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Christ's Ministry to the Sick

(A paper read at the Rochester Clergy Conference-Retreat,
September, 1953)

BY THE REV. F. D. COGGAN, D.D.

THE place that this particular paper has been given in the programme of this Conference Retreat indicates (as did his letter of invitation to me to read the paper) that the Bishop of Rochester's intention is that we should consider together the life and teaching of Jesus with reference to the sick, and that this should be the basis for our subsequent thought and study. Indeed it is the only place to begin. If we believe that Jesus founded the Church, and commissioned that Church, which is His body, to fulfil a work in God's world, then at once the question arises: "What is the nature of that work in a world which is patently and pathetically sick?" That is not an easy question to answer, for it brings us face to face with ultimate problems of extraordinary complexity. But it is, nevertheless, a question which must be faced seriously and realistically; and it is one which calls for our withdrawal into Conference from time to time, lest we become thoughtless robots, doing a round of 'duties', but evading that real grappling with sin and sickness to which we have been commissioned by our baptism, by our confirmation and by our ordination.

"Ultimate problems"—I said. A whole series of them rises up before us, whenever we face the question of man's sickness. Evil—whence? Evil—how cured? What is the relation of suffering to sin? Can we say that all suffering is contrary to the mind and will of God? What is the relation of faith to the cure of suffering? Can we simply say: "Given enough faith, we may expect healing?"—or is that too facile an answer to a tantalizing question? What do we mean by wholeness? For what does the Church pray, when it petitions God, every morning and evening, in the words "Grant us Thy *salvation*"?

The lecturer makes no pretence at having easy answers to any of these questions! The man who steps jauntily in the thorny patch of ground that deals with these problems may soon find himself pretty badly pricked. It is probably true to say that the greater one's experience of life, and the more one has thought about man's radical sickness, the less is one inclined to dogmatize about solutions. But that is not to say that the Christian, and still less we Christian preachers and teachers, goes through this life (to use the modern jargon) 'clueless'. Far from it. We are the children of a Faith which believes in a God Who speaks, Who discloses His Nature, Who is both Creator and Redeemer, and Who has "visited and redeemed His people". You remember Robert Browning in *The Ring and The Book*:

"God stooping shows sufficient of His light
For us i' the dark to rise by. And I rise."

We are not, please God, *blind* guides of the blind.

So we go to our task, under no illusion that we have all the answers, but equally under no illusion that God has left us in unrelieved darkness in regard to human sickness. And so we go to the Christ Who said, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life". (The juxta-position of these two concepts, *light* and *life*, might well interest any modern scientist or doctor who would appreciate the close connection between the two. But that is by the way.) We cannot, however, profitably go straight to the Gospels, for the Lord, whose teaching is there recorded, cannot be understood except against the background of that people of whom, according to the flesh, He was a son. It is true, on the one hand, that He rejected much of the teaching of those who had gone before Him. He threw over, for example, *in toto*, the elaborate doctrine of merit which had grown up and was growing up among His people. He gave no support to the crudities which a certain school of thought among the Jews perpetrated in regard to the doctrine of the after-life. In matters of teaching such as these He showed a sturdy independence. But on the other hand, it was His delight to take the best of the heritage of His nation's prophets and teachers, and, purging and re-fashioning it in the crucible of His creative mind, to make it the vehicle of His own distinctive thought. Thus, such concepts as the Kingdom of God, the Fatherhood of God, the Son of Man, are not new with the coming of Jesus. They are well-worn phrases of Jewish religious thought. But in each of the cases I have mentioned,

In His hand the thing became a trumpet
Whence He blew soul-animating strains.

It is so with the cycle of ideas which includes such words as "Salvation" and "Peace". Let us stop here for a moment, for it may well be that we shall only understand the teaching and work of Jesus against the background of these formative ideas.

