

Sickness and

the Gospel.

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OTTO STOCKMAYER.

SICKNESS
AND
THE GOSPEL:

BY OTTO STOCKMAYER.

"SURELY HE HATH BORNE OUR SICKNESSES AND CARRIED OUR SORROWS" (*Isaiah liii. 4, R.V. MARGIN*).

"THE BODY IS . . . FOR THE LORD; AND THE LORD FOR THE BODY"
(*1 Cor. vi. 13*).

"WAITING FOR . . . THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY" (*Rom. viii. 23*).

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P R E F A C E .

THE objection has been made to the first edition of this little book, that, what was offered on the one hand, has been withdrawn on the other. How far this reproach has been merited I cannot decide. The great fact that Jesus Christ has borne our sicknesses and pains* on the Cross needed to be brought out in its full meaning, as being in itself applicable to every body and every age; while, at the same time, the necessity of being led, step by step, by the Spirit of God in the experience and appropriation of this truth needed to be recognised.

Indeed the reason should have been stated why we cannot lay hold of Isaiah liii. 4, and realise it by the Spirit as simply as any other Scripture truth; why the Lord must here give special instruction, and inward preparation, and open the way. For the solution of this difficulty it should have been put in

* Rather than "sorrows," according to German and French translations.

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the foreground that the redemption accomplished on the cross, *as regards its physical side*, will not be fully manifested in us till the coming of Christ; that, till then, it can only be experienced in part, and step by step. This truth was stated in the earlier edition, but without occupying the place which it should have had.

The first edition had also some sharp points which needed rounding off, in the question of appropriating the truth to which it witnessed.

For the present I offer to my brethren—for this is intended for children of God—what I am able to give under a deep sense of its imperfection, but at the same time with the full conviction that I ought to give it.

This second edition forms two parts, each with its own heading. The first part reproduces much of the earlier edition; the second contains a good deal of new matter.

May the grace of God be with these pages.

OTTO STOCKMAYER.

Hauptweil, Dec., 1886.

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SICKNESS AND THE GOSPEL.

PART I.

JESUS CHRIST, IN HIS HUMILIATION,
BORE OUR SICKNESSES, AND
CARRIED OUR PAINS.



I.

HEALING AND SANCTIFICATION.

WE are created for the glory of God. Our vocation is to manifest His name and His perfections, to give form and expression to the thoughts of His heart, and to carry out His purposes. Our body, as well as our soul and spirit, with all its powers, is required for the accomplishment of this object, and must be set free and placed at the sole and absolute disposal of God; hence the close connection which exists between *healing* and *sanctification*, taking this last word in its primitive meaning.

A sanctified man is a man of whose members God can have free disposal, having redeemed them by the blood of Christ, and brought them back into His possession by wresting them from alien influence. See John x. 36; xvii. 17-19; Heb. x. 5-10. "Say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent

into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said I am the Son of God?" Since God sanctified His Son, and sent Him into the world—not, sent Him and sanctified Him—"sanctified" can have no other meaning than: chosen out and set apart for the carrying out of a commission or a work. In this sense we find this word "sanctified" in Isaiah xiii. 3, Jer. xxii. 7, Jer. li. 27 and 28 (literally translated "sanctify" . . .).

Applied to a sinner, sanctification includes cleansing, since God takes no unclean vessels in hand, and uses no uncleaned instruments. Applied to the Son of God, this negative meaning of the word of course falls to the ground. He did not need first to be cleansed or to be withdrawn from ungodly service, in order to be a perfectly adapted instrument for God's thoughts of love and salvation.

As the Father sanctified the Son (John x. 36), we see also that the Son, on His part, sanctified Himself (John xvii. 19); that is to say, He yielded Himself, that He might fulfil the will of God on earth. "For their sakes I sanctify Myself," said the Lord to His Father, referring to His disciples.* In Heb. x. 5-9,

*NOTE.—Compare also verses 17 and 18: "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." We must be sanctified, that we may be sent into the world.

we read *how* Jesus sanctified Himself; we see Him presenting Himself before His Father with these words, "Lo, I come," and receiving from His Father the body which He had prepared for Him, that He might present that body a living sacrifice, in contrast to the sacrifices of verses 4-6. In the offering of this His body, He carried out God's purpose of love concerning our redemption.

By the very fact of *His* thus sanctifying Himself to God, the Lord Jesus redeemed *us*, body and soul, from every other yoke and dominion: *He sanctified us to God*. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. x. 10). "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth" (John xvii. 19).

St. Paul brings out the same truth in Romans vi. Through the death of Jesus Christ, even our mortal *body* is redeemed from the dominion of sin, verse 12. Our *members*, which before served unrighteousness, which we had made use of for unrighteous purposes and unhallowed works, for our self-life, and to carry out our own will, are now become free, according to verses 13, 19. We can put them anew at God's disposal, that He may use them as instruments for His righteous and holy purposes, to manifest His mind, and the thoughts of His heart. We are able

now to yield our bodies as living sacrifices well pleasing unto God.

The essence of Christian holiness is, that we should be at the free and absolute disposal of God. This attitude cannot be won by self-effort. It is not the natural fruit of sickness or any other suffering; but it is entered upon by faith. We simply receive what the Scripture declares, namely, that we are a blood bought people, redeemed from the vain conversation of our fathers, severed from ourselves and estranged from our self-life, dead and buried with Christ in His death. It is not by the suffering of *our* members that we *become* sanctified; but by the death pangs of *Christ's* members that we *are* sanctified (Heb. x. 10). That which He suffered is for us; what we suffer is for Him.

This implies that we can sanctify ourselves to Him, can serve Him,—not only when our members are *active* for Him in word and deed, but equally so, when we submit the members of our body, as well as the powers of our soul, to the *suffering*, which the service of God brings upon us, in a world estranged from God and opposed to His gospel. Viewed in this light, the words with which the Lord closes His beatitudes are significant—“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall

revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. v. 10-12). See also what the Apostle Paul writes, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for His body's sake, which is the Church" (Col. i. 24). The Apostle's whole life forms a commentary on these words, especially the epitome which he himself gives us of it in 2 Cor. xi. 23 28.

In order to pursue the service of God, whether in suffering or in active work, the members of our body, as well as the powers of our soul, must be free and disposable. Our members ought not to be held bound by sickness. Our spirit ought not to be exposed to the oppression which sickness in its various forms brings with it; our movements must be free.

In most cases, sickness by no means renders *every* service impossible. Far from it. The general state of Christian life being such as it is, God may sometimes even be obliged to use sickness, in order to prepare His children for the highest and most important service.

Nor can it be denied that sickness itself, by the

manner in which it is accepted and borne, may be a means of glorifying God, and thus of serving Him. The history of Job affords us here a striking illustration. By bowing at least in the beginning of his sickness unreservedly to the will of God (Job ii. 10; James v. 11), he rendered Him that service which God had from the first expected of man. He bore himself in such a manner that God was justified, and Satan made a liar. And even to-day there are hundreds of God's children, who, through their patience and resignation, on beds of sickness and pain, glorify their God and show forth His praises. May they remain faithful so long as God gives them no further leading, nor allow themselves to be troubled by anybody!

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that where God, as in the case of Job, wills to give Satan the lie, the life and service of His redeemed ones afford Him sufficient scope, independently of sickness. Moreover, before we draw any conclusion from the example of Job, we must first take into account his exceptional position.

