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Divine Healing and Scripture /1

E.A. Russell

First, a word about the choice of subject, "Divine Healing." It is not meant to imply that what happens in the province of professional medicine does not come from God, but has to do with that aspect of healing which takes place, for example, when such medicine claims to have done all it can to help. It is interesting that in the medical schools there are those who are convinced that "Divine Healing" of this kind does take place.

Another description that might have been chosen is "Faith-Healing." It does, however, tend to lay the emphasis on the manward side, implying that man has a great deal to do with it, and that such a man, e.g., the Faith-Healer, is of such faith as to bring about the divine action, and, in some sense, to exercise control over God. This is not to deny the crucial place that is often given to faith especially in the Gospels and in the present practice of divine healing within the churches. The description "Faith-Healing", whatever safeguards may be imposed or acknowledged, does tend to diminish the emphasis on the divine action and to magnify the part played by the one who becomes the channel of healing.

And what about the description "Spiritual Healing"? It implies an understanding of man in terms of "spirit" and "body". Such a dichotomy tends to play down the body and magnify the spirit. It belongs to the old concept of the body as a tomb where the spirit is imprisoned and longing to be set free and has a basis in what Paul says in Romans 7, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" Thus the concern is with the realm of a man's spirit at the expense of the body and the "spiritual healing" proceeds through repentance and forgiveness to the possession of the Holy Spirit. When, however, we attempt to get hold of the biblical concept of man, we find that the Hebrew views man as a total entity /2 Nor are we to interpret "image", the "image" in which God made man as if it were related merely to the spiritual aspect for such a description includes

the whole man . /3 It is further argued in this connection that Paul sees the whole man as sarx (flesh) and consequently as sinner. /4 If then the distinction of "body" and "spirit" is for the Hebrew a doubtful if not impossible concept, then the description "spiritual" becomes one-sided. Rather "the body is the soul (spirit) on its outward aspect." This will mean that we cannot speak of merely bodily healing but see this as God's action within or upon the total person, nor can we speak of "spiritual healing" without taking into account the body which is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Whether it is the divine action upon the body in restoration to health or upon the spirit of a man bringing about inward renewal and transformation, they are both to be seen as "divine healing".

But the description "Divine Healing" implies something else, which might not be so imperative for the descriptions "faith-healing" or "spiritual healing". If God acts in an immediate manner, bringing something to pass which goes against natural or normal expectation, then it does suggest that the universe is not a closed, mechanical "Newtonian" system where nothing can happen that does not fit in with the so-called laws of the universe. It brings hope to the man who feels himself imprisoned in a system which moves forward inexorably and unchangeably, which has determined what will happen to him and from which there can be no escape; a system where it is no use to pray, or to struggle for freedom, a relentless combination of forces impersonal and unthinking and tyrannical. If God acts in healing in a way that cannot be explained in scientific medical terms, it suggests that the universe is "open", a system which responds to the movement of the transcendent within the regularity of such so-called laws. /5

But we might further ask what is to prevent such a God from acting capriciously and wilfully without any pattern or norm by which we can judge his action? The primitive savage looked out on an enigmatic and frightening world where he could never be certain how the god would act and he had resort to all kinds of means to find out how to gain the god's goodwill. The shaman would try to get the right ritual or the right form of words by which to control the god. In the OT we have examples of God changing his mind

and suggesting a certain inconsistency in His approach and yet perhaps only reflecting the interaction of the divine and the human, where the change of heart in the Israelite found a merciful response on the part of God. And it is when we begin to talk about mercy and steadfast love and justice that we come near to the heart of the matter. Biblical consensus suggests we look for consistency in the divine exercise of power, and reject any impersonal system of causation. /6

It is, however, possible to conceive of two systems, working alongside each other but quite independent, i.e., the causal and the theistic. If Jesus, for example, multiplies five loaves and two fishes, Christian interpreters will see a suspension of the laws of nature, and explain it in terms of God's intervention. Thus we still have two spheres, the material and trans-material, but they have not been brought together in one unifying system. /7 Older Protestant theologians tended to set the action of God over against or contrary to the power of nature. No doubt they would deny that there was any tension but when they put forward the criterion of miracles - that they are acts of God which transcend the powers of nature - it is difficult to resist the impression that there is a certain juxtaposition of God over against his own laws. /8

It is interesting to look for a possible indication as to the lines on which a solution may be found in a Greek writer of Classical times, Herodotus. In a suggestive essay, "Herodotus and the Miraculous" Dr A.H. McDonald makes use of Herodotus' account of the Persian wars, claiming that it represents most faithfully the common Greek conception of the interaction of the human and the divine. Herodotus sought to describe signs and wonders in terms that expressed the popular thought but gave the reader the opportunity to make up his own mind. /9 He made use of Greek mythology but Greek mythology, according to Dr McDonald, "has almost an inspired gift of symbolizing experience....it helps to clarify conceptions in human terms." /10 But human history is not to be interpreted merely in human terms, since the gods however mythical, were nevertheless manifestations of divine power. Where Herodotus sees

divine intervention, he does not use anthropomorphic terms to describe it. /11 He claims a certain balance in society that has emerged in the laws and conventions of society. Any sin against society upsets this balance and for that, man must pay the penalty. Such sin is an example of hubris, the arrogant pride that brings Nemesis with it. Xerxes, the Great King, broke this balance when he fettered the sea, affronting nature and had to pay the price. The gods sent a storm against the Persian fleet and it suffered heavy losses; they acted when the Persians tried to consult the oracle at Delphi with a thunderstorm and a fall of rocks; when they were defeated at the battle of Plataea, it was in fulfilment of a divine oracle. Herodotus however is not systematic. He merely gives us an impression of the workings of his mind. /12 But he does seem to be saying that there is a balance in nature which we disturb at our peril. Thus the divine and the human are combined in the processes of nature. It is this harmony that gives a certain consistency to all that takes place between the gods and men. /13

What we look for in a God who acts in power is not something arbitrary or unpredictable or without any norm by which to assess his action or possible action. The Hebrew would talk about the "righteousness" or the "faithfulness" of God, someone who made promises and kept them, someone who expresses himself in steadfast love; in other words, a God whose character guarantees the absolute consistency or coherence of all that He does. Assumptions of this kind appear to lie behind Augustine's idea of the will of God. If there are "laws of nature" they are only an expression of this will. But in relation to the concept of miracle he could maintain that the God who instituted them could change them if he willed. Augustine did not appear to face up to the problem that if this is the case then the laws are not the expression of the will of God at all times, so that such a will could presumably become a variable quantity. In some measure he does approach the problem when he writes in De Civitate Dei (Concerning the City of God): Miracle therefore does not happen against nature but against nature as we know it" /14..."for can what happens in the will of God be opposed to nature since in any case the will of such a great Creator is the nature of everything created?" /15

Is Augustine implying that "nature as we know it" is not nature as it really is? This is hardly likely. So the apparent contradiction of nature as the will of God and not the will of God remains. But if this will is bound up with an all-powerful and beneficent and loving God, whose nature determines his action, then such a concept would bind together natural law and intervention within such a scheme. It is this which becomes the guarantee of regularity or consistency, a conviction - which doubtless Augustine would accept - that God is in control and nothing happens apart from him. He overrules the most evil of circumstances, the most demonic of all operations within a fallen world for his glory. He "makes the wrath of man to praise him". We can reject as Barth does any distinction such as "ordinary power" (*potentia ordinaria*) and "extraordinary power" (*potentia extraordinaria*) and declare that "a miracle is not proof of a special, but merely the proof of the one divine omnipotence". /16 Thus we can argue for God's faithfulness in everything. This is the fixed rule according to which all things happens and the law behind it is God himself.

