

## DIVINE HEALING, OR "FAITH CURE."

### A STATEMENT.



Y way of explanation it may be said that the writer has been most intimately associated with the "faith-healing" movement ever since it first began to attract public attention in this country. Seven years ago he was healed of a stubborn case of organic heart disease, after the best physicians and the most favorable climate and manner of life had alike signally failed to afford relief. At that time the literature concerning this subject was limited to two or three small books, besides such general works as Horace Bushnell's "Nature and the Supernatural"; but of late it has grown into a considerable library, experimental and theological. In the perusal of this mass of writing, and in the contributions which he has himself made to it, the writer has been necessarily placed in a position to speak with authority on the question, What is the doctrine and practice of Divine Healing, as presented by its most prominent advocates?

The object of this paper is to bring before the reader, as clearly as possible in such an exceedingly limited space, the real nature and ground for the doctrine that Jesus Christ has provided for believers the possibility of deliverance from the inward power of disease (as well as from sin), *provided* we meet all the Divine conditions.

### THE AUTHORITY.

THE only authority to which any real recognition is accorded is found in the Bible. To the Word of our God we bow with absolute submission. What God says we propose to believe, whether we have been so fortunate as to prove it in our own experience or not. With Daniel Webster, we "believe religion to be not a matter of demonstration, but of faith. God requires us to give credit to the truths which he reveals, not because we can prove them, but because he declares them." Individual cases of healing, or phenomena, are absolutely worthless as to the question before us. All the cases in the world have nothing whatever to do directly with the doctrine of Divine Healing, for the very simple reason that they are not and never have been made the basis or ground of that doctrine. The only

foundation is the Word of God, and hence the examination of cases *per se* has no direct bearing upon the subject. But few men seek soul salvation, and some who appear to seek are not saved. It would be dangerous logic that discovered in this fact an error in the scheme of salvation.

### THE DOCTRINE.

PASSING rapidly over the time when Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob each sought the Lord as the direct healer of physical diseases (see Genesis xx., xxv., xxx.), we come to the date of the Exodus, when God specially undertook the salvation of his people. Presumptive evidence is strongly in favor of the transmission of medical knowledge from the long-lived antediluvians, through Shem, who outlived Abraham, to the learned Egyptians of the time of Moses; but direct evidence is conclusive as to the advanced state of this knowledge. Clement of Alexandria (second century) mentions six hermetic books of Egyptian medicine, one of which was devoted to surgical instruments; and the learned George Ebers abundantly proves from ancient papyri that there were colleges of medicine, medical specialists, and much skill in surgery before the days of Moses. Herodotus also testifies upon this point. But "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," hence he must have possessed the highest medical knowledge of this age. Notwithstanding all this, when the Exodus occurred God did not direct the people to go to Moses for treatment, but gave them, unasked, a clear and distinct promise of exemption from disease, on the condition of obedience. In Exodus xv. 26, we read, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee" (or, I am the Lord thy healer).

This promise was tested again and again. Moses prayed for leprosy (Numbers xii. 13), and Aaron for the plague (Numbers xvi. 47-48). The serpent's bite found its cure solely through faith (Numbers xxi. 9), and the pestilence vanished when David sacrificed (II. Samuel xxiv. 25). The Psalmist declares that when the children of Israel walked through the wilderness, "there was not one feeble

[sick] person among their tribes" (Psalms cv. 37); and Solomon reminded the people that there had not failed one word of all the promises given through Moses (I. Kings viii. 56).

In the fifth commandment we find the most explicit assurance of physical life, on the condition of obedience to parents. Passing on we read passages like the following, which cannot be disputed on any ground whatever; "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever" (Deuteronomy v. 29). "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, . . . that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess" (v. 33). "If thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak, . . . I will take sickness away from the midst of thee" (Exodus xxiii. 22, 25). "If ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them, . . . the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee" (Deuteronomy vii. 12, 15. See also Leviticus xxvi. 15, 16, and Deuteronomy xxviii. 58-62). Beyond all possible controversy, exemption from disease was held out to the Jew.

David's understanding of this and his testimony upon the subject are both very clear. He says, "The Lord is the strength of my life" (Psalms xxvii. 1). "O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me" (xxx. 2). "O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave; thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit" (xxx. 3). Out of a great many other utterances of the King of Israel, read especially Psalms xli. 3; xci. 1-6; ciii. 2-5. When Solomon dedicated the temple he made a distinct request for healing in answer to prayer, and the Lord distinctly promised to hear (see II. Chronicles vii. 13, 14). When David's child was sick, we read of a prophet, and not of a physician. Even the mighty sinner Jeroboam knew where to send when disease struck his child; and, later, the sternest rebuke and punishment were pronounced on Ahaziah because he forgot there was a God in Israel, and sent to inquire of Baalzebub.