Job is a character standing between the Old and New Covenant, on a level of spiritual life which does not fully belong either to the one or the other. If the Lord had only measured this His chosen servant by the standard of the Old Testament, the blows men-

tioned in the first and second chapters of the book of Job would not have fallen upon him, for Job was perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil (ch. i. 1); and, as such, he had a right to be spared, according to the declarations of Scripture, which will be given in another chapter. But when it pleased God to accept, and even call forth Satan's challenge, was it not that He might raise Job above the standing of the Old Covenant, and bring him to a consciousness how impossible it is for man to carry out the obligations of that dispensation, and to establish any right or claim of his own on the ground of the words "This do, and thou shalt live" (Luke x. 28). On account of the utter corruption of our human nature, our own piety will never be absolutely irreproachable. We are not able to fulfil the commands of God, or respond to the demands of His holiness in such a way that we may *lay claim to happiness, health, and life, as our right.* The "Accuser" is only silenced by the work and perfect righteousness of Christ. Thus Job could prevail neither against God nor against Satan, as long as he pleaded his rights, according to his own notions of righteousness. But as soon as God interposed, presenting Himself to Job in His greatness, majesty, and holiness, he laid his hand upon his mouth, threw himself into the dust, and owned himself guilty. Thus Satan is conquered

and God's honour vindicated. God has attained His end with regard to Job, and the light of His grace can again shine upon His servant, bringing him pardon and deliverance.

Our position, as children of the New Covenant, is essentially different from that of Job. For us the Accuser is conquered by the blood of the Lamb (Rev. xii. 11), by the blood which "cleanseth from all sin" (1 John i. 7). We bring forward neither rights nor righteousness of our own against his attacks; we know that we have none. Not even when, according to Rev. xii. 11, we are unconscious of any unfaithfulness in the word of our testimony, or of loving our own lives. "I know nothing by myself," says St. Paul (1 Cor. iv. 4), "yet am I not hereby justified." We plead the rights of Christ. These we may, however, plead only in agreement with Him. He alone knows how far His right to the bodies of His redeemed can be realised before His coming, without harm or danger to their souls.

We do not for an instant deny that even those who, washed by the blood of Christ, and sanctified to God through His offering of Himself, are become disposable for the service of the Lord, still need cleansing (1 John iii. 3), and to follow after holiness (Rev. xxii. 11, *R. V.* margin). Whether, however, sickness affords a good means to this end is another question.

Sickness in general, and considered in itself, is not a favourable condition for spiritual growth, for the building up of a healthy spiritual life. It withdraws us from the external activities of life, from the business or work for which we are intended, and thus induces the temptation to be occupied either with our bodily condition or our spiritual experience. Each is unhealthy.

It is a different thing altogether when sickness is limited to a time of humbling and breaking down, to a time during which we have to discern and judge ourselves. We need to repent every time that we have in any way been unfaithful to our position in Christ, in the activities of either our outward or our inward life. Otherwise, anything which leads us to look at ourselves, which draws our eye off God, away from the pursuit of *His* glory and the accomplishment of *His* will, is opposed to holiness. The furtherance of our spiritual life is a matter which belongs exclusively to God. If *we* seek to achieve somewhat of inward growth and strive after a result which shall gratify ourselves, we take a course directly opposed to true holiness. Our attention must be directed to the service of God and to His claims, and we must surrender the care of our spiritual interests entirely into God's hands. Our true interest is to live for God's interests.

The service of God is the normal, God-intended, and God-appointed ground, upon which sanctification, in the sense of gradual cleansing, is most surely accomplished. The Lord refines and purifies in the fire the Levites, the people who serve Him (Mal. iii. 3). The Father purges every branch which bears fruit, that it may bring forth more fruit (John xv. 2). The experiences we gain in our work in the Lord's vineyard, especially that of our utter helplessness and dependence on God, are the stones with which God builds up our inner life. Thus we are constrained by the necessities of the service, to remain unmoved under the discipline of grace, and so the Spirit of God gains ground in us, the life of Christ expands, and a steady growth goes on. Especially do the frictions and humiliations, which are inseparable from joint work with others, afford us opportunity of carrying out practically and in detail our position as sanctified ones, of showing that we really no longer care for our own life nor our own interests. Thus all that unconsciously remained of self is judged and eliminated. By means of the trials which God's children endure for Christ's sake, and as Christians, in the service of their Lord, is accomplished the judgment of the house of God, mentioned in 1 Peter iv. 14-17. This is the true and divine way for our purification.



II.

TESTIMONY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

IT is the definite teaching of Holy Scripture, that by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, we have been redeemed from sickness, as well as from sin. In Isaiah liii., that chapter of the Old Testament which gives us the kernel of the New, in the picture of the dying Redeemer, we see that the Lamb of God bore our sicknesses, as well as our sins. Verse 4 literally translated runs thus: "Surely He hath borne our sicknesses and carried our pains" (*R. V. margin*). No one thinks of limiting this passage to a particular period of time, as for instance to the time of Jesus and His apostles. Moreover, Matt. viii. 16 and 17, shows clearly, that real bodily sickness and pain are meant, and not only * spiritual evils and diseases,

*We say, "not only." The healing of the spiritual disease of sin remains, of course, the principal and most important part of our Saviour's redemption work. See 1 Peter ii. 24 and 25.

“When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils, and He cast out the spirits with His word, and 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.’” From this passage in Matthew, it appears equally clear and unquestionable, that the promise in Isaiah liii. 4. includes the taking away and healing of sickness and pain. It cannot, therefore, be God’s chosen and final will, that we should continue to bear what the Lord bore for us. The Lord has a right to see in our body as well as in our soul, the full fruit of His sufferings: “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied” (Isaiah liii. 11). James v. 14-16, is equally definite: “Is any sick among you? 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, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” The express mention which

* The word may with equal right be translated weakness (2 Cor. xii. 10; xiii. 4); infirmity (Gal. iv. 13); or sickness (John xi. 3 and 4).

James makes of the *special* case where sickness is linked with particular sins, requiring in such a case confession, as a condition of healing * (verses 15, 16), is an additional reason for attributing a universal application to the promises made to the sick *generally*.

We are usually in the habit of putting sickness on a par with other sufferings; but this is not in accordance with Holy Scripture. *It is God's expressly declared will, that His children shall suffer.* Tribulation is the way by which we enter into the kingdom of heaven (Acts xiv. 22), and the apostles gloried in the afflictions which they suffered for the name of Jesus. In the very opening of his epistle, James exhorts his brethren to count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations (chapters 1 and 2) and in chapter v. 10, he seeks to encourage them, by pointing out the example of the prophets. In verse 11, he reminds them of the patience of Job. This servant of God, as we have seen above, not only bowed unconditionally beneath the blows mentioned in the first chapter, but

* "If he have committed sins" Sickness is the consequence of the fall and is closely connected with our sin. But to look upon it in every case, as the punishment and fruit of particular sins is an error, which the Lord frequently combated (John ix. 2 and 3, Luke xiii. 1-5), and of which the friends of Job were guilty. Equally wrong is it to pre-suppose the existence of some bondage, conscious sin, or personal unfaithfulness in every case, where a child of God is not at once released from his sickness. See further on.

Capt.
Carter's
view

he also manifested complete submission under sickness, at least in the beginning (chapter ii. 10). It might thus be inferred from this reference to Job, that James puts sickness on the same plane as other afflictions. But immediately afterwards (verses 13-15), we find in this respect an express and definite distinction. "Is any among you afflicted?" says the apostle, "let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? 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," etc. The direction which is given in the case of sickness, is the very opposite to that given for those otherwise afflicted. Whilst with regard to other trials we are exhorted to bear them patiently, or, according to the sense of the Greek word, to "remain under" them, to wait under them to the end,—we see here that God's final word and final will with regard to sickness, is not that we should abide under it; but that we should be set free from it.

We find the same distinction between sickness and other afflictions in the case of the Lord Jesus.

As far as His *person* is concerned,—“He suffered being tempted” (Heb. ii. 18); was “in all points tempted like as we are” (ch. iv. 15). “In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren” (ch. ii. 17). Sin is expressly excepted (ch. iv. 15);

sickness is nowhere mentioned. He who suffered for us and left us an example that we should follow His steps (1 Peter ii. 21-23), left us no similar example for sickness in its ordinary meaning.*

The *teaching* and *work* of our Redeemer manifest the same distinction. The time of His sojourn upon earth was by no means an exceptional one in this respect. The Lord had already acquainted His disciples with that same call to suffering, of which the apostles afterward remind us in their epistles. Whosoever would follow Him, must deny himself, take up his cross, and hate his own life. But the same Redeemer who gave to each one a cross to bear, healed all the sick who were brought unto Him (Matt. iv. 23; viii. 16), and bade the disciples whom He sent forth, do the same (Luke x. 9). Never did He require a sick person to look upon his sickness as being the will of God, and, as such, to bear it patiently. He imposed suffering, but delivered from sickness.