It is something of the same kind that Professor C.F.D. Moule puts forward when he claims that there is only one point of view that the consistent theist can hold. It is the view that we cannot divide up into two systems, material (or causal) and trans-material. "To do so", he writes, "would be to entertain deism (cf. rationalism) rather than theism, and would imply an intolerably mechanical and inorganic relationship between Creator and creature." /17 The only ultimate reality is bound up with the character of a personal God. The material universe itself expresses that character, a character which determines for us what is possible or probable.

Up until this point we have looked at the problem of description whether "Faith-Healing" or "Spiritual Healing" or "Divine Healing" and saw reasons for preferring the third possibility. We have looked at the problem of miracle and the so-called "natural laws" and tried to get some consistent way of describing what happens whether as "natural" or "supra-national" and concluded that the basic premiss of regularity or consistency lies in the character of a personal God. We turn now to look

specifically at "Divine Healing", the aspect of miracle with which we are primarily concerned. On reflection we may conclude that for most people the practice of divine healing is something that lies outside their experience. They enjoy good health. They seldom see the doctor and they are not called into the trauma of knowing that they have a serious terminal disease, or a condition of hyper-anxiety and tension. It is likely that such people are in the majority within the churches though probably in some areas at least a decreasing majority. Medical science has made such progress and so many diseases that in the past would have been extremely serious have lost their binding hold on the health of the ordinary individual that he is less and less likely to think beyond the resources of medical practice whether at home or in hospital. We are told for example that the average citizen in the Western world can expect to live twenty years longer than he might have done in 1900 or that major killers like gastritis, tuberculosis, influenza or pneumonia in the past have been replaced by heart disease, cancer, vascular lesions of the central nervous system, and accidents. /18 It is not to be wondered at, then, if the attitude of many people to divine healing - if an attitude exists at all - is one of complete indifference perhaps related to a sense of its irrelevance to their situation, or even taking the form of disbelief and hostility.

Disbelief in divine healing does not necessarily derive from a disbelief in the inspiration and authority of Scripture. It is interesting that while the Roman Church has always cherished the belief that miracles of healing can take place, the Reformers - and we may ask how far this point of view reflects a situation of polemic - /19 developed a dispensational teaching, claiming that the mighty works Jesus and the apostles did, were only for a particular period and purpose. Luther, for example, appears to have held on to the view that the day of miracles is past, that the complete revelation has been given in the writings of the apostles and no special revelation or miracle is necessary. In his discussion on John 16.13 "And he will declare to you the things that are to come", his view that miracles are

confirmatory of the message comes out on a number of occasions, based presumably on Mark 16.20, "The Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it." /20 In the same paragraph, speaking of salvation, Luther comments, "For this one does not need any new signs or miracles." Later, on the chief doctrine of Christ, he instructs his readers to ignore signs in opposition to it "even if it snows miracles every day." /21 Thus for most of his life Luther denied along with miracles in general the gift of healing. Yet, as in the case of many who are wholly committed to the ministry of divine healing today, his experience showed him that he was mistaken. His friend Melancthon was at the point of death and Luther visibly saw him brought to full life and vigour again. Five years later, in 1545 (Luther died in 1546), he was asked advice about what should be done for a man who was mentally ill. He replied by writing out instructions for a healing service based on the words in the epistle of James, "Is any among you ill? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up." (5.14,15). It does not appear to have been an innovation for Luther for he writes in the same connection "This is what we do, and that we have been accustomed to do, for a cabinetmaker here was similarly afflicted with madness and we cured him by prayer in Christ's name." /22 This inconsistency in Luther can be paralleled in other areas, e.g., in his attitude to the Jews. /23

In a dismissal of extreme unction, based on the same passage in the epistle of James as above, Calvin describes the action of the Roman Church on a par with the laying on of hands as "mere hypocritical stage-play". Then he proceeds, in such a polemic context, to say: "But the gift of healing disappeared with the other miraculous powers which the Lord was pleased to give for a time, that it might render the new preaching of the gospel for ever wonderful...They (i.e. the Roman priests) make themselves ridiculous, therefore, by pretending that they are endued with the gift of healing....because that gift was temporary, and, owing, in some measure, to the ingratitude



of men, immediately ceased." /24. It is difficult to understand this type of reasoning in someone like Calvin and we are forced to say that if it had not been for the situation of polemic against abuses carried on in the existing church, this so-called "dispensational" teaching would never have arisen. It was a reaction to a church whose members seemed to be continually resorting to pilgrimages to certain churches and shrines where it was believed miracles could take place, to such an extent that one writer describes the urge to pilgrimage as a currendi libido, and speaks of the craze for miracles and signs. /25 The attitude of these key figures in the Reformation movement was bound to be immensely powerful in all who were identified with it, especially since, unlike Luther, Calvin does not seem to have deviated from this position. It is notable, for example, how little interest is taken not only by the twentieth century theologian, Karl Barth, in the ministry of healing but also in recent works on the theology of the New Testament by Dr Donald Guthrie or Dr G.E. Ladd, both conservative scholars. /26 We no longer require signs and wonders, it is seriously claimed, and if we did have them, it would suggest that our faith would be on a lower level and our Christian experience inferior. /27 In the light of the modern renewal movement with its signal demonstrations of faith, this explanation can no longer be entertained and in any case does appear to be based on a misunderstanding of John,4,48, "Except you see signs and wonders you will not believe." /28.

But the objections to divine healing do not rest with affirmations that modern medicine is enough or that such healing belonged merely to the period of the early church. The existentialist NT scholar, Rudolph Bultmann, in an article on "The Question of Wonder" /29 shows how persistent is the notion of the validity of natural law, of nature's conformity to law. Miracle is a violation of this conformity and "has therefore become untenable and must be abandoned." /30 It is argued that the idea of miracle is not a notion of faith but purely intellectual. Since miracles can help or harm, some criterion must be established in order to distinguish what is good or bad, in other words, "one must know God

beforehand, before the miracle happens, in order to be certain." It is evident then that miracle does not necessarily include God's action and "hence the Christian faith is apparently not concerned with miracles; rather it has cause to exclude the idea of miracle." /31 To Bultmann any concern to prove the possibility or actuality of the wonders of Jesus as events in the past is wrong. Christ becomes present for us as the preached Christ and the wonders of Jesus are only relevant as part of that preaching and as witnesses to it. They are not to be understood as demonstrable events which form a basis of faith but rather carry the same ambiguity as the wonder of Christ himself. We are not to hanker after Jesus as a historical figure or personality of the past. Rather we are "to see him as the wonder of God...the One who is here for us now as the Word of forgiveness spoken by God." /32

We can see certain links between Bultmann and Luther. Both agree that miracles have a subordinate place, Luther on the basis of a dispensational view which he later abandons or, at least, modifies, and Bultmann on the basis of natural law. Both agree in their emphasis on preaching and on the real wonder as that of the preached Christ and the transformation that is wrought. Both agree on their emphasis on the individual response to the preaching which Luther would interpret in traditional biblical terms but Bultmann uses for his hermeneutic the categories of existentialism. Luther experienced the action of God in divine healing as the response to prayer, but we have no evidence that the writer knows of that Bultmann modified this position. /33

We turn now to look more specifically at divine healing in Scripture. The writers of the NT can only express themselves in relation to healing in terms of the understanding of their times. As they confess their faith in Jesus Christ and are part of the company of believers, no doubt the expression of this understanding will take a distinctive form especially in relation to their view of Jesus. Nevertheless their understanding, e.g., of the causes of illness whether demonic activity or a divine judgment can be and is something they share with their contemporaries. How far this is a legitimate under-

standing in the light of our modern situation is a question that has already been mooted in this essay but it is still a matter of course for continuing debate within the church.