"Thou shalt call His name *Jesus*, for He shall *save* His people from their sins." That was the message of God to Joseph before the birth of the Christ Child. Here was an idea whose roots went deep down into Jewish soil. Jesus—Joshua—deliverance *from* and *to*. . . . The Name which is above every name is derived from a Hebrew root that denotes "to be spacious". Of this, Dr. F. W. Dillistone writes in a recent book (*Jesus and His Cross*, p. 22): "He is Jesus, Saviour, because He brings men out into a new spaciousness in every sense of the term. He breaks through the false securities and shams and compensatory oppressions of human life in order that he may lead his new race out into the place of light and growth and expansion and enlargement. 'Salvation' means life at its highest level of experience. It means freedom from the cramping and confining limitations both of the world's prejudices and of our own timidities. The Hero-Saviour has won the decisive victory and thereby has brought near to man 'the glorious liberty of the children of God'". This is germane to our subject. Jesus—deliverance—growth—enlargement—spaciousness. This can hardly be dismissed as irrelevant to an age terribly concerned with 'repressions' and inhibitions and complexes. When Tyndale makes Christ say to Zacchaeus, "This

day is *health* come to thy house" (where the A.V. says 'salvation' St. Luke 19. 9 σωτηρία—ישועה) his translation spoke deeper than he knew, and made luminous the deep interest of Christ, for true health is impossible apart from God. At some such point as this, deep down in the Person and very Name of the Redeemer, must we make our beginning in any study of Christ's Ministry to the sick.

Or again, we take the idea of *peace*, a word frequently on the lips of Jesus. True, "peace be to you" or "go in peace" were ordinary Eastern greetings in His day as in ours. But on His lips the greeting was more than a greeting. It was a potent benediction. When Jesus said to the woman who was a sinner (St. Luke 7. 50): "Thy faith has brought you liberation, health (σέσωκέ σε); go into peace", He was not just saying "Good-bye". He was making a statement of fact, followed by a powerful command—"you may get out of this cramped life of sin and repressions and complexes; you are to get into the land of life and spaciousness, for I, the second Joshua, command you!" "Peace" says Johs Pedersen (*Israel I-II*, p. 311-313) "designates the fact of being whole", "consists in complete harmony", is "comprehensive and positive", "comprises all that the Israelite understands by 'good'". "It expresses every form of happiness and free expansion" (you will note here the proximity of the idea of *peace* to that of *salvation*). Now we see something of the meaning of the word on the lips of Jesus—'peace' is not the absence of disturbance. It is the presence of the God Who is Light and Life and Health.

The doctrine of salvation: the doctrine of *peace*. In both cases Jesus took up, and developed into fulfilment in His own Person, ideas which had been part of the very stuff of Judaism at its best. And in regard to the *body*, Jesus showed Himself the heir of the Jewish tradition rather than of the Hellenic. He would never have subscribed to that Hellenic conception of man which "has been described as that of an angel in a slot machine, a soul (the invisible, spiritual, essential ego) incarcerated in a frame of matter, from which it trusts eventually to be liberated".¹ No σῶμα σῆμα for Jesus! No suggestion that the body is non-essential to the personality. Rather does He seem to have been motivated by the typically Hebrew concept of man as "flesh animated by the soul, the whole conceived as a psycho-physical unity".² "The body is the soul in its outward form."³ "The spirit is the living body seen from within, and the body, the outward manifestation of the living spirit."⁴ If in this case, as in others, our Lord was the heir of the best thinking of His people and Himself gave His stamp of approval to their concept of the relation of body to soul, then we can understand the immense importance which He clearly attached to bodily health, and to the well-being of the *whole* man.

It is against some such Jewish background as this that we must come to the work and teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. Perhaps,

¹ J. A. T. Robinson, *The Body*, p. 14.

² Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

³ J. Pedersen, *op. cit.*, I-II, p. 171.

⁴ J. A. C. Murray, *Christian Psychotherapy*, pp. 149-150.

for the sake of clarity, it will be well to make our points in a series of propositions.