In the same way we find that, in the time of the primitive Christian church, all the sick were healed.

* Yet the Lord has left us the example for a life of hardship and self-denial (fatigue, hunger, and thirst), for martyr sufferings and a martyr death. In its largest acceptation this last was also sickness. The Lord was a Man of pains and acquainted with sickness (Isaiah liii. 3, literal translation). Yea, in a special manner, in these very pains, in this sickness of His death pangs, He bore our sicknesses and carried our pains.

The 11th chapter of Hebrews is noteworthy in this respect. We find there, especially in the resumé given at the end of the chapter (verses 32-40), a complete list of lives consecrated to God, either in active service or in suffering. Among the godly witnesses there named, whom we should take for our example (ch. xii. 1), not one sick person do we find, but on the contrary (verse 34) those who, "out of weakness were made strong."

III.

CONDITION BY WHICH TO EXPERIENCE THAT TO WHICH SCRIPTURE TESTIFIES : TO TAKE OUR STAND AS REDEEMED, AS CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST.

IF we desire that Jesus Christ should reveal Himself to us as our Redeemer from sickness as well as from sin, we must remember that there is no redemption without sanctification;—in other words (*vide* chap. I.), that Jesus Christ has redeemed us *unto God* for His service. God said unto Pharaoh, “Let My people go that *they may serve Me*,” not, that they may go their own way. Deliverance from sickness cannot be separated from the whole work of redemption. *God* can heal us, according to His free grace and to His hidden purposes of love, independently of the question how far we have entered into redemption from sin ; but *we* can claim deliverance from sickness by faith, only if, at the same time, we accept by faith our deliverance from sin.

Sin has displaced our life's centre, and given a wrong direction to our whole being. Instead of God, our own self has become the centre around which everything within us revolves. The work of redemption restores things again to order, and brings back the original relations. To be redeemed, therefore, means nothing less than to take again our right and true place with regard to God ; to deny ourselves, as Holy Scripture expresses it.

Christ has redeemed us by His sufferings and death, and he who owns to being His, declares that he is dead and buried with Him. " Know ye not," writes the apostle, " that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life " (Rom. vi. 3, 4). " For the love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died ; and He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again (2 Cor. v. 14, 15, *R. V.*) " For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of

the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 19, 20). We must *know* that by the blood of Jesus Christ we have been redeemed, that is, bought off from our vain conversation, received by tradition from our fathers (1 Pet. i. 18, 19), so that no power of hell or of the flesh can retain us one moment longer in the bonds of vanity or of pre-occupation with ourselves. We must *know* this, and then thankfully step out into the proffered liberty, breaking for ever with our own ways, and resolved not to seek ourselves or our own satisfaction in anything, but in everything to seek the Lord's interests only. Heart and head, eyes, ears and mouth, hands and feet, all the members of our body, all our powers of love and thought, must be yielded to the Lord for His use. He must take the reins of our life into His hand.

As long as we are undecided upon this point, as long as we still love and spare our own life, we must take it as a gracious leading of God, if He sets bounds to our self-life through sickness or other trials. It is better for us that the Lord should hold the members of our body fast bound or paralysed for a while, than that we should pervert our members and our powers to serve our self-life, and live as we think best. It is true, we may seek our own life even in sickness. It may happen that sickness is used as

a pretext for yielding to ill-humour and caprice, for nursing selfishness and wilfulness, for absorbing the time and attention of others in being waited upon. How much wrong is being done in this respect, especially with children. How many Christian parents have allowed sin to develop in a naturally nervous child, because they dared not oppose the self-will and selfishness of the child, for fear of a nervous attack, or other accident, and thus the body has been cared for at the expense of the soul. The Scripture says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33). "It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire" (Matt. xviii. 8). None need, however, fear. He who in childlike faith commits himself and his children to the direct care of the Lord, shall know by experience that He takes upon Himself all the responsibility, and averts all evil consequences, even those distinctly predicted by medical science. He who, like Abraham, considers not the body, but looks to the Lord and His word, shall receive strength and courage to exercise, even over a sick or delicate child, such discipline as is necessary for his spiritual welfare.

To die in our own person and in the person of our children—to die, and thenceforth to reckon ourselves

as dead—is the way by which we become partakers in body and soul, for ourselves and ours, of the salvation which Christ's death and resurrection has obtained for us.*

It is well to notice that Scripture does not demand of us that we should die to ourselves and to sin, but that we should reckon ourselves dead (Rom. vi. 11). Of course this is only possible to children of God; these in their conversion have crucified the flesh. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts" (Gal. v. 24). They have been

* The following paragraph, in small type, has been found useful, and has therefore been retained in this place, although it interrupts the connection.

Why then art thou afraid of *dying*? Why wilt thou not enter by faith into the position of one who is redeemed and sanctified, and thus be planted together in the likeness of His death (Rom. vi. 5)? Has He not, through his death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil? and thereby delivered them who *through fear of death* were all their life-time subject to bondage (Heb. ii. 14, 15)? And when the fear of death is spoken of, is not every kind of dying implied, the offering up of our self-life and the renunciation of our own will, as well as the bodily death? Did not He become "obedient unto death" (Phil. ii. 8), in order that He might enable us to follow in the same path of obedience? "Wherefore, my beloved," says the apostle in the 12th verse of the same chapter, "as ye have always obeyed . . . work out your own salvation," that is, continue to obey, be obedient unto death, even as He was (compare Rev. xii. 11). Never ask, How can I do this? Know that it is the Holy Ghost, God Himself, who worketh in thee "both to will and to do." He makes us willing to die, and leads us into death. He carries us through death into the grave, into "fulness of fellowship" with our crucified and buried Saviour. All that we have to do is to follow the Holy Ghost step

buried in the death of Christ, have taken in Him the position as crucified with Him. Whereinsoever they have been unfaithful to this position, they have again to mortify, that is, put to death their members which are upon the earth (Col. iii. 5). But in order to remain faithful to this position, they have nothing further to do but by faith to reckon themselves dead to sin by their union with Christ.

by step with self-surrendered confidence. Christ "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself . . . to God" (Heb. ix. 14). Through the same Spirit we also receive power to tread the same path. We can now say with the Psalmist, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Being free from the fear of death, of whatever nature the dying and the shadow of death we pass through may be, we are now enabled to follow our faithful and compassionate Shepherd, even into the valley of suffering and humiliation, yea, and to praise Him there. He is with us, "His rod and His staff comfort us" (Psalm xxiii. 4). Was it not in a certain sense, this very joy in dying which John the Baptist experienced when he heard the Bridegroom's voice? He rejoiced to see his own person and ministry cast into the shade by the coming of the Master; he rejoiced that the Lord must increase and he decrease (John iii. 29, 30). Such joy is pure and godlike. It is joy in the Holy Ghost.



IV.

FURTHER CONDITIONS: TO HEARKEN. SICKNESS A JUDGMENT, A MEANS OF DISCIPLINE AND OF EDUCATION.

THE reality of our being dead with Christ, and having broken with our own will and our self-life, will be made manifest by our listening in everything to what God has to say to us. To place our members at God's disposal and to hearken to Him are one and the same thing. While it is written in the epistle to the Hebrews (x. 5), "A body hast thou prepared Me," the Psalmist says, "My ears hast thou opened" * (Psalm xl. 7).

The Old Testament expressly teaches that our bodily health depends upon our readiness to attend to

* Or, digged, bored through, that is for permanent service (Ex. xxi. 5 and 6). The body with which we fulfil the will of God, either in active service or by suffering, answers to the ear which hearkens to His directions.