### Old Testament

For the first disciples, set within Judaism, any understanding of "miracle" or "divine healing" is bound up naturally with the OT. Here God had the power of life and death. The essential conviction of most of the writers is expressed in words put in the mouth of Yahweh, "I kill and make alive; I wound and heal; and there is none can deliver out of my hand." (Deut 32.39) Whether it was blindness or deafness, good fortune or bad, the ultimate responsibility lay with God (Ex 4.11). Sometimes the action of Yahweh could not be given any moral explanation, e.g., the laming of Jacob (Gen 32.32) or the attempt to kill Moses (ex 4.24-26) or again the striking dead of Uzzah because he touched the Ark (2 Sam 6.7-10). It was enough for the Israelite that God was the one who acts and his actions were often shrouded in the mystery that belonged to his wholly-other and ineffable being. Since most of the OT writers had no belief in the after-life, reward and punishment were bound up with their present existence. For the more thoughtful the stark inequalities of these would provoke searching questions especially in the matter of redress of wrongs. Answers would be found in their conception of the link up with succeeding generations and the readjustment sometime in the future of the family or race; or alternatively such a dilemma would have to be resolved in a belief in the after-life (cf Psalm 73)

As the Covenant people, Israel was committed to obedience, e.g., "If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among the peoples (Ex 19.5), and closely bound up with such commitment and determined by it were sickness and healing.

/34 We have a sombre picture of the results of disobedience in Leviticus:

"If you spurn my statutes and if your soul abhors my ordinances, so that you will not

do all my commandments, but break my covenant, I will do this to you: I will appoint over you sudden terror, consumption and fever that waste the eyes and cause life to pine away," (26.16)

and an even more devastating catalogue of punishments in a parallel passage in Deuteronomy:

"The Lord will smite you with the boils of Egypt, and with the ulcers and the scurvy and the itch, of which you cannot be healed. The Lord will smite you with madness and blindness and confusion of mind; and you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways." (28.27-29)

No doubt these frightening threats were related to the concern - and a very rigorous concern - on the matter of obedience, made all the more stringent as the concluding sentences of the book of laws, the Law of Holiness (Leviticus) and of Deuteronomy with its sentences of "blessing" and "cursing" show. We have implicit here a conviction about God's sovereign power over life and death. The severity of the language may be understood against the conventions of the time and perhaps the danger of apostasy from the God of their fathers to idolatry. Medical science can explain consumption and fever, ulcers, boils, scurvy and itch, in terms of certain viruses or germs which would be generally accepted. For the Israelite, to whom illness was a judgment of God, and which he could not understand, the easy way out was to pin it on God. In a more sophisticated way, the Christian doctor relates the whole miracle of scientific healing ultimately to God's ordering of his world as something which can respond to intellect and reason. In all these expressions in the OT, there is a deep conviction that sickness and disease constituted a punishment from God for breaking the terms, whether ritual or moral, of the covenant. Further, no prospective priest with any kind of deformity or ailment could serve in the temple (Lev 21.18-23) for his sickness showed that he had been defiled by sin, and therefore broken off relationship with God.

/35 The belief that long life was bound up with the practice of law and goodness is evidenced in the words of the Psalmist:

"What man is there who desires life,  
and covets many days, that he may enjoy  
good? Keep your tongue from evil and  
your lips from speaking deceit. Depart  
from evil and do good." (34.12-14)

Sickness, too, seems to be implied in the words, "My son, do not scorn correction from Yahweh, do not resent his rebuke; for Yahweh reproves the man he loves, as a father checks a well-loved son." (Prov 3.11-12) Thus sickness could be a way by which God brought a man back to his senses and to the way of obedience. Judaism only underlined the firmness of its conviction or dogma on the close relationship of sin and sickness when, in a situation of uncertainties, it tried to spell out the way sickness expressed itself in terms of various maladies, e.g., ulcers and dropsy were due to immorality or licentiousness, leprosy to blasphemy, bloodshed and perjury. The transmission of guilt within the family or group unit led to the most cruel of interpretations, e.g., that children born crippled or epileptic were being punished because their parents were unfaithful. It was a situation in which knowledge was uncertain but answers superimposed in the interest of dogma, e.g., the gratuitous suggestion that the sin of a child in the womb could cause its mother's illness. /36

We can see, then, that in the earlier phases of OT thought at least, disease was understood as the result of disobedience or sin brought about by God. Such an understanding persisted into the NT period and appears to be implied in the narrative of the healing of the paralysed man (Mark 2.1-10) or of the man blind from birth (John 9.2). In the case of Job, it was explained in terms of the Adversary who acted with the divine permission (Job 2.7). Such an Adversary appears to be a buffer to the divine transcendence but, to some extent, does relieve Yahweh of responsibility for the direct action though ultimately it only happens because Yahweh permits it. If, however, the Hebrew tended to explain

any form of sickness as the result of the divine action, the opposite is also true. Yahweh was regarded as the Healer of his people and where people were healed, it was taken as an indication of the divine forgiveness. Indeed a close relation existed between the fulfilment of the divine commands throughout life and a healthy and prolonged existence. The blessings of material prosperity as well as good health were bound up with this. The promises from the Lord, described as "Healer", are expressed for us in Exodus: "If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in his eyes...I will put none of the diseases that I put upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord, your Healer." (15.26). As a result of looking only to God for healing, it is not unnatural that it should be regarded as an affront to Yahweh to resort to a human physician and indeed such a consultation was forbidden (Asa in II Chronicles 16.12 was an exception). Occasionally the prophets would prognosticate, e.g., Nathan can tell David that he will not die but his child will (II Samuel 12.14); Elijah can say that it was Yahweh who brought about the death of the widow of Zarephath's son (I K.17.20); Elisha's command was the channel of God's healing action for Naaman in a narrative where the primitive idea of Yahweh as God of the Israelite land is set over against that of Rimmon, as the god of Syria. Jordan in the land of Judah is where Naaman bathes. He takes away some of the earth that represents Yahweh's possession to set up a shrine to him in the temple of Rimmon (2 Kings 5.14-18). The only prescription in the OT apparently was a poultice of figs to heal a boil, given by Isaiah and effective in healing king Hezekiah (2 Kings 20.7). Since sickness was regarded as due to God's action, it had to do with the individual's relationship with God, who alone could heal. This is probably why, generally, there is no outline of medical treatment in the OT, except for a few folk remedies.

### New Testament

Those who are engaged in the ministry of divine healing today in a convinced and active way, have certain attitudes that should be mentioned perhaps here. They can be people who have experienced what they believe to be the action of

God in an exceptional situation when, e.g., a nervous condition of distressing consequences is deemed irreparable by doctors receives healing by prayer or prayer and the laying on of hands or by proxy; or a cancer which has an alarming prognosis by the specialists disappears and never returns. These people are so certain that God has acted that they repudiate any scepticism as to what has taken place and any attempt to undermine the records of divine healing in the NT. Often especially in the renewal of the Holy Spirit movement, they will have a lively conviction about the activity of demons and even if not in an extravagant or unwise practice of exorcism, they nevertheless believe that through prayer individually or in groups, such a sufferer is "delivered" or restored to peace of mind and even to faith. It is clear, of course, that if there are those who experience healing, there are also those who know themselves in an extraordinary way as the channel of healing. Thus healer and healed often help to make up the considerable and growing number of those who engage in prayer groups and healing services and there can be little doubt that God is speaking to the Church through what is happening and the Church should be ready to listen.