1. *Jesus, when faced by physical and mental sickness, almost invariably showed Himself a fighter.* So far as we can judge from the Gospels, it would appear that for Jesus to be confronted by disease was to be affronted. The O.E.D. defines "to affront" as to "insult to the face . . . to put to the blush . . . to cause to feel ashamed". Our Lord meets a poor woman with a twisted body (St. Luke 13. 11). What does He do? Sigh, and pass by? No. Such a state of things He feels to be an affront to the plan of God, and an insult to His face. "This woman . . . Satan hath bound." He heals her, and she finds her body not a hindrance to the service of God, but an expression of His glory.

Again, St. Mark (1. 40) gives us the story of the leper who came to Jesus. He records the compassion with which Jesus viewed the pitiable figure (v. 41). But in a well-known variant reading (common to Codex Bezae, the Old Latin and Tatian's Diatessaron) no compassion is recorded but rather anger—(ὀργισθεὶς for σπλαγχνισθεὶς). Judging by the canon of textual criticism which lays it down that *difficilior lectio potior*, the more probable reading is ὀργισθεὶς. This would fit in with the strange participle in v. 43 ἐμβριμησάμενος for which the A.V. gives the doubtful rendering "straightly charged". This is a meaning "unknown to profane authorities" (as Grimm-Thayer puts it, S.V.) and Moulton and Milligan (*The Vocabulary of the N.T.*) find that the papyri cast no fresh light on the meaning of the verb in the New Testament. In classical usage the word means "to snort" (of horses), "to be very angry, to be moved with indignation". We may well ask, then, at what or at whom was Jesus thus incensed? Not at the by-standers (as in the miracle of the healing of the man with the withered hand, St. Mark 3. 5), for no mention is made of them. Perhaps the anger of Jesus expressed the Divine anger against sin, of which leprosy, a living death, spoke. But is it not more likely that these participles, ὀργισθεὶς and ἐμβριμησάμενος, are the evangelist's attempts to express the reaction, the shame, which Jesus felt at the utter wrongness of the havoc brought by sickness on the miracle which is a man's body?

We may further note, in the story of the raising of Lazarus, the extraordinary effort of the evangelist in St. John 11. 33 to express the profound emotional disturbance of Jesus at the grave-side. Not only did He burst into tears (ἐδάκρυσεν, v. 35, and ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτὸν, v. 34— itself a strange phrase) but came to the tomb ἐμβριμωμένους (v. 38 'snorting'?) Again we ask "Why?" At the unbelief of the sisters and bystanders? Perhaps. Or was it at the tragedy of a life prematurely cut short by disease and death? Or perhaps it was *both*?

These instances—and there are others worthy of careful study—show us One Who, so far from showing any 'resignation' to suffering and death, seems to have opposed them with all the power at His command. He was a fighter against those elements in life which detracted from man's fullness of life, from his full health, from his σωτηρία.

II. *Jesus struck a blow at the current doctrine which viewed suffering as invariably the consequence of sin.* The clearest case of this is the story of the man born blind (St. John 9. 1). Two subsidiary points may be made—(a) v. 2 would seem to imply some form of the re-incarnation idea; according to the disciples' question, if the man's blindness was due to his sin, it must presumably have been sin in a pre-incarnate state, for he was *born* blind. (b) The omission of the full stop at the end of v. 3 relieves us of the monstrous doctrine suggested by its insertion—that the man was born blind "in order that the works of God might be manifested in him" (some God!). But, these minor points apart, the main value of the story is the blow it strikes against the theory "suffering is *invariably* the result of sin". Life makes it pretty obvious that *frequently* that proposition is true (visit a V.D. ward in any hospital!) But not *invariably*. If it be objected that that gives us no positive philosophy of evil and of suffering, it may be replied that nowhere in the recorded sayings of Jesus is such a philosophy to be found; but, negative though the blow be which the story strikes, it removes at one stroke much of the bitterness which the current theory caused (and, it may be added, still causes) in the minds of multitudes.