God's voice and to follow it. We have to hearken to God, first of all, in order to know what we have to do, and then, if we have been disobedient, that we may let Him judge and reprove us.

We read in Exodus xv. 26, "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, the Lord thy Physician]." And also in Exodus xxiii. 22-25, "If thou shalt indeed obey His voice (that of My messenger) and do all that I speak, then I will . . . take sickness away from the midst of thee." Compare Deut. vii. 12-15. On the other hand we have in Leviticus xxvi. 14-16, "But if ye will not hearken unto Me, and will not do all these commandments, and if ye shall despise My statutes, or if your soul abhor My judgments, so that ye will not do all My commandments, but that ye break My covenant: I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart . . ." Compare also the more detailed passage in Deuteronomy xxviii. 15, 21, 22, 27, 28, 35, 58-61.

We often hear it said that these promises no longer hold good under the New Covenant; but the Lord

said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil (Matt. v. 17). Only, under the New Covenant, God's claims upon us, and with them the conditions upon which we obtain the promises, are higher. Six times the Lord reiterates, "Ye have heard, that it was said by them of old time . . . but *I* say unto you . . ." Having been purchased by Christ, we are bound to give ourselves up to Him, with all that we are and have, and if we would be made and remain whole, we must submit ourselves unreservedly to the discipline of His Spirit, that we may hear and obey God's voice. The distinctive character, then, of the New Covenant, is that now all is summed up in the person of Christ; He is the end of the promises, as well as of the law. To him who seeks first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, all other things shall be added (Matt. vi. 33); the present things, or the things to come—the world, life, death—all belong unto those who are Christ's (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23). Belonging to Christ, we no longer seek our own. While, for example, an Israelitish woman considered sterility as a loss to herself, and a reproach under which she suffered personally, a Christian woman, who in faith expects children from the Lord, desires above all things, to bring forth fruit unto the Lord (1 Tim. ii. 15; Rom. vii. 4). Yet while we thus no longer

seek our own, but remain in the attitude of unconditional surrender to God, we are nevertheless certain that what we have offered up on Mount Moriah (Gen. xxii.), what we have forsaken for Christ's sake, shall be made good to us a hundredfold, even here below (Mark x. 29, 30). Now all that was promised to the faithful and obedient Israelite, besides health and fertility, may be summed up in the words, "daily bread." Do we not still ask God every day for our daily bread, and has not that been secured to us by the Lord Himself (Mark viii. 14-21); not only for the body, but also for the soul (James i. 5; 1 Cor. x. 13; Compare Heb. xiii. 6). The promise of long life is also expressly renewed under the New Covenant (Eph. vi. 3).

However, even in the New Testament, there is a passage in which the preservation in health of God's children is made to depend upon their attention to their Father's voice, and the discipline of His Spirit. "For this cause," writes Paul to the Corinthians, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves (discern, thoroughly judge), we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. xi. 30-32).

The numerous cases of sickness and early death in the Corinthian church were judgments which they

had drawn upon themselves by no longer having an open ear for the discipline of the Holy Ghost. As long as we give ear to God, He speaks to us, chastens us, and sets us right, whether it be immediately through His Word and His Spirit, or by a messenger, (Job xxxiii. 23), and He can use everything as His messengers (Heb. i. 7). Then He will not need to use those outward judgments in order to take us out of a false position, and guard us against condemnation (1 Cor. xi. 32).

We see from this passage in the Epistle to the Corinthians, that wherever the New Testament, in accordance with the Old, lays stress upon the necessity of hearkening, it is always with reference to the person and work of our Redeemer. The Corinthian Christians were judged because they failed to discern "the Lord's body" offered for them (verse 29). It is inadmissible, according to the context, to interpret verse 30 as referring to spiritual sickness and spiritual sleep. Spiritual sleep is not a means by which we can be aroused, set right, and kept from condemnation. Much rather are those external judgments, which are accomplished in the flesh, especially sickness, the means by which those of God's children who had given Him only partial attention are aroused and saved. Many must be brought to a death-bed in order that they may be snatched from condemna-

tion. Saved, yet so as by fire (1 Cor. iii. 15), they can now fall asleep in Christ.

We see that if sickness is a judgment on those who do not hear, it is a judgment in *grace*—a gracious visitation, by which the loving God seeks to open our ear, so that He may bring us into, or restore us to, the position of being crucified with Christ. (See also Lev. xxvi. 14-16, compared with verse 18, "If ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me . . ."). It is universally admitted how blessedly sickness can work, either with the converted or the unconverted, in order to make them hearken to God's voice. How many a prodigal son who, in fleeing from the Father's house, has never stopped to answer the questions, Where art thou? Whence comest thou? Whither goest thou? is brought to a standstill by sickness, and so comes to himself, and turns back. And of how many children of God can we not say as much? How many a worker for God becomes estranged from his Father's house and his Father's heart in the midst of work for his lord? Many a one, for example, while he devoted himself and spent his strength away from home in the service of others, had become guilty of selfishness in the home circle, in the privacy of family life, and it needed sickness, often long and painful sickness, to make him aware of it. He had been regarding himself as a much-to-be-pitied victim, little

thinking how much his wife, children, and household had to suffer from him.

If a child of God has once come completely to himself through sickness, and his heart and life are again illuminated by God's light, sickness can be made to him a blessed school, and above all a school of self-denial. Taught by the Word and Spirit of God, he begins to see whither God desires to lead him: that is, to renounce all earthly hopes and prospects, and to commit to God, in perfect confidence, the question of his maintenance, and many other things, which hitherto he had himself the care of, but which he is now obliged to leave in other hands. He sees it, and learns it by the power of grace. He learns to practice patience and forgiving love when he fails to find in others that tender consideration and unwearying sympathy to which his sufferings seem to entitle him, and much besides which he had neglected to learn in the time of health.

When the sick one has learned self-denial and submission, and to commit himself, with unreserved confidence, to the love of his God, then God can use him to exercise on his part the blessed vocation of love in the midst of sickness. He has found in Christ a High-priest, who has taken away his burden, and at the feet of Christ he now learns to bear the burdens of others; he follows with his intercession all

work for the Kingdom of God with which he is acquainted, whether at home or abroad ; he learns to exercise a priestly ministry (Rev. i. 6).

God the Father does not rest till all things are put under the feet of His Son. Although at the present time, and till Christ come, many enemies remain unconquered ; although the world at large does not bow beneath His sceptre, yet at least the first fruits of the redeemed ought to be even now completely subjected to Him ; they at least ought to honour Him as their Lord and King in all their desires, thoughts, and affections. Now sickness is one of the modes of discipline which the Father employs to make us captives to His Son, His conquered and willing subjects. The nearer a child of God is to his Father, the more jealous is the Father for His Son, that He may see in this child the full fruit of His death, and so gain a full victory over him. If therefore Satan * attacks by pre-

* There are a number of passages in which sickness and disease are treated as being the work of Satan. See especially Job i. and ii. ; the woman with a spirit of infirmity bound eighteen years by Satan, Luke xiii. 16 ; Paul buffeted by a messenger of Satan, 2 Cor. xii. 7 ; also 1 Cor. v. 5, and 1 Tim. i. 20. Acts x. 38 sums up the whole earthly ministry of the Lord in these words, " Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him." According to this passage we see Christ's victory over the devil, not only in the healing of the possessed, but in every healing He accomplished. In other passages of the New Testament also, the healing of the sick is connected with the coming of the kingdom of Christ, Matt. iv. 23 ; ix. 35. Wherever God's kingdom advances there sickness loses ground (Luke x. 9).

ference the most useful and fruitful of God's servants, and seeks through sickness to rob the Lord of at least a portion of their members, it is not simply that God permits it, it is God Himself who sometimes gives over these, His most blessed children, to sickness for a while, until their self-life is thoroughly judged. They must learn to hold by faith that they are dead and buried with Christ, and to be thankful for it ; they must learn to regard themselves as holy to the Lord, in order to serve Him as such, through His strength.