That these things are happening helps to give confidence in the biblical records especially in the gospels and we have books on divine healing that do not attempt to argue the case for divine healing but accept it as a proven fact. We have only got to think of the World Council Studies No.3 on "The Healing Church", published in 1965 or, more recently, the Bishop of Selby's book on "The Christian Healing Ministry" published in 1981 and reviewed in Irish Biblical Studies of April 1982. Thus our approach to the NT evidence is a positive and descriptive one at this stage, though some of the critical aspects have already been looked at above.

Those engaged in divine healing services have certain presuppositions. They believe that it is the will of God to heal. They are aware of many cases where such healing does not take place but this does not prevent them believing that since Jesus healed, it is the will

of God to heal. It is evident that on no occasion do we find Jesus saying in relation to a patient, "Heal if it is your will.". Thus the approach of such is, it is claimed, all the more effective because there is no room for any hesitation on the matter of healing, and this lack of hesitancy is itself, not a claim on God, but evidence that God is already active in creating the conditions for healing. Of course there are many in the Church who see a danger in this. It can raise expectations that may only be disappointed. It can encourage unhappy comparisons and a sense of rejection and even create an attitude of hostility. Starting with the situation that not all are healed, such members claim that it is clearly not God's will always to heal. The suffering can be something that ministers to the deepening and maturing of the personality, as it appears to have done in the case of Paul whose "thorn in the flesh" does not appear to have been taken away. With these preliminary observations, we turn now to look specifically at the NT evidence.

### The Gospels

In the NT, it is the Gospels that provide us with more information than any other writings except the book of Acts. In the Epistles there are few references though enough to give us some idea of the thought and practice of the early church. /38

In the Gospels, the Jesus presented to us is one who regularly heals and exorcizes demons. Such activity is not divorced from his preaching and teaching ministry. It is curious, for example, that when Jesus performs his first exorcism in the synagogue in Mark (1.23-26), the people relate the exorcism to the teaching with authority (27). The omission of the section by Matthew would appear to indicate he found the connection awkward and especially as he omits so little of Mark. With the emphasis, too, that he makes on instruction, the omission becomes all the more significant. Further confirmation of the awkwardness of the passage is indicated in Luke (4.33-37) who re-shapes it to read, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out."(36)



The link of preaching, teaching and healing is confirmed for us by the summaries of Jesus' ministry found here and there in Mark and repeated in the other Synoptic Gospels (not found in John). An extended and elaborated form is found in Matthew where Jesus is described as teaching and preaching the kingdom of God and healing every disease and infirmity among the people, viz, "those afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, /39 and paralytics." (Matt 4.23; cf Mark 1.34; 3.10). The disciples, twelve in number as representing the total church and perhaps the New Israel, are allowed to share in this ministry as those commissioned by Jesus. He bestows on them the same authority (*exousia*) as his own to expel unclean spirits. They share in healing the sick, anointing them with oil (Mark 6.7,13). Oil is not mentioned in connection with Jesus' acts of healing. Does Mark imply that Jesus does not need to use such methods for if later he uses spittle (8.23), it is his own? Even in the account of healing the blind man in John's Gospel, the clay is made by Jesus' own spittle (9.6). The only other place where anointing with oil is mentioned in connection with healing is in James 5.14ff. For some reason which is not clear, both Matthew and Luke omit the mention of anointing with oil. In any case the mission of Jesus links up with that of the disciples as preaching, teaching and healing.

Such healing, however, must be understood within the context of the whole ministry of Jesus. Matthew in a summary peculiar to him (though it may represent a condensing of Mark 1.14b-15), /40 presents Jesus' message as "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (4.17). The essential meaning of "repent" (*μετάνοιέω*) has to be understood in the light of the Hebrew word it translates i.e., *נָחַם*. Johannes Behm, in his article on *μετάνοιέω* and *μετάνοια*, claims that they "are the forms in which the NT gives new expression to the ancient concept of religious and moral conversion." /41 Such "conversion" or "change" is to take place in view of the nearness of the kingdom or indeed of its presence. Such a "kingdom" or "reign" is present in Jesus' ministry where "the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are

cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the good news preached to them." (Matt 11.4-5). /42 That preaching has priority with Jesus is especially clear in Mark, e.g., after considerable healing activity, Jesus is told that the crowd is looking for him. His reply has a peculiar significance for Mark i.e., that he has to preach elsewhere and this was why he "came out" (ἐξῆλθον) - is there a suggestion of pre-existence here, making the purpose all the more striking? /43 That preaching is prior is also suggested by the narrative of the healing of the paralysed man where Jesus first pronounces forgiveness before healing the man (2.1-10) and if we are to link this up with the account of healing of a similar case at the pool of Bethesda, there the man is told, "Sin no more" (5.14). Jesus is concerned with the whole person, within whom there is an area from which come all manner of evil thoughts, suggesting the Rabbinic explanation of the source of sin as the "the evil impulse" (  $\gamma\eta\eta\ \nu\epsilon\psi\chi\eta$  ); Mark 7.21-23). In this connection, it is interesting to note that the term used for "save" (σωζω) also mean to "make whole" or "heal". It is never used for the healing of one part of a man but for the whole man and it leaves open the interpretation that such healing goes beyond the mere physical fact. This is confirmed probably by the fact that the verb is used for the healing of the woman with the issue of blood and for the woman who was a sinner (Luke 8.50;7.50). /44 It would appear that Jesus' priority is to proclaim salvation, the setting free of the man from all that impairs life (Luke 19.9,10). Such "setting free" is bound up with the Cross in the overall purpose of God in Jesus who "came to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10.45; cf. also 14.24) While healing in itself can dramatize the meaning of Jesus' mission, it does seem, in the ministry of Jesus, to occupy a subordinate position in relation to the proclamation of the kingdom, the sovereign reign of God, but is not to be divorced from it.

It is interesting that it is only in the Matthaean tradition, we have Jesus quote from Hosea, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice" (9.13;12.7); we have the parable of forgiveness to seventy times seven (18.12) and the

beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy" (5.7). The first of the quotations from Hosea has the setting of Jesus with taxgatherers and sinners at a meal. It is linked up with the saying about only the sick needing a doctor. Further, the practical expression of mercy is visiting the sick (25.36,43). Thus, if we are to understand Jesus' ministry, we have to see it in terms of the exercise of "mercy" (ἔλεος). ἔλεος, however, hardly brings out the fulness of the Hebrew word behind it, רַחֵם (hesed) which embraces within itself God's gracious and loving action. The continuing support for such a meaning is evident in the RSV rendering of "stedfast love" and the Jerusalem Bible "love". Jesus' ministry is further defined in Matthew by a characteristic use of an OT quotation from Deutero-Isaiah, "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases" (8.17) and this in a context of healing and exorcism. Indeed Jesus' ministry of healing can be seen as a fulfilment of the second greatest command - to love one's neighbour as oneself. There is an interesting and perhaps significant reserve in the use of the verb "have compassion" (σπλαγχνίζομαι) in the synoptic gospels. It is spoken only of Jesus whether in response to the leper (Mark 1.41) or to the crowds (Mark 6.34; 8.2), /45 or used by him in his parables whether of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10.33) or the father who welcomes the prodigal son (Lk 15.20) or the master who shows mercy to his servant heavily in debt (Mt 18.27). It would appear that this love or compassion was something that the early church discerned as supremely characteristic of Jesus in relation to the needy and the diseased. If healing is in obedience to the will of God as expressed in the command to love one's neighbour, to have stedfast love inclusive of pity and compassion, then the Church is compelled to seek healing for others as Jesus did. We are to seek through the same Holy Spirit who came upon Jesus the fulness of the divine compassion especially in ministering to those who are ill, who are in fact our "neighbour", or in whom we find Jesus (Mt 25.40).