III. *Jesus refused to concentrate in His healing work, solely upon the ills of the body.* A paralytic (St. Mark 2. 3) is brought on his mattress bed to Jesus. He looks expectantly to Him for physical healing. What must have been his surprise when Jesus said to him, *not* "Thy paralysis is cured" *but* "Thy sins are forgiven"! The great Physician diagnosed the trouble which underlay the outward manifestation of it which was the physical paralysis. He saw that if there was to be a complete and permanent cure, the *whole* man must be dealt with—first, his relationship to God and to his fellows must be put right (there had been *sin* of some sort); then his physical healing would follow and there would go to his house a man every whit whole.

Again, the story of the demon-possessed man, told as it is, no doubt, only in outline (St. Mark 5. 1-20) reminds us almost of a modern psychiatrist's approach to his patient. Jesus is apparently at considerable pains to get alongside the deranged man. He sympathetically questions him—"What is thy name?" (v. 9) and elicits the significant answer of what sounds like a schizo-phrenic: "My name is Legion: for we are many". After the cure, Doctor and patient are together, presumably in close conclave (v. 15, "They come to Jesus and saw him that was possessed . . . sitting"). Mere expulsion of the demons was not enough. The man must feel that he is understood. He must be made whole in the totality of his personality.

The importance of this point can hardly be exaggerated. Any "healing movement" which simply goes out to cure physical sickness without reference to the well-being of the whole personality will have results compared with which the efforts of a bull in a china shop will be pacific. For if, as we have seen, it is true that suffering is not *invariably* the consequence of sin, it is also equally true that time and time again, suffering is the manifestation in the physical part of him of a man's maladjustment to God, to his environment, or to himself. To attempt to cure the symptom without dealing with the root of the

problem is like putting on a new tile to the roof when the foundations of the building are totally inadequate! When Jesus healed a man's or a woman's body or mind, that healing was one of the ways, one of the most expressive and eloquent ways, in which the Love of God in Him went out to folk in need. But the God who made man as a psycho-somatic unity loves that man in his entirety, and, if we may say so reverently, is 'all out' for his total restoration. "More and more," says Jung, "we turn our attention from the visible disease and direct it upon the man as a whole" (*Modern man in search of a soul*, p. 222). Said a wise French clinician; "Il n'y a pas des maladies, seulement les malades".

IV. *Jesus viewed His healing work as part and parcel of His Messianic function.* Those of you who are familiar with Canon Alan Richardson's excellent book *The Miracle Stories of the Gospels* will recall how frequently he insists that the very language in which the evangelists record the healing miracles of Jesus is Old Testament language, and very often Old Testament *Messianic* language. Intentionally this is so, as if the evangelists would say: "This which we saw happen is that of which we had read in our Scriptures. The Christ has come, and the signs (to use the word of which the Fourth Evangelist is so particularly fond) the signs of His coming are visible (for those who have eyes to see) in the works of physical and mental healing which accompany His Advent". "Your God will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing. . . ." So Isaiah had written (35. 4-6). The evidence of the Messianic Coming was to be seen in blind seeing, deaf hearing, lame walking as well as in poor being evangelized. In the Person of Jesus the Reign of God arrived with power. The evidence of its power was plentiful in the *δυναμεις* of Jesus. The powers of the Age to come were impinging on this Age. "*Si monumentum requiris,*" the early eye witnesses might have said (in anticipation of the inscription on Wren's tomb!) "*circumspice*".