The question has a practical bearing, in so far as the sick man learns to impute it no longer to God, when he is, as it were, racked on a bed of torture ; and he will bring his need to the Lord in quite another way when he has recognised that the power of the enemy has been at play. Truly it is always God who directly or indirectly, sends, permits, or takes away sickness ; but though all things work together for good to them that love God (Rom. viii. 28), yet our deliverance from an oppression in which Satan has a hand, will mainly depend upon our appealing to the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ over the devil and all his power (Col. ii. 15 ; Heb. ii. 14, 15). Practically, the devil is powerless against God's children just as far as they rest upon the Lord, upon His Word and His work ; but this requires light and knowledge.



V.

FAITHFULNESS AND PERSEVERANCE ; SURRENDER AND TRUST.

IF we wish to have confirmed in our experience the teaching of Holy Scripture, according to which healing and health form part of our redemption, we must remember that all realisation of Christ's salvation, as it is accomplished by the Holy Ghost in our hearts and lives, requires on our part faithfulness in the smallest things, obedience and self-surrendered trust. Christ's work of salvation exerts its redeeming power upon our hearts and lives only in proportion as the Holy Ghost illuminates it to us. What, then, determines the character and the development of our inner life, is the unreserved willingness, with which we yield to every ray of God given light, and the tender, conscientious fidelity, with which we follow it. All that we have apprehended of the Word of God, and the work of Christ, must, at once, find expression and

application in our lives. Knowledge of divine things, which does not transform the character and life, and which bears no fruit of self-denial, only harms and corrupts our inner man. The best way of receiving more is to apply in the home life, in the office and the daily calling, what we have seen and received, until all clouds of unbelief are dispersed, and the truth shines into the heart and life with purifying and liberating power.

But we have gone about so long with blinded eyes, and deceived our souls by accumulating knowledge, without bringing forth fruit, and thereby blunted our perception of the truth, that we must not be discouraged if, at first, it is difficult for us to realise even in our inner man, the fulness of Christ's redemption—if we do not succeed all at once in finding rest from sin and the flesh—if we should again in word or deed fall into the old ways.

Still less need we be surprised if, in our bodies, the fruits of Christ's redemption work are not manifested at once, or at first only partially so, if sickness does not disappear, although the dominion of sin has been already broken. "Das *Ende* der Wege Gottes ist Leiblichkeit," says the late Oetinger, a servant of God well known in Germany. The sense of which is: to take a bodily form, or, to be manifested in the body, is the end of God's thoughts and dealings. The last

enemy that shall be destroyed is death, therefore it may already be well with the soul, while the body is not yet in perfect health (3 John 2). Hebrews x. 36, applies here, "Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."

The first step out of unbelief and distrust is to be thoroughly willing to be healed. *Wilt* thou be made whole? was the question to the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda. Many are afraid of being healed. They dread the duties and claims which returning health would bring with it; they cannot understand how they should preserve intact, amid the frictions of daily life, the varied occurrences and unexpected interruptions of an active calling, that inward silence, that calm peace and communion with God, which they found in the retirement of the sick room. That this certainly requires a greater display of God's grace appears from the fact, that we find a deep and undisturbed rest of soul, an atmosphere of eternity, more frequently about the couch of one who has been long tried with sickness, than amongst the healthy who are amidst the noise and bustle of life. This fear, however, springs from an inconceivable and culpable suspicion towards our heavenly Father, and the Shepherd and Guide whom He has given us. Forget not, dear brother, that when God gives new duties, He also gives new power in a corresponding measure. Think not that

the Lord will heal your body, without pouring into your soul new powers of life and health, without endowing you for the days of health. Bid farewell to your fears, let go your unbelief, and trust your heavenly Physician. And if He ask you, wilt *thou* be made whole? Answer Him boldly and firmly, trusting His grace and faithfulness, "Yes Lord, for Thy sake and to the glory of Thy name."

It will be understood from what has been said, that we are responsible or guilty of unbelief only so far as the Holy Ghost has given us light on some truth of Scripture. If Isaiah liii. 4, 5 has not yet taken for you the meaning, that you have a shelter from pain and sickness in Christ's wounds and death, then hold to the word "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" all the more firmly, in that sense that you can cast all the burden of your sickness upon the Lord. Be sure that you will find in Him at all times an open heart and a helping hand. Hanging between heaven and earth, He experienced in His own body the bitterness and pain of suffering. Therefore now "let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

If a child of God has not arrived yet at the point where the Father can remove the sickness from him, He does not on that account leave him at the mercy

of sickness ; on the contrary, He surrounds him with the most tender care. "The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing, Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness" (Psalm xli. 3). "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench" (Isaiah xlii. 3). "He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm ciii. 14). Whether it be a question of bodily pain or of inner griefs and conflicts, which sickness so often brings with it, the sick one may at all times, and under all circumstances, comfort himself with the assurance that God will not suffer him to be tempted above that he is able ; that He will, with the temptation, make such a way of escape, that His child shall be able to bear it (1 Cor. x. 13). *

* If the Father's attention be specially turned to His sick children, it evidently becomes the healthy members of Christ's body, to enter into their Father's mind, and to treat their sick brethren with warm sympathy and considerate reverence (Matt. xxv. 36, 43-45). Sufferers need to be touched with a delicate hand. We should put off the shoes from our feet in approaching a sick-bed.

PART II.

JESUS CHRIST AT HIS COMING WILL
BRING US THE COMPLETE REDEMPTION
OF OUR BODY; THERFORE UNTIL
THEN, THE APPLICATION OF
ISAIAH LIII. 4, MUST BE VERY
SPECIALLY UNDER THE
GUIDANCE OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT.



VI.

“AGAIN IT IS WRITTEN.”

THE first thing to bear in mind, in seeking to grasp and realise any scriptural truth is, that as God's Word can only be understood through the Holy Spirit, so it can only be applied by the Holy Spirit. It would be folly to take into our own hands, and out of the hand of the Holy Ghost, what He Himself has unfolded to us, in order to dispose of it according to our needs and our own judgment. But we can count on the discipline and guidance of the Holy Ghost only so long as our union with the person of Jesus is unbroken.

Furthermore, we must remember that, until the Lord's coming, our knowledge and understanding of the Bible, whether as individuals or as a church, will be imperfect. In this condition we shall be led astray, if we take any isolated text, and carry it out to its extreme. If the Word of God is to remain the sword

of the Spirit in our hands, we must practise the Master's "*Again* it is written." Otherwise it will become a carnal weapon, yea, even a weapon which the wicked One can use to lead us captive.

"Again it is written," becomes doubly important, when dealing with a question of such deep importance as redemption from sickness. Let us look into it carefully.

We read in Romans viii. 23, 25, that the redemption of the body remains an object of hope, even to those who have the firstfruits of the Spirit. Granted that the primary meaning of this redemption of our body be exemption from physical death, still we cannot claim at all times, and unconditionally to be exempt from all pain and disease, so long as we have to wait with patience for the redemption of our body.

Paul had to leave Trophimus sick at Miletus. Epaphroditus fell ill in the service of Christ, and owed it to the compassion of God alone, that he was brought back from the border of the grave into the land of the living. And what of Paul himself? Whatever that thorn may have been which he bore in his flesh, this much is certain, that Paul was buffeted by a messenger of Satan (2 Cor. xii. 7). If an apostle had to submit to this, how canst thou refuse unconditionally, and in all circumstances to bear sickness and pain, relying on the fact that Christ has borne them

for us? It is true, the extraordinary revelations given to Paul furnished a special ground, and perhaps the altogether singular position which he occupied, may have furnished an additional reason why this thorn should have been necessary. But what assurance hast thou, that thy circumstances, though they may be very different, do not render a similar discipline necessary? In the hour of trial, about fourteen years before he referred to this subject (2 Cor. xii. 2), the apostle himself did not know why it was necessary for God to send him this affliction, else he certainly would not have prayed thrice for its removal. It was only subsequently that the Lord showed him that it had been needed to guard him from the danger of self exultation. At the time, he had simply to bow to the word, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

We have repeatedly mentioned Job, and have seen by comparing Job i. 1, and Exodus xv. 26, that he had reason to expect exemption from sickness. God neither excuses nor justifies Himself. He only asks him if we may be permitted to use a synopsis, "Who art thou, impotent, short sighted child of man, that thou shouldest take God to account?"