In any consideration of divine healing, the place of faith has to be examined. It is evident that in the

case of Jesus, his relationship with God played a significant part and is implied in all the gospel accounts. We can call it "faith" if we will /46 and suppose a faith relationship of Jesus with God, implicit in the cry, "Abba, Father." The person who becomes the channel of healing can often be a person of deep and rich experience of God in Christ, and his close relationship with God can be important. Yet we have also to remember that there are those without any visible faith or awareness of God who can also be instruments of healing. It is something that is inherent in their make-up and something that is effective in making people well. /47 There is also the faith of the sick person, who responds in confidence to the healer. Jesus believed that sicknesses were not to be fully overcome until the reign of God was consummated, but, as the powers of the kingdom were present in him in the here and now, healing took place, e.g., he can say, "If I by the Spirit of God, expel demons then the kingdom of God is upon you." (Mt 12.28) Yet exorcisms or healings are shown to have a close relationship with faith on a number of occasions. In the case of the paralytic, the faith that is mentioned can include that of the paralytic for himself in addition to that of the four who bore him. In the case of the epileptic boy there is no suggestion of faith on the boy's part but merely that of the father on his behalf. (Mk 2.1-12; 9. 14-29). Jesus can tell the father of the epileptic boy, "All things are possible to him who believes," (Mk 9.23) - a statement that is omitted in the parallel accounts in Matthew (17.14-21) and Luke (9.37-43a). Indeed the faith of the father is not recorded in the parallel accounts but the emphasis is on the lack of faith of the disciples and this is common to the Q account. Matthew places the whole emphasis of the account on the reply of Jesus when the disciples come to ask him, "Why could we not cast him out?" Jesus' explanation is, "It was because of your lack of faith." (17.20) On the other hand in Mark where the same question is put, the answer is different, "This type (of demon) does not come out except by prayer." (Mk 9.29) It is possible to maintain, however, that Mark has both emphases, lack of faith of the disciples being suggested in the address of Jesus, "O faithless generation" (Mk 9.19) and the Matthaean account represents an abbreviation of

Mark, slanted toward an emphasis on faith. In the Lucan account, there is, strangely no mention of prayer nor is there the same stress on faith that we have in Matthew. It would appear that the story developed on different lines, or, more probably, we have two independent condensations of Mark.

It is possible that in all Marcan accounts of healing faith is explicit or implicit (1.30,40;2.5;3.10;5.34;7.25,29,32;8.22). In Luke's own source we have accounts of healing where faith is not mentioned and in narratives that are not unlike those in Mark, i.e., the case of the woman with an infirmity (13.11) and of the dropsied man (14.2), though Luke, as he so often does in the book of Acts, may assume that faith even if not mentioned is present. What kind of faith are we to understand in these accounts? Is it a condition required of one who wished to be healed by Jesus' supernatural power or the power he exercised in the fulness of the Holy Spirit? Fridrichsen maintains that faith is to be taken in its completely natural sense, as the tribute due to a great prophet, a homage that is graciously rewarded, an expression of confidence that Jesus does not refuse.

/43 Is it then simply trust in Jesus' miraculous powers? /49 It is clear that it is not the kind of faith that creates disciples necessarily. It would be surprising if all who were healed became disciples when we consider how few members made up the Church according to Luke's pre-Pentecostal account, i.e., 120. It is not what we understand by the faith which puts a man in the right with God though it could and probably did make many better Jews and more committed to God. The term for miracle in Mark δύνάμις, implies a demonstration of "power", perhaps Jesus is the channel of the power of God or of God's direct exercise of power in an eschatological context. Healing is often understood as response to the "trust" or "faith" of the sick person. Indeed some would judge faith to be the sole ground of healing. It does appear true of the synoptic tradition that Jesus seldom acts in healing unless it is requested. Indeed it is possible that he did not act in healing at Nazareth because they did not ask for it, i.e., it was not to be considered a qualification of Jesus'

power to heal. /51 In the Fourth Gospel, we are introduced to another term for miracle, σημεῖον, "sign", but "sign" in a very distinctive sense. If we can take it as the Johannine equivalent of δύναμις, it is only because it, like δύναμις in Mark becomes the special term for miracle in John. /52 The meaning of "signs" is bound up with the person of Jesus. They help to reveal his person and the response is in terms of faith not in the miracle but in Him who acts within the "sign" and reveals himself (2.11;4.54). It is hardly necessary to state that in divine healing today there can be a discernment of Jesus' power and presence and an experience of his self-revelation which can transform and renew a total personality, so that even if there are considerable problems for many about the historicity of John's Gospel there can scarcely be any misunderstanding of the reality of what he says in relation to Christian experience.

In the Gospels, however, the emphasis is most often on the will and action of Jesus in healing. There may and most often was response but also the lack of it. It is not always clear that "faith" as such is present where some receive healing. Healing itself could be a demand to face up to the challenge of the imminent reign of God in the person of Jesus and whatever healings are done are evidence of that kingdom's presence and indeed of Jesus as the Coming One. It is not untrue to the NT witness to say that "God bestows it freely but not universally within the Church. Healing does not always come to those who pray for it, and it is given upon occasion to those who least expect it." /53 Yet Jesus does command faith, however we explain it (Mt 8.13;9.22) and prayer (Mk 9.29; cf. the Epistle of James where the "prayer of faith" brings healing 5.15) and healing may be merely the first stage on the road to discipleship as the Johannine tradition shows (John 9.6, 35-38).

### The Book of Acts

Here the space devoted to healing is much less than that in the gospels and for those who like statistics - though what their significance is, is not always clear - it is something like five per cent over against some forty per cent in each of the gospels. Peter who is so prominent

in the gospels (though he does seem superseded by the beloved disciple in John, that elusive figure) but never in relation to healing except as part of the healing church on mission (Mk 6.7ff and pars), is now in the foreground of those engaged in healing, a healing which links closely with the early kerygmatic speeches of Peter, themselves only delivered by him as one filled with the Holy Spirit (3.1-10-9.32-35,36-41;5.15-16). It is notable that although James, the Lord's brother, appears to have had a position of leadership in the church at Jerusalem, no healing activity is attributed to him but perhaps an authoritative position deriving from his administrative ability. Nor apart from the provisions for the admission of the Gentiles, representing the decision of the Jerusalem Council, do we find him ever speaking or preaching. Luke's hero, Paul, comes into prominence in the latter half of Acts when Peter falls into the background, and both preaching and healing are spoken of him (14.8-11;19.11-12;20.9-12;28.9; cf 19.11). If "many signs and wonders" are spoken of the apostles (2.43) healings are reserved for Peter, Paul, Hellenists Stephen and Philip, and Barnabas, the companion of Paul (14.3) (It is possible that Ananias who lays hand on Paul that he might receive the Holy Spirit is regarded as performing the miracle of restoration of Paul's sight: 9.17-18). While "signs and wonders" are attributed to all the apostles (2.43;5.12), the phrase does seem to be a stereotype where it is taken for granted that such take place but there is no detailed information available. It is otherwise with Jesus, attested by "signs and wonders" (2.22) but if the apostles are equally attested by signs and wonders (cf. the prayer in 4.30), the details are not forthcoming except in the case of those mentioned above. If John accompanies Peter in the narrative of the healing of the lame man, it is only as a silent partner (3.1,3,11) for Peter alone preaches and heals. It is possible, however, that Peter is representative of John (see 4.13) as he was of the apostles at Pentecost (2.14). On the other hand John may be present to show that the Church carries out Jesus' command to go in twos.