Perhaps this is the place to say a further word about the nature of the healing miracles, though it is not the place (nor indeed am I the person) to attempt a rationale of miracle in general or of the miracles of Jesus in particular. We may leave on one side the so-called "nature" miracles which have peculiar problems of their own, and which are, for our present purpose, strictly speaking, irrelevant. H. E. W. Turner, in his book *Jesus, Master and Lord* (p. 176 ff), has drawn our attention to St. Augustine's singularly up-to-date treatment of the subject in his *The City of God* and other works. St. Augustine draws a distinction between acts which are 'beyond nature' (*praeter naturam*) or even 'against what is known of nature' (*contra quod est notum naturae*) and acts which are 'against nature' (*contra naturam*). Our Lord's miracles are best regarded as of the first type, that is to say *not* as against nature, but as beyond nature or perhaps against what is known of nature. This is in accord with much of the best modern thought. Science to-day is far less dogmatic than it was at the turn of the century. Its best exponents are far more prepared to admit the provisional nature of its conclusions than were their fathers or grand-

fathers. Where the grandfathers said : " Here is a clear breach of an unswerving law of nature ", the grandsons prefer to say : " Here is a case which is not covered by our previous generalisations ". They may even add : " With further knowledge this may well fit into our understanding of things ". Turner is at pains to point out that this approach to miracle does not mean that we simply view our Lord as a practitioner of psychological medicine many centuries before His time. But it does mean that in the recent advances of medical science we have a background against which the healing miracles of Jesus can be most appropriately understood and satisfactorily set. In somewhat similar vein, Dr. L. Weatherhead writes : " Are we to regard [the healing miracles of Christ] from the human standpoint as falling within psychotherapeutic categories ; the work of a great psychotherapist, or even a religious genius born before His time, whose therapeutic methods show a great advance on any healing work accomplished before Him, but methods which we are able to study from a purely scientific point of view and follow in modern psychological practice ? Or are we, on the other hand, to regard Him as a supernatural person, revealing by His amazing healing power, forces and energies which belong to another plane of activity normally above our reach, but penetrated to some extent by His followers, who subsequently wrought similar miracles of healing in His name ? "

I think the answer is the latter, but this need not preclude us from learning many valuable lessons, even in the realm of scientific healing, by the study of Christ's work. After studying the question for many years, however, I cannot completely fit the healing miracles of Christ into the categories of modern psychotherapeutic practice. The latter is illumined by the former, but the former are not explained by the latter."¹

We may go further, I think. If we conceive of Jesus as doing His Messianic healing work (it may be *contra quod est notum naturae* but) not *contra naturam*, but *praeter naturam*, have we not here a strong hint that the Church, if she is entrusted with a healing function, should exercise that function, not against or at cross-purposes with the work of science but in closest liaison with it ? But perhaps this is to anticipate what I shall refer to shortly.

I come now to the fifth and last of my ' propositions ':

V. *Jesus' greatest contribution in the realm of suffering was not what He did in healing, nor what He taught by word, but what He was in His person.*

The picture which the early documents give of Jesus is not of some superb Apollo, though it may be noted that we have no record of the sickness of Jesus but have, rather, the impression of One perfectly integrated and supremely at peace with God and with Himself. Rather do the documents stress the fact that He who was called Immanuel entered into our griefs with a terrible intimacy. St. Matthew, after recording Christ's healing of a leper, of the centurion's servant, of Peter's mother-in-law, and of the demon-possessed, concludes the section by recalling the words of Isaiah and noting their fulfilment in

¹ *Psychology, Religion and Healing*, p. 40.

our Lord : " Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses " (St. Matthew 8. 17). He was indeed, as He Himself taught, the suffering Servant foreshadowed in the great Isaianic prophecies. And as Dr. Dillistone has so movingly pointed out in his book *Jesus and His Cross* (esp. pp. 114 ff.), it is the function of the *servants* in society to carry the burdens, and to do the dirty work of mankind. He quotes Bushnell (*The Vicarious Sacrifice*) : " Love is a principle essentially vicarious in its own nature, identifying the subject with others, so as to suffer their adversities and pains, and taking on itself the burden of their evils ". Referring to St. Matthew 8. 17, Bushnell asks : " Does it mean that He literally had our sicknesses transferred to Him and so taken off from us ? No one had ever such a thought. How, then, did He bear our sicknesses, or in what sense ? In the sense that He took them on His feeling, had His heart burdened by the sense of them, bore the disgusts of their loathsomeness, decayed, felt their pains over again, in the tenderness of His more than human sensibility ".

