paul's ship was wrecked on the island of Malta, he suffered no harm from the bite of the viper that fastened on his hand. He prayed, and laid his hands on the father of Publius, and healed him. He also cured many that had diseases (xxviii. 1-10). The concluding verses in Acts give us a glimpse of the character of Paul's work in Rome for at least two years (xxviii. 25-31). There is no record of a single case of physical healing during that time. The words "should heal them" refer solely to spiritual healing.

THE TEACHING OF THE EPISTLES.

1. In the two Epistles bearing the name of Peter there is not one word about physical healing. The word "heal" occurs just once (1 Pet. ii. 24), "by whose stripes ye were healed." It is somewhat remarkable that the apostle who was with Jesus from the Jordan to Calvary should not have one word to say in his Epistles about healing.

2. In only one place in his thirteen Epistles does Paul men-

tion physical healing, and that is only an incidental reference (1 Cor. xii. 9, 28, 30). In speaking of the gifts of the Spirit Paul says: "To another gifts of healing, in the one Spirit"; "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, divers kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all gifts of healing?"

3. Healing is not mentioned in the Epistles of John. In Rev. xiii. 2, 12, the death stroke of the beast was healed, and in xii. 2, "the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." These two references, neither of which refers to physical healing, are the only places where John uses the word "heal" in his three Epistles and in Revelation.

4. In Hebrews there is no reference to physical healing. The only place where physical healing is mentioned is in xii. 12, 13, where the writer says, "Make straight paths for your feet, that that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed."

5. Of the twenty-two Epistles from the pens of the apostles, James alone furnishes a direct and definite statement about healing (v. 14-16). The sick man is directed to "call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, having anointed him with oil in the name of the Lord." The anointing with oil, which represented the known remedies of that age, preceded the prayers of the elders, "The prayer of faith shall save him that is sick," etc. Only under the guidance of the Holy Spirit can men offer "the prayer of faith." The Spirit reveals to men the will of God. Only on such conditions can men offer the prayer of faith.

In conclusion let us note the following facts:—

1. The concluding verses of Mark's Gospel contain the

only statement about healing found in the final commission of Jesus to his followers (xvi. 17, 18). It is a well-known fact that many scholars reject verses 9-20 in the last chapter of the Gospel of Mark as being an addition by a later hand. If this is true, Jesus, in his final charge to his followers to evangelize the world, gave them not a single sentence about healing. Read carefully Matt. xxviii. 16-20; Luke xxiv. 44-49; John xxi. 15-23; Acts i. 4-8. If healing was to play any prominent part in the evangelization of the world, its omission from the final commission is very remarkable.

2. In concluding the study of this subject in the Gospel of John a few facts are worthy of emphasis. When the multitude said to Jesus (John vi. 28), "What must we do that we may work the works of God," Jesus answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Not healing but believing is the work of God. In x. 11 Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep," not heals them. In xii. 37 we read, "But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him." Remarkable examples of healing rarely produce remarkable spiritual results. Again, proof of discipleship is not in the possession of healing powers, but in love of the brethren (xiii. 34, 35). "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." In promising the Spirit Jesus said, "He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (xiv. 26); "He shall bear witness of me" (xv. 26); "And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and righteousness, and of judgment" (xvi. 8); "He shall declare unto you the things that are to come"

(xvi. 13). Nowhere does Jesus say that the Holy Spirit would give them power to heal. In fact, in only one passage in the New Testament is the gift of the Spirit associated with healing (1 Cor. xii. 9), "To another gifts of healing, in the one Spirit." The Holy Spirit helps men to live holy lives, and to bear witness to Christ. John gives us a very clear statement as to the object of the signs and wonders which Jesus wrought, and it is evident that the power given to the apostles was for that purpose, and no other: "These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: And that believing ye may have life in his name" (xx. 30, 31).

3. From the study of this subject in Acts the following facts deserve emphasis: In Acts i. 8 the power of the Spirit was pledged to enable the disciples to witness for Christ. When the Spirit came upon them they spoke with other tongues, proving that the purpose of the power of the Spirit was to secure effective witnessing to Christ (ii. 4). Peter's answer to the conscience-smitten crowd in Jerusalem confirms the foregoing conclusion (ii. 37-42). In ii. 43-47 we read of charity and worship, but not one word about healing as among the activities of the apostles. After healing the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple, Peter said to the astonished crowd, "Repent ye therefore, and turn again that your sins may be blotted out" (iii. 19). Acts iv. 33, "With great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all." When the angel released the apostles from prison he said, "Go ye, and stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life" (v. 20). When taken from the temple before the council Peter said, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus. . . . Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel

and remission of sins" (v. 29-32). After Paul's conversion, and the great wave of persecution that had scattered the church had spent its force, it is recorded that "the church throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, was multiplied" (ix. 31). In Peter's discourse to Cornelius and his friends we have the epitome of the gospel when he says, Jesus "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." It is evident that Peter had in mind not the healing of physical ailments but the healing of the hurt of sin (x. 34-48). There is also a similar instructive note about the work of those dispersed after the martyrdom of Stephen. They "travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none, save only to Jews. . . . When they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord" (xi. 19-21). Apparently these men said nothing about healing, but put all the emphasis on believing. When Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch at the conclusion of their first missionary journey, they, in their report to the church, said God had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. Though Paul labored a year and six months in Corinth there is not one word mentioned about healing. His farewell to the Ephesian elders does not mention healing as one of his noteworthy works in that city. He reminds them of his "serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears." He says, "I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable." "I am pure from the blood of all men. For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God." "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy

Spirit hath made you bishops to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood." "And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified." If physical healing occupied any important place in the teaching and ministry of the great apostle, its omission here and elsewhere is incomprehensible.

4. There are a few instructive inferences that may be drawn from four passages in the Epistles of Paul. In Gal. iv. 13 he says, "Ye know that because of an infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you the first time." In Phil. ii. 26, 27, we learn that the Philippians were sore troubled over the severe sickness of Epaphroditus in Rome. Paul himself seems to have been greatly concerned about his recovery. In 1 Tim. v. 23 Paul says to Timothy, "Be no longer a drinker of water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." In 2 Tim. iv. 20, Paul says, "Trophimus I left at Miletus sick." Luke the beloved physician was Paul's companion for years. Paul, who received his gospel direct from his Lord, had his plans modified by an infirmity of the flesh and suffered great anxiety because of the sickness of his friends. Not one of the apostles laid any emphasis on healing. They regarded healing not as first but as of fourth rate importance.

Neither the teaching nor the practice of the modern so-called divine healer has any support in the New Testament. For nineteen centuries, wherever the gospel has been preached, scientific sanitation, skilful surgery, and medical missions have been ministering to the health of humanity. But these, like the charities of the church, are secondary and not the main mission of Christianity, which is to heal the soul from the hurt of sin.