What about the place of faith? Faith is not mentioned explicitly in relation to the healing of the lame man

(Acts 3.1ff) though his whole joyous response in walking, leaping and praising God makes such a deduction irresistible. There is no need to mention faith in the case of Aeneas who is one of the saints (9.32f) or of the devout Dorcas (9.36-41). If a girl is set free from a spirit of divination, it is done in the name of Jesus who himself has triumphed over evil spirits but there is no suggestion of conversion to discipleship (16.16-24). Both believers and non-believers share in the healing activity of the church done in the name of Jesus and attesting the presence of his Holy Spirit. It is possible that Luke understands that all believers take part in healing, e.g., the participation of Philip, Stephen, Ananias and Barnabas (9.17-19;14.3). News of the healing activity brings the response of faith on a number of occasions in different areas, e.g., in Lydda and Sharon (9.35), Joppa (9.42). The initiative that led to healing varies as in the Gospels. Sometimes it is someone outside the church like the lame man (3.3) or within the church fellow-christians (9.38) or an apostle, whether Peter (9.34) or Paul with Eutychus (20.10ff). Paul could act when he could discern (cf. gifts of Spirit in 1 Cor. 12ff) faith or perform an exorcism when the demoniac made herself a nuisance (16.18) or act in healing for the father of the leading man, Publius of Malta (28.8). Aspects of healing in Luke appear to be absent in the book of Acts, e.g., compassion, fulfilment of Scripture, the cry for healing. Yet too much should not be made of this since (1) Luke assumes his Gospel will also have been read; (2) He is writing an outline of the progress of the church's mission and cannot include more than a brief account of many events (there is of course a certain amount of repetition, e.g., three accounts of Paul's conversion, and in the narrative of the events leading to the admission of the Gentiles but it can be argued that this is a deliberate emphasis on events of major importance); (3) His dominant purpose is to tell of the "Acts of the Holy Spirit". The healing miracles are only important as bound up with, and expressive of, the good news proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit (1.8). Whether it is healing or preaching, the Holy Spirit becomes the alter ego of Jesus, representing him to the world.



Epistles

In the NT epistles (and here we are primarily concerned with Paul), there are only a few references to sickness and healing. This is perhaps only to be expected since the letters are addressed to specific situations though it may be odd that it is not raised as a major issue. Is the explanation in the fact that healing was assumed as the regular practice of the church associated with worship and linked with the gifts expected from the Holy Spirit, e.g., Paul appears to expect that when people were admitted into the church by baptism on profession of faith that they too would share in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and these included "gifts of healings"? To suggest, as Fridrichsen does, that Paul knew the tradition of Jesus' healing miracles but because he was determined not to know Jesus after the flesh, he preferred to concentrate on the risen Lord, is hardly open to cogent proof. /54 But problems of healing did not appear to arise to afford an opportunity for Paul to show such knowledge which indeed he may assume. It is not improbable that Paul found the practice of divine healing in the early church, perhaps at Damascus in the first instance, and then in other churches. Thus he does not find it necessary to raise the issue as it was part of the regular practice of the church. If the illness of Epaphroditus is mentioned - so serious that he nearly died - Paul does not tell us how he was healed but merely says, "God had mercy on him" (Phil 2.27). The form of expression appears ordinary for such a signal recovery. Was it at some distance from the event or was it not regarded as anything unusual? We have no mention of exorcisms or demon possession or raising from the dead. The healing would not be confined necessarily to the Christian community for unbelievers would be present at the services in the house-churches, e.g., the statement that tongues were a sign for unbelievers (1 Cor 14.22).

"Gifts of healings" is a unique phrase, unknown in the rest of the NT (1 Cor 12.9). Perhaps not unrelated to it is the "gift of faith". These "gifts of healings" lend themselves to various interpretations of which we may mention only two of interest: (1) different gifts for different diseases - in the nature of the case something which cannot be proved. Is such an interpretation

warranted by the experience of some branch of the church? (2) Different members within the body of Christ one of whom has gifts of healing which are effective for one type of person, another for another type (or types). There is some evidence in support of this where one channel of healing, successful for one, fails with another, a pattern repeated over and over again. The "gifts" are gifts within the body of Christ and the totality of these gifts are operative for the widest number of people. Related to this may be another gift of the Spirit, that of "faith" but interpretations of this are also uncertain. Is it a gift of faith for a specific act of healing in the services of worship which may not be present at other times, an ad hoc gift? Is it faith for others outside the worshipping community that they may be healed? It is of course not Paul's typical use of the word "faith", faith that "justifies" but a faith possibly unique in Paul's writings. We know that Jesus talks about the faith that moves mountains, the faith to which all things are possible, and within the history of pietism we have those "giants of faith" through whose prayers and expectant faith remarkable things have happened. It is easy for the more rational approach to be sceptical about the claims that are made but the claims are made and continue to be made. Are we here faced with issues that lie outside our grasp, where we need to accept a reverent agnosticism or an acknowledgement of mysteries beyond our "ken"? This faith, however, mentioned in 1 Cor 12 appears to be a special gift, bestowed probably in the services of worship and related to some situation of which we have no certain knowledge; it still remains a possibility that it is related to acts of divine healing, as it is throughout the Gospels.

### Healed and Unhealed

The problem of those within the church who are not healed emerges also within the NT. Jesus can speak of many lepers in Israel at the time of Naaman, the Syrian, but God only visited Naaman with healing (Lk 4.27), nor do we have any records in Luke of any healing taking place in Jesus' home town, Nazareth, though we do have a few healed in Mark(6.5;cf Lk4.28-30). A major problem

for Paul was his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor 12.7,8), which was not as far as we know healed. It would appear that Paul views it, rather after the fashion of the OT thought, as given by God, e.g., the passive "was given me" suggests God's action (12.7). Yet it is described as a "messenger of Satan". Is this merely a metaphorical or traditional statement, or does Paul conceive the "messenger of Satan" (cf. the "Satan" of Job) as fulfilling the divine intention? The result was that Paul gave himself repeatedly to prayer - the "three times" is interpreted by commentators from Chrysostom to C.K. Barrett as "repeatedly". It gave him a fresh experience of the grace of God as sufficient for the time of weakness, so that in the end he can say, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses...for when I am weak, then I am strong" (9,10). Thus here we see something of what illness can do for the believer, and how the divine purpose can bring good out of evil

What does scripture say about the relation of sickness to the will of God? Jesus carried on a ministry of healing because he believed that sickness and disease were not God's will if perfectly fulfilled. He prayed and worked for their removal. He looked upon the healings and exorcisms that took place as evidence of the Holy Spirit's activity through him and of the presence of the kingdom of God (Mt 12.27). He saw himself engaged in a struggle with the forces of evil and disease and, on one occasion, when the mission of the seventy included exorcisms, he declared that he saw Satan falling from Heaven (Lk 10.18). Such a struggle suggests that illness was not God's will. /55 Those who heal in the book of Acts also assume that healing is part of the divine purpose (3.1ff;9.32-43) and Paul's persistent prayer for his illness to be removed could suggest that he believed it was God's will he should be healed. Yet even when such a prayer was not answered, it is evident that illness can become a means of deepening and enriching the spiritual resources of the one afflicted.