We have seen something of the Jewish background against which the Ministry of Jesus was set. We have seen, in five 'propositions', some of the principles on which our Lord fulfilled His task of bringing health, spaciousness, salvation, peace, to a sick world.

Now it remains to ask : What of the Church, which is His Body ? What of her function in an equally sick world to-day ? I must be brief, and if I am therefore over-dogmatic in the way I put things I must ask your indulgence. Such brevity and dogmatism may serve to pinpoint the important issues.

I would submit that the commission of St. Mark 3. 14, 15, has never been withdrawn. Jesus ordained twelve (i) that they might be with Him, (ii) that He might send them forth to preach, (iii) to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils. To the early Church were committed gifts of healing (Rom. 12 ; 1 Cor. 12). Has the commission been divided, so that the third part is now irrelevant ? Have the gifts of healing been withdrawn ? Or has the Church fallen into a faithless torpor from which only now she is beginning to awaken ? I tend to think that the latter is more likely than the former. The phrase, " The Church is the Extension of the Incarnation " is non-Biblical and open to misunderstanding. But there is enough truth in it to make us go back to take seriously once again what St. Paul meant by the Body of Christ, or what St. Luke meant when He spoke of " all that Jesus *began* to do and to teach " (Acts 1. 1).

Inasmuch as the message of the Church is precisely that of her Master, that is to say, a message of salvation, of full health, for the whole man, body, mind and spirit, a message of peace, with God, with men, with oneself, a message of integration ; inasmuch as the approach of the Church to body and mind must be that of her Master to those subjects ; she must necessarily be committed to the task of healing those things which detract from the full health of the individual and of the body corporate. Perhaps a parallel may be found in a slightly different sphere : It is recognized that the so-called " social Gospel " is utterly inadequate to meet man's deepest needs. But it is also obvious that to preach to men with empty stomachs is not only useless but blasphemous, for the simple and profound reason that the Gospel

of God is concerned with a man's soul and a man's belly. For the same reason, I would submit, we must not divide up the original commission of Jesus and fail to continue the healing work which He began. *It was part of His Gospel. It must be part of ours.* To recur for a moment to my fourth 'proposition' (that Jesus viewed His healing work as part and parcel of His Messianic function): If we believe that, with the coming of Jesus, the Reign of God was inaugurated in power, and if, further, we believe that it is the function of the people of God to be that Body through which the powers of *that* New Age function in *this*, then surely we should expect the significant *σημεία* still to be evident. "These signs shall follow them that believe; In my Name shall they cast out devils . . . they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover" (St. Mark 16. 17, 18).

I fully realize that, for some (and those, very earnest good people) the healing of the body has become almost an end in itself. Such folk would do well to bear in mind my third "proposition", that Jesus refused to concentrate, in His healing work, solely upon the ills of the body. The only place in the world where the love of God can be understood and the forgiveness of sin be obtained is within the fellowship of the Church of the Living God. Unhindered fellowship with God—that is the first and last thing for which the Church exists. Its primary battle is with *sin*: its primary end is the glory of God; its message is health for the *whole* man. It may well question its own sensitiveness if, when faced with sickness, it does not "show fight" (see proposition I—"Jesus when faced by physical or mental sickness, almost invariably showed Himself a fighter"). But it will be remembered that the greatest insult to the Majesty of Almighty God is sin. Deal with this and much sickness will fade away (though not all? See Proposition II). Modern medical science would corroborate this. How many duodenal ulcers are due to the sin of worry? How much asthma is due to unresolved complexes or unhappy relationships? How many nervous breakdowns are the outcome of spiritual homelessness, and would have been averted if men had come to terms with God, and were living in the bracing warmth of a live Church fellowship?