Moreover, if a redeemed child of God would attempt to carry out the application and realisation of Isaiah liii. 4, fully and unconditionally at all times and in all circumstances, must he not first ask himself, "What about death?"

Our Lord not only bore on the cross our infirmities and diseases, His death has also redeemed us from physical death. If through death He destroyed him that hath the power of death, that is the devil, and delivered them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. ii. 14 and 15), this victory over death is indeed realised, wherever the fear of death has given place for ever to the Spirit of adoption; but that is not its full realisation, its last triumph. When Jesus planted His banner of life and victory over the grave of Lazarus, with the words, "I am the resurrection and the life", He had previously said, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live," and then, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." We cannot, therefore, take the second statement for a mere repetition of the first; no, it goes further. In the sixth chapter of John's gospel, that chapter so full of deep significance, the Lord twice repeats in verses 50, 51, and 58, "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever." Since the Lord both times uses the expression, "this bread" in express contrast to the bread from heaven, which the fathers did eat in the wilderness, "and are dead," he shows plainly that the bread which He

broke on the cross "for the life of the world" (verse 51), works deliverance also from physical death. Paul says that Jesus Christ abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Tim. i. 10).

Scripture goes yet further. In the eleventh of Hebrews, Enoch is cited among the cloud of witnesses whose faith is held up to us for our encouragement and example; and it is said of him, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him." By this very fact the experience of Enoch is held up to our faith as a goal.

And yet the Apostles died; and yet Paul declares, in the Epistle to the Philippians, his joyous confidence that God will not let him in anything be put to shame, but that at all times Christ shall be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death (Phil. i. 20). How is this seeming contradiction to be harmonised, and how should we stand in regard to sickness and death?

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. xv. 26). In the same way as for the world the victory of the Lord Jesus over death will be partially manifested during the millenium, but realised in its fulness, that is, in the abolition of death, only at the end (1 Cor. xv. 24); so the doing away of death will be for the believer the closing act of the present

dispensation. The Lord alone knows how near we are to this moment, the moment in which the Lord will take home His bride. All the real members of Christ's body are pressing forward to this, but Christ alone can decide whether we are of them that "remain unto the coming of the Lord." It depends on Him whether, and for how long, He will grant us free access to His fulness of life, that we may draw from Him, the Prince of Life, new supplies of life and resurrection power to withstand those powers of death and dissolution, under which we suffer, and whose seeds we bear within us.

Now, as even in the Church, Christ's victory over death has not yet reached its climax in the abolition of death, but has been manifested only in so far as this enemy is made to serve the purposes of God, Who is glorified in the death of His saints, so it is with Christ's victory over Satan and his kingdom. Through His death on the Cross the Lord has delivered us from the power of darkness (Col. i. 13), and triumphed over all the powers of hell (Col. ii. 15), and yet they can trouble us mightily, and we need the whole armour of God in order to be able to withstand them. The Lord has conquered Satan, and yet Paul writes to the Romans xvi. 20, "The God of peace *shall* bruise (margin, tread) Satan under your feet shortly." Twice was the Apostle himself hindered by Satan from going

to Thessalonica (1 Thess. ii. 18). Satan, indeed, can no longer touch the *souls* of those who are begotten of God, so long as they keep themselves (1 John v. 18), but he can touch their *bodies*. Yet even in this Satan is now become a conquered enemy, whose working serves God's purposes. Even when he touches our body he is compelled to minister to us. As the good angels are sent forth, even so are the evil angels made use of to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation. God overrules Satan's torture of His children's bodies, to guard them inwardly (2 Cor. xii. 7), just as the hindrances which the devil opposes to every fruitful work in the Lord's vineyard, by endeavouring to paralyse or trouble the Lord's workers, is used by Him for the purifying of His servants, and for keeping alive in them a sense of their dependence upon Him, their Shepherd and Master. We are constrained by the straits into which Satan brings us to cling more closely to Jesus, and to press on to such a nearness to Him, that at last Satan shall no longer be able to reach our *souls*.

It will only be in her rapture that the Church will be for ever delivered from all contact with Satan, and at the same time from all contact with sickness. Till then the Lord, to Whom is given all power in heaven and on earth, over nature and hell, will show to each one individually, by His Spirit—as with regard to

sickness so also with regard to death—whether, and to what extent, He can call, and, in vital union with Himself, enable us to remain free from them.

We shall arrive at the same conclusion from another side when we come to consider the passage in the Epistle of James, which treats of healing.



VII.

“IS ANY SICK AMONG YOU? 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, THEY SHALL BE FORGIVEN HIM.”—

James v. 14, 15.

THE sick child of God (“any . . . *among you*”) is here invited to send for the elders of the Church. What does the Word of God mean by “the Church?” If the existing churches are essentially different from that which the writer of this Epistle (St. James) had in his mind, then the invitation and promise contained in these verses cannot be applied directly and unconditionally to our circumstances.

According to the Scriptures, the Church of Jesus Christ, as a whole and in its entirety, consists of the

united company of His redeemed, those whom He has washed and whom He is perfecting (Eph. v. 23-32). The Church in a place, or, as it is in large cities, the Church of a certain district, consists of the children of God living in that place (Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 2; etc.). The Scriptures everywhere presuppose that the children of God, who are members together of one body, most closely knit together for weal or woe, for honour or shame, and continually needing one another (1 Cor. xii. 21-27), should, as far as time and circumstances permit, gather together in the same place. In Corinth some sided with Paul, some with Apollos, some with Cephas; others again claimed to be Christ's in a special manner. Paul grieves for these divisions, and calls the Corinthians "carnal." (1 Cor. i. 10-12; iii. 3-7). But bad and deplorable as was the condition of this church (1 Cor. xi. 17-20), yet the Epistle to the Corinthians bears no trace of these Christians having thought of separating themselves, according to their several sympathies, into special circles, which would then have been called religious bodies, or congregations. Divisions in the Church cannot be justified by Holy Scripture, whatever the questions may be about which Christians differ, whether of Church government, or of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Wherever there exists a difference of views or convictions, there Phil.

iii. 15 applies, "If in anything ye be otherwise minded (have another view or conviction), God shall reveal even this unto you."

In our day we are accustomed to see Christ divided (1 Cor. i. 13), and how many children of God in the National Church, in the Free Churches, in Baptist, Methodist, and other communities, pride themselves on the truth or the views they represent, instead of being ashamed of participating in the guilt of dividing Christ's body, instead of bewailing the reproach and weakness which are thus brought upon the Gospel. Christians meet with satisfaction on the ground taken by the Evangelical Alliance, and congratulate themselves on the respect paid to man-made barriers, and the consideration shown to the creeds for whose sake they separated, instead of rather availing themselves of such precious opportunities of meeting with each other, in order to bow in repentance and humiliation on account of a state of things which the Lord alone can alter and heal; human attempts to put them right would only aggravate the evil.

The immediate deeply important bearing of such a state of things on the subject of the healing of the sick members of the Church is obvious. Indeed just in the Corinthian Church there were many sick, and many were prematurely carried off by death, because, in the Lord's Supper, they failed to discern the Lord's

body (1 Cor. xi. 29, 30); because they did not discern their own condition in connection with it, and did not "judge" themselves (verse 31). But in the Lord's Supper the body of Christ is to be viewed, not only as broken for us on the Cross, but also as His mystical body, which is the unity of all the redeemed in Christ—they are indissolubly bound together in Him. "We who are many are *one* loaf (margin, one body)" (1 Cor. x. 17 R.V.). The Lord's table is the place where this unity of God's children finds its perfect expression. Wherever the Church is divided, wherever the believers of a place have separated themselves into divers communities, founded by man, according to human ideas, and have their Lord's table closed to each other, there they no longer "discern the Lord's body," in a sense different indeed from the Corinthians, but in a manner equally culpable. If the Corinthians were sick because of their sin, we in these days have no right to expect that our sick shall be healed at once so long as we are guilty of the same sin. It is also hardly possible to call the elders of the Church as long as we have only elders of communities.