The OT background has shown that there are certain assumptions about the relation of sickness and sin.(vide supra). If a man was ill, the Jew would ask what sin he had committed. The child of David and Bethsheba died in spite of David's entreaty (2 Sam 12.14) and it is seen as the divine act of judgment. The interpretation of

sickness and death as the divine judgment goes back to Genesis (3.16-19). While the righteous man is promised freedom from disease (Ex 16.26), the disobedient are promised "sudden terror, consumption and fever that waste the eyes and cause life to pine away" (Lev 26.14-6; vide supra). Later, apart from the conventional ending the book of Job leaves the problem of sickness and suffering unanswered. Yet such sickness together with all the misfortunes that came upon Job brought him to a deeper level of thought and understanding than might have been possible without it. He saw God as present in the midst of sickness and pain.

Later, in NT times, sickness comes generally to be understood as due to evil, even demonic forces, and not divine. In Jesus, the bearer of the Holy Spirit, God exercises his sovereignty in expelling demons. Such expulsion of demons is by way of anticipation of Jesus' triumph in his death and resurrection, when the Kingdom came with power (Mk 9.1ff). In John's Gospel Jesus refutes those who say that the parents of the man who was blind had sinned /57 i.e., he does not subscribe to the general Jewish point of view. Rather, the Jesus of John claims that, in the Providence of God, it was to manifest the divine working (Jn 9.3). It is thus possible to maintain that, in the NT, sickness affords an opportunity for God to manifest his redemptive or liberating power. We may note also that, in what appears to have been mental illness, the cause could be identified as the action of demonic spirits (Mk 1.21-27). /58

This is not to say that there cannot be a link between sin and sickness. This is implied in the healing of the paralytic, where Jesus first pronounces forgiveness (Mk 2.1-12); and of the man ill for thirty-eight years in John (5.14). Paul can say that what a man sows he reaps; and this can apply to sickness that a man brings on himself by evil ways (Rom 1.27). Jesus, by his emphasis on the need to forgive to seventy times seven, i.e., without any limitation, would appear to link it with wholeness of living. Refusal to forgive brings its own spiritual illness with it and can, as experience tells us, affect

the physical personality, so closely is the body linked with the inner spirit. Such refusal to forgive can itself indicate a situation of unforgiveness in relation to God. Jesus, by interiorizing the law, e.g., from murder to anger, and from adultery to wrong desire, by teaching that what comes out of a man defiles him, shows where the real centre of sickness, spiritual sickness, is to be found.  
/59

### Means of Healing

In the NT we find certain means used in connection with healing. With Jesus it could be merely the word of command (Mt 9.6) or a touch (Mt 9.29), or the use of saliva and clay, saliva at the time being regarded as having healing properties (Jn 9.6). It is possible also that he used oil, since his disciples used it for anointing the sick (Mk 6.13). Similarly in the book of Acts, healing can be by word for exorcism (16.18) or healing of a cripple (14.10), or by touch (5.12); or by word and touch (3.1-10). In the case of the apparently dead Eutychus, Paul embraced him (20.9-12). Sometimes healing is related to the shadow of an apostle (5.15), or by cloths from his body (19.12)

In the epistle of James, the subject of healing is dealt with in the context of a discussion on prayer. The sick man is to call the elders of the church, i.e., those who, like the elders in the synagogue, were men of authority, responsible in this case for pastoral oversight and spiritual direction. The sick person does not appear to be able to attend the church where prayers could be offered for his recovery. It does look as if we have an ideal situation here where "the prayer of faith shall heal the sick and the Lord shall raise him up." (5.15) As in Jewish thought, healing and forgiveness go together, "if he has sinned, the Lord will forgive him." James makes no qualification of this confidence, though he must have known of those who were not healed even with the laying on of hands and anointing. Anointing with oil for illness was common in the ancient world. Jewish Rabbis visited the sick and anointed them with oil to cure such ailments as headache. Was the oil (and saliva, clay, shadow,

cloths ?) a supplementary aid from popular folklore to awaken faith? Whatever the explanation, James shows remarkable confidence in the healing of the total person with the main emphasis, in the context, on the corporate prayer of the leaders of the church.

Whatever the variation in means, it is God who does the healing. Jesus, Son of God, in the power and fulness of the Spirit, had a closeness with the Father, a power of discernment and penetration into the varied situation of human need and a compassion that were unique. Even if science today has a great deal to tell us about psycho-therapeutics which help, in part, to a better understanding of Jesus as healer, it can hardly give us the full truth about his unique relationship with God and with people.

The biblical records tell us little about the relationship between medicine and the healing practised by Jesus and the apostles. We have seen in the OT a situation where resort to a human physician was generally forbidden. In the NT we are told that Luke is "the beloved physician" (Col 1.4) and, within his writings, supporting evidence of such a profession was formerly claimed. It is certainly notable that, whereas Mark can say of the woman with the haemorrhage that "she had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors, and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse" (5.26), Luke omits such a statement. Did he not care for the depreciation of members of his profession?

The NT gives us little or no information about co-operation, or the lack of it, with medical practitioners and in the circumstances of Palestine of the time this perhaps was hardly to be expected. Yet both divine healing, in the sense in which we have used it, and the healing of medical practitioners come from God, the Creator; i.e., both in their own way warrant the description "divine". We too readily take for granted the immense miracle of modern medicine but should never forget, e.g., that the powers of observation and deduction from the facts presented are all of God. It is notable that in the case of the woman with the haemorrhage, it was only because the physicians could not help her that she

came to Jesus. And there are numerous occasions when many doctors, aware that they cannot secure healing by their skills, happily associate themselves with the practice of divine healing and value the importance of prayer, of pastoral counsel and the laying on of hands, and of the possible total renewal, bodily and spiritual, of the patient. /60

It is time to attempt some conclusion. The complexity of the biblical evidence shows itself in the varied understanding within the church on the biblical basis and practice of divine healing. None, however, will dispute that it is a common conviction of the biblical writers that God is creator, that ultimately he is sovereign in his world and that nothing happens apart from him. It is such that on occasion the OT writers can speak of an evil spirit coming from the Lord. What God made was good and by insisting on this what is not good can be attributed to other causes and in particular to man's sin. A general conviction is that, in the fall of Adam, creation was associated with that fall and sickness in addition (cf Rom 8.22)

God has the power to recreate or restore. Through Jesus Christ his plan is to set people free from all that cripples life, whether sin or sickness. Thus the NT can speak of new birth, of new people, of a new heaven and a new earth, of putting off the old man and putting on the new. In Jesus' person healings and exorcisms took place, which he adduced as evidence that the reign of God was present (cf Mt 12.28). In him God's recreating power for physical sicknesses was present; but such restoration or sickness was not to be divorced from the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom or, in the apostolic church, of Christ crucified.

While Jesus stressed the importance of faith in relation to healing, yet it would appear that bodily healing could take place without total renewal or even without faith being present in the one healed. It was a continuing problem for the church as to why some believers were not healed and, further, why those outside the church, could perform healings or exorcisms which the disciples could not. (Cf Mk 9.28,29,38) While various means were used in connection with healings, including remedies recommended at the time, any healings were due to the divine action and

not to anything man could do. Again, whatever may be the link between sin and sickness - and Jesus again and again stressed the need of forgiveness from God to man and man with man- compassion rather than judgment was the main imperative of divine healing.

We may add that there is no specific requirement as to the location of any healing whether in the synagogue or the congregation at worship or in the open. Jesus did give the promise according to the gospel tradition that where two or three are gathered in his name, there he is in the midst. James called the elders of the church. In the church at Corinth, "gifts of healings" appear to have been exercised at the gatherings for worship (1 Cor 12-14). The church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is called to the ministry of healing; but always with the full recognition of the expertise of medical practitioners and in full co-operation, recognizing that all this remarkable knowledge is part of the divine gift to the church and to the world.