Those of you who have followed me so far will have seen that I view the healing of mind and body as part of the Good News of God in Christ, not as an extra "optional subject" to be taken if the candidate is inclined that way! But before I close there are two points which I think should be made with regard to a subject of vast importance and almost infinite difficulty:

(1) One of the problems which I merely mentioned at the beginning of this paper was this: Can we simply say, "Given enough faith, we may expect healing?" I suggested that that was too facile an answer to a tantalizing question. How many earnest folk, possessed of a living faith, have pleaded with God for the removal of some physical illness, and been distressed that the illness persisted unrelieved! One such tells his story in 2 Corinthians 12. Does such persistence of disease mean failure on the part of God, or of the man concerned, or of the Church? I suspect that *sometimes* it does indicate failure, for example, in the fellowship of prayer and faith in the local church, which is not strong enough to do for the patient what his four friends did for the

paralytic in the Gospel story. But I would submit it does not always indicate failure. I do believe that God has lessons to teach which, for reasons not wholly known to us, can only be learnt in and through suffering. In the passage already alluded to (2 Corinthians 12) God answered St. Paul's prayer for the removal of his illness, answered it with a clear "no". Why? Because God was not interested in a man's mere body? The whole thesis of this paper has been against that conclusion. Because God had lessons to teach about overshadowing grace, and strength made perfect in weakness, which He could not teach apart from weakness. Because God wanted to teach the Apostle the hard lesson of Christian prepositions—that the predominant preposition is not "out of" but "through" and "in". "My strength is made perfect *in* weakness." "When thou passest *through* the waters, I will be with thee."

B. K. Cunningham prayed, and had the Laying on of Hands, for the removal of his deafness. It persisted, though he testified to great blessing received in the service. *But the deafness became a means of grace to him.*¹

Dr. J. T. Bell Nicholl, in his autobiography *The Span of Time*, tells of his sudden cure from the terror of agorophobia when at Lee Abbey he put his life right with God, as far as he knew how (pp. 241 ff.). But for some years now he has been getting further in the grip of disseminated sclerosis and is apparently slowly dying of the disease. I realize that to venture the question "Why?" is to be accused of rashness. But I would suggest two possible rays of light on a very dark problem :

(a) Bell Nicholl is experiencing the triumph of God *in* his very experience of sickness, and his witness to eternal realities is all the clearer in the weakness of his temporal body.

(b) One of the greatest gifts of God is the gift of sympathy. There is no short cut to this. The word literally means *suffering with*. Only he who has suffered can sympathize. We (rightly) make much of the Passion of Christ—a mighty positive force. Is not the witness of the saints this, that time and time again God has acted in power through the *passion* of His followers? This is not to say that the Christian is not to be in the front line of fighters against disease. But it is to say that he does not regard it as the final ill. Indeed he knows that, if God does not see fit to remove it, He can, through nail-pierced Hands, make that very disease a channel of blessing.

Miss Phyllis L. Garlick has expressed this well; she writes :² "Christ's touch has still its ancient power. That renewing, life-giving power may be seen at work in cases of direct spiritual healing, when the ills of the body respond to the spiritual quickening of the whole personality. And such is a gift of the grace of God, a positive demonstration of the truth that health is God's primary will for His children. But His restoring power is also seen at work in others of no less faith and consecrated personality, who in the experience of suffering accepted

¹ See B. K. Cunningham—*A Memoir, esp. pp. 57 and 156*, by John R. H. Moorman.

² *Man's Search for Health*, p. 143.

and borne with trust in God's unchanging purpose of love, learn a deeper understanding and sympathy for the suffering of others. Such find in that immediate experience a 'will of God', not in the sense that He sends suffering, but that He can and does make it a means whereby we draw closer to Him in the very discipline of sharing the common experience of all humanity. We suffer as individuals, but not in isolation; our suffering links us with the whole human family, and for some it would seem that at this present stage of human development and limited knowledge there can be no short cut to physical healing".¹