It is certainly significant that the sick member of the Church is not directed to the gifts of healing or of working of miracles deposited with the Church (1 Cor. xii. 9, 10). From the beginning, the Lord gave the

power to heal the sick in connection with the work of evangelising, the work of extending the kingdom of God. It was so when He sent out the twelve (Luke ix. 2, 6), when He sent out the seventy (Luke x. 9), and in His last will and charge to His disciples (Mark xvi. 18). The instances of healing recorded in the Acts of the Apostles also are generally not those of members of the Church.* The divine rule for the members of the Church is in 1 Cor. xi. 31 : "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." Those "without" were healed by gifts and miracles ; those "within" must judge themselves, or let their brethren judge them (1 Cor. v. 12) if they are to escape judgment on God's part ; and therefore sick members of the Church are directed to the elders, who are the shepherds and teachers of the flock, and, as their ministers, have amongst other offices that of prophet. They must be able to say to the sick member of the flock who has not "*thoroughly judged*" himself, not discerned his own condition (such is the meaning of the Greek word *diacrinein* in 1 Cor. xi. 31), as Nathan said to David : "Thou art the man" (2 Sam. xii. 7). It should be said of them what the woman of Samaria

* The question seems to be different with regard to raising the dead (Acts ix. 36-42 ; xx. 7-12).

testified of Jesus : " He told me all things that ever I did " (St. John iv. 29). Compare here the other saying of the woman in verse 19, " Sir, I perceive that Thou art a Prophet." But if the whole condition of the Church is no longer according to God's mind, if the Church has split into parties, into religious bodies,* and the elders are not even alive to the culpability of such a state of things, how shall they see clearly enough to judge the condition of the individual member of the Church ?

If there exist an intimate connection between the discerning the Lord's body and the healing of the sick, it will be easily understood that the Lord specially owns the anointing with oil, according to James v., where the sick person and the elders have their minds open to this discernment of the body of Christ, where the separate interests of party or community have given place to the common interests of the Kingdom, where the scriptural truth of the unity of Christ's body is recognised and respected.

Also as concerning the healing, in the name of Jesus, of those that are without, there may be a connection between healing and the condition of the Church ; and the servants of the Lord 'cannot expect any manifestation of the power and compassion of

* Or if even a larger body lays claim to be *the* Church.

God towards the bodies of men, so long as they do not seek the common interests of the kingdom of God and His glory, without after thoughts for the interest of a particular party.



VIII.

“CONFESS YOUR FAULTS ONE TO ANOTHER, AND PRAY ONE FOR ANOTHER, THAT YE MAY BE HEALED. THE EFFECTUAL FERVENT PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN AVAIL-ETH MUCH.”—*James* v. 16.

THOUGH the Lord Jesus called apostles, and the apostles appointed elders, yet the promise was not withdrawn, whereby the Lord gave to His disciples in general authority to bind and loose (*Matthew* xviii. 18), and therefore we see, in the next verse of the passage of *James*, as cited above, that it is not necessary to be an elder in order to be used of God in the healing of our sick brethren. The circle widens here, and all children of God are exhorted to pray one for another in case of sickness. It is no longer the prayer of the elders, but the prayer of the righteous man, that is spoken of here as availing much when it is effectual and fervent, that is to say, when it is energised by power from on high. Though

we have no longer a scriptural church, or elders furnished with the needful spiritual powers, still the Lord can raise up, here and there, His disciples to bear faithful witness to His name also in this matter of healing the sick. He has done this at various and most divers times, and does it yet more at the present time. So if a Christian is perplexed by the passage in James v. 13-15, because he knows no elders who will act accordingly, let him lift up his eyes to God. The Almighty and all-loving One, who showed the wise men from the East the way to Bethlehem, who brought Naaman out of Syria to the prophet Elisha, and to the waters of Jordan,—who made Ananias willing to go to the praying Saul, and the unwilling Peter willing to go to the group of Gentiles who were waiting upon God in Cesarea,—who led His own Son once to Jacob's well, another time into the far North, that He might bring help to a Samaritan woman here and a Gentile mother there,—that same God knows how to find for every upright heart, near by or far off, a righteous man who shall, as a brother and a priest, intercede for the sick one, and meet him according to his inmost condition and need with the prophet's word of judgment (Hebrews iv. 12 and 13), or with the glad tidings of comfort (Isaiah l. 4).

Together with bodily sickness, there is often an inward oppression, a weakening or overclouding of

the life of faith, and this explains to us why God's children, when sick, should be directed to the elders of their church or to the "righteous" in general. Brotherly help is here especially in place. But certainly, this does not mean that the Lord is limited to human instruments in the healing of His children. Jesus Christ remains the one Mediator between God and man, for the body as well as the soul, and if the Holy Ghost has given us light on Isaiah liii. 4 and 5, in regard to its import for the diseased body, then it will only enhance the glory and the joy of the Lord, if we go straight to Him, that He, in a direct manner, may take us in hand as the Lord our Physician.

In the present divided state of church relations, and the confusion of ideas concerning it, each one must see clearly for himself, before God, what position he is to take with regard to questions about the Church, or about healing. He must be mindful of the way by which the Lord has led him up to this point. The more definitely and rapidly the Lord opens up new paths, the more will systems and theories prove inadequate, their only use indeed in all questions has ever been to sum up the knowledge and experience which had been previously gained. In such times as these of revolution and transition, it is doubly necessary that each one individually should live in unbroken communion with his heavenly Guide,

and keep such an attitude towards Him, that at all times, and in all questions, he may receive the watchword, signal, and guidance, direct from Him. The Lord can only use those stones in the temple He is building, which He Himself has hewn. He Himself forms the members of His body. Even as they were not born of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, so neither can they be educated by the life and knowledge of other members, they must be anointed with other than human oil. He has begotten them, He nourishes them with His life, and teaches and guides them by His Spirit. All ministrations of the members one to another, which are not communicated and controlled by the Head, will only hinder, weaken, and mislead.



IX.

“ELIAS WAS A MAN SUBJECT TO LIKE PASSIONS AS WE ARE, AND HE PRAYED EARNESTLY THAT IT MIGHT NOT RAIN; AND IT RAINED NOT ON THE EARTH BY THE SPACE OF THREE YEARS AND SIX MONTHS. AND HE PRAYED AGAIN, AND THE HEAVEN GAVE RAIN, AND THE EARTH BROUGHT FORTH HER FRUIT.”—*James v. 17, 18.*

A STEADY and victorious walk in grace, fruitfulness in service, and calmness in the midst of labour, are essentially dependent on childlike prayer on the one hand, and trustful activity on the other, having each their proper place in our daily life. It is of the utmost importance that we should know the right moment when we are to bring our petitions to the Lord in *prayer*, and when to go forward in *confidence*, not seeing the way, and ready to put down our foot on a seeming void, like Peter on the water. If Joshua, instead of following the command given to him (Josh. iii. 7, 8), had divided Israel into groups along the banks of the Jordan, and commenced prayer

meetings for the passage across, they might have prayed day and night, but the waters would not have been divided. Here it was a case of believing, not of asking. In faith the people had to move onward, in faith the priests had to set down the soles of their feet in the swollen river, or they would never have entered into the promised land.