There is no mistaking the lesson in the cases of Asa and Hezekiah. God had blessed and saved the former, but when "diseased in his feet . . . he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers, and died" (II. Chronicles xvi. 12, 13). Two hundred years after this, Hezekiah prayed and was miraculously healed; God's instrument being once more a prophet and not a physi-

cian; and, in answer to the king's prayer, the people were also healed. But when Hezekiah neglected to tell the messengers of the King of Babylon what a wonderful deliverance God had sent him, the judgment of heaven fell upon him also (II. Chronicles xxxii. 31, and II. Kings xx. 12).

In the days of Hezekiah, Isaiah the prophet lived and wrote. In the great atonement chapter we find the forecast of the coming Messiah expressed in the following literal readings: "A man of pains, and acquainted with sickness" (v. 3). "Surely our sicknesses he hath borne, and our pains he hath carried them" (4). "And by his bruise there is healing to us" (5). "And Jehovah hath delighted to bruise him; he hath made him sick" (10).

The above is Dr. Robert Young's translation, made, of course, without the faintest idea of assisting modern "faith-healers." Dr. Isaac Leeser gives a significant rendering of the fourth verse: "But only our diseases did he bear himself, and our pains he carried." Now, in view of the facts developed above, what sort of mind would it have required in a Jew to say that this chapter only referred to spiritual blessings? But we have a sure and certain commentator on this point.

In Matthew viii. 16, 17, we find the distinct declaration that Jesus "healed all that were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Here the Holy Ghost, through Matthew, says Isaiah spoke of the body; but in I. Peter ii. 24, we find the Spirit, speaking through that apostle, quoting these very words as applicable to the soul. The only inference must be that both are true, and that the atonement provided for both soul and body. *If Peter can be relied on for the present day, so can Matthew; and if Matthew's words have no present force and application, neither have Peter's.*

The Jew believes in a material kingdom; the Christian in a spiritual dominion. Both are right in what they receive, and wrong in what they reject. Jesus Christ did not abolish the decalogue and the moral law; the ceremonial alone passed away. We are not playing at see-saw with the Jew. Laws of health and healthy food are the same as they were in the days of Moses, and the best physicians are continually indorsing the sanitary and dietetic regulations of the great Hebrew leader.

Jesus Christ never turned away from those who sought healing at his hands. He specially commissioned the twelve to heal as well as to preach; and, later, the same commission was given to the seventy (Luke ix. 1-6, and x. 1-19). The only limit to these benefits was

unbelief, as is plainly declared in Mark vi. 5, and Luke iv. 27. His last words, according to Mark, contain a positive promise of the "signs" which should "follow them that believe," among which we find the healing of the sick through the laying on of hands. This was not a promise to the apostles, but to "them that believe." The apostles took up the work of healing as an important part of the gospel. "Such as I have give I thee," said Peter at the beautiful gate of the temple. In those days a man who, like Stephen, was full of the Holy Ghost and of faith almost of necessity did great signs and wonders among the people; and simple healings abounded everywhere. When the unbelievers raged against them, the apostles did not merely ask for more grace to bear it, but actually prayed for signs and wonders, in the name of Jesus (Acts iv. 30).

In Corinthians Paul speaks frequently of bodily matters, and specially mentions the several "gifts of the Spirit" which were then in the church. Now "gifts of healing" stand on precisely the same ground with the others. The church does not discard the "word of wisdom" or the "word of knowledge," nor throw away "governments"; indeed, she is well-nigh governed to death in these days. But if one has lapsed, why not all? In Ephesians i. 14, Paul speaks of the "earnest of our inheritance." Part of this inheritance is to have our mortal bodies quickened by his Spirit (Romans viii. 11). "He that hath the Son hath life," and it is therefore concluded that "Christ within you, the hope of glory," must or may give an earnest, or a foretaste, for the body as well as for the soul. An impartation of the Divine life is looked for, enabling the man to perform any and all God-directed work until the day of his death, if he dies before the second advent.

Finally, we have the unanswerable direction to the sick in James v. 14, 15. "Is any sick among you? [among you believers] 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 shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins [as a cause of the complaint] they shall be forgiven him." On this passage we remark that John Wesley quotes and indorses Bengel as saying that, "this was the whole process of physic in the Christian church, till it was lost through unbelief." Dr. Daniel Steele says that the man who attempts to represent the word "sick" as having any other meaning than bodily ailment, is "either an ignoramus in Greek or an intentional deceiver"; and Dean Alford most forcibly declares that the whole

passage refers to physical disorders and to these only.

As to the knowledge of medicine in the time of Christ, there is abundant evidence to show that it was extensive and profound. Following Hippocrates (B. C. 460), who mentions no fewer than two hundred and sixty-five drugs, besides many dietary and surgical remedies, arose the schools of medicine under Herophilus, a profound anatomist, and Erasistratus his rival. (Doctors disagreed in those days as well as at present.) After these came the Empiric school (280 B. C.), whose physicians were very successful, especially in surgery and the use of drugs; and later on Asclepiades, the friend of Cicero, founded a system known as "Methodism." The medical knowledge of the Roman Empire came from these men. This is sufficient to show that healing by faith was not instituted because of the ignorance of scientific methods.

