

ST. JAMES V. 14, 15.

MANY men of widely different opinions, setting out from widely distant standpoints, have of late arrived by converging paths at something like a general agreement as to what may conveniently be termed "spiritual healing," and it seems worth while to look closely into the chief passage in the New Testament on which all Christian views on the subject must be founded.

The passage seems to be written with extreme care and in accurate sequence, six steps or gradations being carefully marked.

Some one "in the Church" is sick. This of course is given as a specific case of the suffering (*κακοπαθεῖ*) mentioned in verse 13.

(1) He is to call for the elders of the Church, not merely for prayer to be offered out of his sight on his behalf—a private friend or single minister might do that—but that the sick man may have the comfort and help of having before his eyes the whole Church as it were. "Qui dum orant," says Bengel, "non multo minus est quam si tota oraret ecclesia."

(2) They are to pray "over him" (*ἐπ' αὐτόν*). A definite visible sign before his very eyes.

(3) Anointing him—or having anointed, R.V. margin—with oil in the name of the Lord. The aorist *ἀλείψαντες* may, as is well known, denote contemporaneous action, or the anointing may have preceded the prayer. This seems immaterial. The point is that the sick man may have the further help given by an outward and visible sign.

The use of the oil may conveniently be termed religious. It is to act through the mind and spirit. All notes written on the use of oil as a physical remedy seem beside the point. It was of course a common vulnerary remedy, as in

Luke x. 34, of the good Samaritan, ἐπιχέων ἔλαιον καὶ οἶνον, but there is no suggestion of any wound or organic mischief here, and however generally oil may have been used as a physical remedy, it could scarcely be applied in all cases of ἀσθένεια. St. James' directions are quite general and without limitation.

The ἡλειφον ἐλαίῳ of Mark vi. 13 can scarcely have been the application of physical remedies. Rather "they anointed with oil—for 'spiritual healing'—many who were sick, καὶ ἐθεράπευον and treated them medically."

(4) And the prayer of faith shall "save" the "sick" man.

σώσει surely must refer to physical soundness, or rather "improvement" in a physical sense. There has been no reference yet to the spiritual state of the sufferer, and to intrude a spiritual reference here, with ἐγερεῖ, obviously physical, immediately following, would be extremely harsh. Nor can we suppose in such a definite passage that the spiritual sense underlies the physical.

But σώσει cannot simply mean "make whole," or ἐγερεῖ would be an otiose repetition of the same idea (except in so far as it has a new subject); we must look therefore for some early stage in the recovery, and this σώσει will furnish if, as seems to be the case, it will bear the meaning of "bring him into the way of getting better." Make him, that is, a σωζόμενος in the physical sense, just as the σωζόμενος spiritually (e.g. in Acts ii. 47) is one who is in the way of spiritual salvation.

The use of σώζειν in the New Testament, in the sense of cause to recover bodily health, is of course well established, but it seems not to occur except here in the *inceptive* sense unless it be in John xi. 12, of Lazarus, εἰ κεκοίμηται σωθήσεται, "if he has fallen asleep he will *do well*," or begin to *get better*, as we say. Not necessarily "recover" finally. It was too early as yet to speak of recovery. Of course

there could not have been in the Apostles' minds, when they spoke, any thought of spiritual salvation for Lazarus.

A classical parallel is Antiphon 116. 26 (Reiske), *ὅταν δὲ νοσήσωσιν ὑγιεῖς γινόμενοι σώζονται*, "get better and are healed."

τὸν κάμνοντα, to return to the passage in St. James, may be only "him that is sick," and Mayor, in his note *ad loc.*, says: "I see no ground for the distinction made by some between *ἀσθενῶ* and *κάμνω*." But why should St. James substitute for the former the latter far less usual word? *κάμνειν* of course may be simply, like *laborare*, to be ill. But here I would render "him who is losing heart," "giving up the fight" (for life); cf. Hebrews xii. 3, *ἵνα μὴ κάμητε ταῖς ψυχαῖς*, "that ye may not flag spiritually," *ταῖς ψυχαῖς* being joined closely with the verb. Cf. *οἱ κεκμηκότες* in classics, those who have finally given up the battle of, or for, life—the dead.

The outward and visible signs, the elders praying and the oil, are just what *ὁ κάμνων* needs to help in his recovery.

(5) "And the Lord will raise him up," *ἐγερεῖ* of physical healing still. The stress is on *ὁ κύριος*. The elders do their part, the *ὁ κάμνων* takes fresh heart, joins in the prayer of faith, but it is the Lord who is the real healer.

"I applied the remedies, the Lord was the healer," is the translation of a striking inscription in the ward of a French hospital, possibly suggested by these words of St. James.

The whole stress of the passage then up to this point is on physical healing by spiritual means. It may be objected that, if this view be taken and the oil has only a religious efficacy, St. James ignores all ordinary medical aid. He does so, possibly, because the healing art among those to whom he wrote was still in an elementary stage, or far more probably, because he is writing solely to the Church as such; it is not his *métier* to address the faculty of medicine or to consider its methods.

(6) And *even if* he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him." *Kāv*, "even if" (not "if," as in R.V.). The connexion of sin with sickness, and the fact that it is a hindrance to recovery, is no doubt implied, but not, it would seem, its necessary connexion in every case of sickness.

The promise is added still with the failing flagging spirit in view; "can I recover, and can my sin be forgiven?" is the natural thought of *ὁ κάμνων*.

The elaborate nature of the proposed method of cure as compared with what we find in the Gospels may fairly be considered as adding some little weight to the arguments for a late rather than an early date for the Epistle.

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[It was not until the above was in type that I had the advantage of seeing "The Anointing of the Sick," by the Rev. F. W. Puller—J.H.D.M.]

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE PROPHETS.

XII.

JEREMIAH XLVIII.—XLIX.

*The Pride of Moab is humbled; her Vineyards and Wine-presses are ruined; and the whole Land is given over to mourning.**

²⁹ We† have heard of the pride of Moab, he is very proud; his loftiness, and his pride, and his arrogance, and the haughtiness of his heart. ³⁰ I know, saith Yahweh, his wrath, and his boastings are untruth; ‡ they do untruth.

* This paragraph is largely a mosaic, constructed of reminiscences of Isa. 15-16.

† See Isa. 16. 6.

‡ Rendered by many moderns, though questionably, *and the untruth of his boastings*. The same Heb. is found in Isa. 16. 6 *end*.