(2) A final word must be said about the attitude of the Church to science and the medical profession. I have already suggested that the nature of the healing miracles of Jesus hints at a close liason between religion and science. The Church cannot but be ashamed of the suspicion, even opposition, with which in the past she has regarded new scientific discoveries. Was there not a sermon once preached, at a time when the discoveries of science clashed with the tenets of the Church, on "Ye men of Galileo, why stand ye gazing up into heaven . . ." ? It is to be hoped that the worst of that discreditable epoch is over. There are signs that, with the coming of an age when science is less cock-sure and religion less bigoted than in days gone by, the two are beginning to work hand in hand for the welfare of the whole man. Commenting on the fact that, as recently as 1919 the term "psychosomatic medicine" was unknown to the medical vocabulary, Miss Garlick writes: "The now current use of this compound word, describing the soul-body relationship, marks a far-reaching change in the attitude and approach of modern medicine towards the cause and treatment of disease" (op. cit. p. 85). No small debt is owed to Carl Jung for his insistence that "a religious attitude is an element in psychic life whose importance can hardly be overrated".² In a well-known passage he writes: "Among my patients in the second half of life—that is to say, over 35—there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook" (op. cit., p. 264). He comments: "It is indeed high time for the clergyman and the psychotherapist to join forces to meet this great spiritual task" (p. 265).

I would venture to suggest that, the more virile our doctrine of the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the Life-Giver; the more fully we realize that *all* truth is His gift to His world, whether it be truth about the Incarnation or about the atom, about the atonement or about the constitution of man in his complex and wonderful make-up; so much the more shall we see that, as religion and science join hands, God's plan of salvation, of spaciousness, of full life for men will be worked out. And that will best happen, not in the rarefied atmosphere of high up talks between scientists and theologians, but as Dr. Jones and Vicar

¹ Victor Gollancz has some worth while things to say about pain and its blessings in *My dear Timothy*, pp. 157 and 282.

² *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 77.

Smith together consult (and, if may be, pray) about John Brown who is ill and whom God wants to be well.

Book Reviews

KERYGMA AND MYTH.

Ed. H. W. Bartsch. Trans. R. H. Fuller. S.P.C.K. 22/6.

We have heard a good deal recently of the demythologization of the New Testament demanded by Rudolf Bultmann, but apart from a few specialists it is doubtful whether many students know exactly what it is that Bultmann suggests, or what criticisms he has had to meet from contemporary German writers. To make good that unfortunate ignorance a symposium of statements, originally collected in German, has now been made available to the English speaking public, with an interesting appreciation by Austin Farrer.

The most important of the series is, of course, the original essay by Bultmann entitled *New Testament and Mythology*. This is followed by a detailed and penetrating criticism by Julius Schniewind, which provokes Bultmann to what Farrer regards as the most careful and exact presentation of his view. Further contributions are made by E. Lohmeyer, H. Thielicke and F. K. Schumann, all of which touch on important aspects of the problem. In a final reply Bultmann tries particularly to defend himself against the charge of reinterpreting the Gospel in terms of current philosophy.

To pronounce on a controversy which covers so much ground in such detail and with such an acuteness of theological perception is not easy in the space of a short review, for any judgment which is not backed up by definite evidence is bound to smack of the pontifical. On the other hand, a survey of the different statements has left a definite impression which it is perhaps legitimate to pass on. And that impression is that Bultmann has not so far established his case. The reasons are as follows.

First, and as some of the contributors point out, including Farrer, he does not distinguish clearly enough the nature and aim of demythologization. On the one hand he is pleading that all traces of a non-scientific, or three-decker universe, be removed from the Gospel language. But if there are such traces the demand is just as pedantic as to require that we ought never to speak of a sunrise or a sunset on the ground that it is the earth itself which rises or sets and not the sun. On the other hand he is suggesting that the doctrine of God and the world and the work and person of Christ and the atonement is itself mythological, and that we need to sift out the real Gospel and to put it across in a form which will not unnecessarily offend the modern scientific age. But this is obviously another and more serious matter.

Second, Bultmann has not made it clear how in fact the Gospel is to