One point needs to be especially guarded. Death is a consequence of sin, and is included in "the curse of the law." But "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law" (Galatians iii. 13), and a logical conclusion would lead us to expect translation, were it not for a number of special scriptures which expressly declare that this is not included at present (see, Hebrews ix. 27, 28; Romans viii. 10-22; I. Corinthians xv. 23-32; Colossians iii. 4; Hebrews ii. 8). These texts withhold the boon of translation from the direct covenant, and retain it in the special providence of God, except for the living, waiting saints at the second advent. They have its sure promise.

"Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever," is a tremendous declaration. Now we have seen that the promises of God most undeniably contain the assurance of physical health, on condition of obedience. These promises have not been outlawed by time. We cannot throw them away without sacrificing the decalogue and the moral law. An unbroken line of leaders, kings, and prophets carry them down to the present gospel dispensation, and they are ours to-day. In II. Corinthians i. 20, we read, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." These are included in the "all," therefore they are yea and amen in Christ, and therefore are based upon his vicarious atonement. The conditions to-day are the same as of old. *We must believe, and obey.* Belief is faith, and obedience is works. "Faith without works is dead"; so belief and simple obedience cannot be separated. When Naaman joined his obedience to his belief, and dipped in Jordan, faith and works were united, and salvation resulted. It is ever so.

## THE PRACTICE.

1. "FAITH-HEALERS" believe in the use of means. The Scriptural means are always employed:—(1) Laying-on of hands, (2) anointing with oil, (3) the prayer of faith. They also believe in occasional leadings of the Spirit to employ other means, which may be inherently efficacious or not.

2. No one is advised by any prominent leader or teacher to lay aside all medicines, unless he can do so with perfect spontaneity. Forced abstinence is will power, not faith.

3. Faith in the patient is regarded as necessary when the individual is responsible. Even the man "borne of four" and let down through the roof had to obey the command to rise. Rare exceptions are known where the individuals have not been aware of the prayer offered in their behalf. These can be included under general answers to prayer. They are certainly conclusively against the supposition of any subjective condition of the patient.

4. A perfect consecration of the whole spirit, soul and body, is strongly urged. It would be almost blasphemous to ask for healing with any other view than the entire devotement to God of the renewed powers. Hence the universal experience of spiritual blessings in those who seek to be healed.

5. Inquirers are instructed to believe that they do receive, when the spirit witnesses within that their consecration and obedience are complete, and the prayer has been offered. "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them," is the warrant for acting out the belief; that is, acting as if you were well. The leaders in this movement have themselves received life and health while following this same plan of action, and therefore give this advice with all knowledge and honesty.

6. The laying-on of hands, prayer, and anointing are distinctly taught to be of no efficacy in themselves, any more than Jordan was to Naaman. But it is held that "to obey is better than sacrifice."

7. Those who fail to get saved, and those who fail to be healed, afford no argument against the continuance of preaching or praying. Lists of failures are not kept in either case; and the real reason lies in the fact presented in the very beginning of this article, that the doctrines of Christianity are not

founded on phenomena, but upon the word of God alone.

8. All who weigh the meaning of words counsel the use of such terms as will be mutually intelligible. A man who is exercising faith, but whose symptoms continue, is advised to say, I believe, and not, I feel.

9. It is taught that Satan can tempt to sickness, precisely as he can tempt to inward sin, by producing a symptom. He can consistently advise the use of a medicine to one who is striving to fix his faith upon God alone; especially when he thinks that the remedy will prove unavailing. In any case such action is more consistent in him than that of those good people who profess to believe that it is the will of God for them to suffer, and at the same time spend time and wealth, for every conceivable medicine, in the attempt to defeat that will by getting well.

10. Finally, it is distinctly taught that Divine Healing, like every branch of salvation, is a matter of personal experience; and as such is not susceptible of perfectly logical explanation to the unbeliever. To him all such things are "foolishness," but "to us who believe" they become "the power of God." Every saved or healed man can testify from his heart: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see," though he may utterly fail to convince the Scribes and Pharisees.

True or false, there is no belief rising more swiftly before the churches everywhere than that of Divine Healing. There are over thirty "faith homes" in America to-day. In England, and on the continent of Europe, can be found a large number, some of them commodious institutions with a history of many decades of years. In June, 1885, an international conference on this subject assembled in London, composed of delegates from all parts of the world; and the great Agricultural Hall was taxed to its utmost to accommodate the serious crowds that flocked to hear. During the last two seasons a number of conventions have been held in New York, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Pittsburg, Detroit, and elsewhere, in all of which Divine Healing has claimed an important part. The mass of evidence offered, the multitude of witnesses arising, and the words of Scripture on the subject, demand at least a respectful hearing, and invite the closest scrutiny into the doctrine and practice of Divine Healing.

*R. Kelso Carter.*