### Notes

1. This paper was first conceived in the course of preparing a report for the Doctrine Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The writer gladly acknowledges his debt to many of the insights of members of the Committee, especially those engaged in the ministry of Divine Healing. The views of the enlarged paper are, however, essentially his own.
2. Cf W.G. Kümmel, Man in the NT (ET), London 1963, p47 "Paul knows...only the complete man who is sarx, soma, psuche etc"; Ninian Smart, The Religious Experience of Mankind, London 1971,p370; E. Jacob, Theology of the OT, NYork 1958,p174 in Robert B. Laurin, (Ed), Contemporary OT Theologians, London 1970,p157
3. Gerhard von Rad, Genesis, (ET), London 1961,p56
4. Kümmel, op.cit., p60f
5. Cf. C.F.D. Moule (ED.), Miracles, London 1965, pp13,89
6. Moule, op.cit.,p15



7. ibid; the argument, however freshly expressed, is of course not new.
8. H. van der Loos, The Miracles of Jesus, Leiden 1965 (a massive book extending to some 748 pages!), p41
9. Moule, op.cit., p83
10. ibid
11. ibid, p86
12. ibid
13. ibid , p90
14. J.P.Migne, Patres Latini, Vols XLI-XLII, Augustini Opera Omnia, XXI, VIII 2, p721: Portentum ergo fit, non contra naturam, sed contra quam est nota natura
15. ibid: Quomodo est enim contra naturam, quod Dei fit voluntate, cum voluntas tanti utique conditoris conditae cujusque natura sit? (For those who wish to read De Civitate Dei, it is available in translation by John Healey, The City of God, Ed. by R.V.G. Tasker, 2 Vols in Everyman's Library, London 1950; the relevant pages are Vol II, p329)
16. K. Barth, Die Kirchliche Dogmatik, Zollikon-Zürich, 1947-1959, II, I, p608; cf. the fine statements of A. Mitchell Hunter, Calvin, London 1957, p57f; Chas Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol III, London 1960, pp615-636.
17. op.cit., p16; again an attractive presentation of a familiar argument.
18. Cf. Morton T. Kelsey, Healing and Christianity, London 1973, p10.
19. The discussion that follows should underline this fact.
20. M. Luther, Works, Vol 24, p368 where he speaks of the signs mentioned in Mk 16.20 (not original to Mark, of course) as substantiating the new message of the apostle; cf. also "for this (ie salvation) one does not need any new signs or miracles."
21. ibid, p371

22. Quoted by M. Kelsey from W.J. Kooiman, By Faith Alone: The Life of Martin Luther, London 1954, p192, a book not available to the writer; the account is given in Luther, Letters of Spiritual Counsel, 1955, pp51f
23. G. Rupp, Martin Luther and the Jews, London 1972, pp12,17
24. John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. by H. Beveridge, Book IV, XIX, 18, 19
25. Cf. John Dillenberger, M. Luther, Selections, NYork 1961 pp456-7; also Joseph Lortz, The Reformation in Germany I, London 1968, p114f
26. D. Guthrie, NT Theology, London 1981 where "healing" does not occur in the index nor is it mentioned under the heading, "Jesus"; G.E. Ladd, A Theology of the NT, London 1974, p536 where he suggests that the gifts of apostleship and prophecy were given for the founding of the church and that possibly the distinctively supernatural gifts belong primarily to the apostolic - a cautious gesture to the dispensational position.
27. R. Anderson, The Silence of God, London 1952, pp153ff
28. For the explanation of "sign" in the Fourth Gospel and the close tie-up of its interpretation to Jesus' self-revelation, see below.
29. Faith and Understanding(ET), London 1966, pp247-261
30. ibid p249
31. ibid
32. ibid, p260
33. Kelsey, op.cit.p233 who assumes no such modification
34. Cf. M. Noth, Exodus, (ET), London 1962, pp155ff where he suggests that 3b-6 is a latter addition and notes the deuteronomistic flavour of vs5.
35. On this cf. Kelsey, op.cit.p37
36. A. Oepke, art. ἰσχύει in TDNT, Vol III, p201
37. Morris Maddocks, The Christian Healing Ministry, London 1981.
38. Cf. Anton Fridrichsen, The Problem of Miracle in

Primitive Christianity (ET), Minneapolis 1972,  
especially p40

39. The word is  $\sigma\epsilon\lambda\eta\nu\iota\alpha\zeta\acute{o}\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ , literally "moon-struck" reflecting the primitive view that the moon had some impact of the health of man; for the early view that the planets who were personified, impressed their own characters on human affairs according to their distinctive nature, cf. F. von Oeffle, on "Sun, Moon and Stars" (Introductory) in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. XII, pp48-62 but especially p49)

40. The verbal identification in the message of John (3.2) with that of Jesus (4.17) has never been satisfactorily explained whether (1) as preacher of the Christian congregation or (2) as evidence of the high esteem in which John was held by the Jewish-Christian congregation of Matthew's day or (3) as indicating a close relationship between the Baptist and Jesus than our sources would indicate or even (4) merely a way of driving home the need for repentance as submission to the reign of God.

41. In TDNT, Vol IV, p1000

42. The verbal identification between Matthew and Luke here is one of the more striking confirmations of the Q source; cf. Siegfried Schulz, Q Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten Zürich 1972, pp190-203.

43. The suggestion of pre-existence for Jesus in the form of address to the Son in Mark (1.1ff) and for this  $\acute{\epsilon}\xi\eta\lambda\theta\omicron\nu$  is suggested by W. Grundmann, Das Evangelium nach Markus, Berlin 1968, ad loc.

44. It is striking the reserve of this verb whether for Jesus or for what he says in the parables. The repetition of the word in the two feedings confirms that it is fixed within the oral tradition as a unique feature of Jesus; Luke, generally regarded as the gentlest of the Gospel writers omits the opportunity to stress this aspect of Jesus in his account of the feeding of the five thousand, the only account he records.

46. Cf. the interesting treatment of "Miracles and Faith" in Fridrichsen, op.cit., pp77-84 which receives some qualifications in this essay.

47. Cf. the disciples' objection, "We prevented him because he was not one of us" is reference to the outsider expelling demons in Jesus' name (Mk 9.38 and par.)
48. op.cit., p78
49. Cf. R. Bultmann, art. ΠΙΣΤΙΣ in TDNT, Vol VI
50. Cf. Fridrichsen, op.cit., p78
51. ibid., p79
52. Cf K. Rengstorf, art. ΔΟΥΛΙΑ in TDNT, Vol II
53. United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., The Relation of Christian Faith to Health, 1960, p19
54. ibid., pp37ff
55. There is a thorough treatment of the exorcisms of Jesus and of Jesus as exorcist in Otto Böcher, Christus Exorcista, Berlin 1972 where especially read the sections on the historic Jesus (166-167) and the exalted Lord (168-170) and exorcism.
56. For an idea of the immense literature on Job, cf. the article in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol II p924 for its bibliography; also Hiobbuch, in Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (RGG), III Band, column 360f
57. R.E. Brown, The Gospel According to John, Vol I, p371 where he suggests the meaning is that God manipulates history to glorify his name.
58. We may note the plural, "What have we to do with you? Have you come to destroy us?"; cf. modern concept of schizophrenia.
59. For a fuller account of the implications of the relationship between the ministry and members of the Medical Profession cf. General Assembly Reports, Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1959, pp175ff.
60. Again, cf. The Healing Church, World Council of Churches Studies No.3, Geneva 1965.