It is equally important to discern when we are to pray unconditionally, and wait upon God till we have our petition, and again, when we should say, "Lord, not my will, but Thine be done." In that hour when it was with the Lord Jesus a personal question of life or death, and when He could not know whether it was in accordance with His Father's will to spare Him a step, from which His whole nature shrank—then it was that He prayed, "Not My will but Thine be done." At the grave of Lazarus, when it was no longer a question about Himself, but about glorifying His Father, and He was certain of His Father's will, then He did not wait to see what the Father would do; but, confident that His prayer was heard, and thanking the Father for it, He spoke with authority to the dead man before all the people.

It is the object of the present dispensation to prepare for the Lord Jesus a bride, *who is able to understand Him*, and who will reign with Him. As the realisation and manifestation of the full redemption,

accomplished on the cross, is the work appointed to the Church, and committed to her trust, so the accomplishment of this task is the very way by which the Church is formed for her calling to occupy her position as Christ's bride. The Lord desires a people for His own possession, not a people to cringe as slaves, but a people who will boldly enter with full purpose of heart, mind, and will, into the lines of God's purposes and ways, whenever the Holy Ghost opens before them new vistas and possibilities.

The late Pastor Blumhardt knew this. In his biography, for which we have to thank Pastor Zündel, of Winterthur, we read page 284, second edition, "The promises of God are not self-fulfilling, their realisation depends upon man. The fulfilment of what God has *promised*, is always more or less dependent upon man's free will, whether he really desires that which has been promised to him or not." Yes, the Lord seeks a people who understand Him, who will enter into His thoughts with their hearts and souls.

God had said to Elijah, "Go show thyself unto Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth." Fearlessly and without hesitation Elijah did as God commanded him, but yet the rain did not come, the divine promise remained unfulfilled. From the time that the judgment of drought was pronounced against Israel, the Lord

had made the removal of the judgment dependent on Elijah's intervention (1 Kings xvii. 1), and now that the hour of visitation is come, He places the carrying out of His gracious will into the hand of His servant. Elijah had been prepared by the many schools of faith, through which he had passed to present himself before his people as a prophet, judging and through judgment preparing the way for deliverance. But the effectual accomplishment of this deliverance and the visiting of the land with rain, depended on Elijah's waiting on his God in the prayer of faith.

Elijah was a man of like passions with us (*R. V.*). Whatever he did God may expect of us, the children of the New Covenant. If we have surrendered ourselves unconditionally to the Lord, and if the Holy Spirit has full possession of us, He will awaken and use all the gifts and powers committed to us. He will teach us to take the same position which Elijah took with respect to the Word and the promises of God. We then no longer wait passively until these are fulfilled in us, but we appropriate them by active and definite faith.

This must not, however, be applied to sickness without limitation. Assured as we are that the Lord bore our sicknesses as well as our sins on the Cross, we yet cannot place both on a level. In the domain of our physical life we still groan with the groaning

creation ; we wait for the redemption of the body, and hasten it by every groan, which the Spirit puts within us (Rom. viii. 22-27 ; 2 Peter iii. 12, "Looking for and hasting the coming" . . . [margin]; Rev. xxii. 17, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come"). After His resurrection the Lord commanded that forgiveness of sins should be preached to all people, not as something future and conditional, but as something that He had purchased, into which everyone might enter at once. "Repent," said Peter, "and be baptized, every one in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." In the same chapter in which Paul speaks of the redemption from *physical* death as something to be looked forward to in the future, he clearly states that he is already made free from the law of sin and *spiritual* death (Rom. viii. 1, 2, 6, 10). Not to accept this great salvation at once were unbelief and disobedience. Here it behoves us, in the fullest sense, to place our heads between our knees as Elijah did. As he shut himself in to all that passed around him, so must we shut ourselves out from all that passes within us. Indifferent to our state or condition, our feelings, experiences, or frames of mind, we must, by naked faith, hold on to what is written that the Lord has done for us. Here it behoves us to pray unconditionally. He who asks for forgiveness of sins and then waits till the load and sense of

condemnation leave him does not understand his God, he does not understand what faith is. In any case doubtless thou must first recognise thyself as a lost sinner, condemned on the Cross of Christ, and must suffer thyself to be thoroughly searched and judged by the Spirit of God, just as Elijah, after he had received the promise of rain, had first to show the people their sin and then to execute judgment. But if thou wilt honour thy God thou must also know how to plead with Him on the ground of that judgment which was passed on that same Cross of Christ on all the sins of the world; thou must plead this before God, and thou must lay hold of it without waiting for any inward experience.

With regard to sickness, our position is more difficult. Yet even there the example of Elijah shall serve us. Let us begin with rooting out of our hearts and homes all Baal-worship; let us put to death our own will and our own notions; let us no longer ask whether it suits us or not to be ill, but simply, "What does God expect of us? What position are we to take in this present case of sickness in order that *God* may be glorified?" and then, if God does not interpose His "My grace is sufficient for thee," we take God at His word, and remember that sickness is not His chosen and final will for His children. As long as the Holy Ghost gives us liberty, we ask for,

and expect, our healing with unmoved assurance, however long and severe may be the trial to which it may please God to subject our faith, whatever be the outward or inward hindrances which oppose themselves to the instant and complete realisation of God's will in us.

All obedience to the truth through the Spirit, all holding fast *in faith* of any revealed truth, cleanses and purifies the heart (1 Peter i. 22 ; Acts xv. 9), and so prepares the way for the fulfilment of the promise.

The same holds good with regard to *death*. Those of His servants and handmaids, whom the Lord has called and prepared to advance against the bulwarks of darkness, have to experience also the opposition of the enemy. Not only against the world inimical to the gospel and resisting all invasion of its territory has the Christian to fight even unto blood (Heb. xii. 4), but also from believers, in so far as they have allowed themselves to be held captive by Satan in sloth and thoughtlessness, we have to experience painfully the counter pressure of sin. There are times when the Master lifts His servants above this opposition by the power of His Spirit, but there may also be other seasons when Satan is permitted to sift us, times when our mind and body will experience the pressure of opposition to the truth in its whole weight. The devil will then appear as an angel of light, perhaps

telling the weary servant that he has served long enough, and may make room for another, so that it will appear to him to be humility if he retires. If the soldier of Christ, in such a case, is not to be overcome by an irresistible longing for his eternal rest, if he is to escape the snares and sophistries of the Prince of Darkness, who still retains some of the power of death, and unfolds his wings as the angel of death, this soldier must be thoroughly true ; he must be able to say to his Lord, " Lord, Thou knowest how gladly I will go home when Thou callest me, and that nothing in this world is holding me back ; Thou knowest that I can give back into Thy hands with perfect calm and in fullest confidence the work with which Thou hast entrusted me ; Thou knowest that, in spite of my earnest expectation of remaining till Thou come, I am ready to go through death, as my forefathers and brethren have done, as soon as Thou shalt beckon me, but I must know that it is Thou that callest me. As long as Thou canst use me, as long as my remaining here may in any way serve Thee and Thy people, so long will I not suffer my heart to wax faint, not even through the yearning after home, fully willing to remain at my post. I know Thou art with me even unto the end."

In bringing before us, however, the example of Elijah, St. James does not primarily intend thereby to

encourage us to withstand sickness and death for ourselves, but that we should intervene for others. As God called Elijah to stand up for His people, so He can call us and fit us to stand in the breach for others, that they may not fall a prey to sickness, but remain at their post or be won back to it. Yet let us be careful. If entire simplicity and much sobriety is needed, even where it is ourselves who are in question, and if it is indispensable that we should be to a certain degree accustomed to discern God's guidance, in order that we may resist sickness really *through the Spirit*, it is doubly necessary that we should keep ourselves from our own ideas and our own impulses when it is a question of taking part in the guidance of others, whether it be that of individuals, or of whole families, or congregations.

Elijah was a man of like passions with us, but it was his habit of life to "stand before God." When he lay before the Lord on Carmel he was certain that he was acting in accordance with God's will in not letting Him go until He had removed the judgment from His people. The scriptural, and therefore the surest way to be able to intercede unconditionally, and in persevering confidence for others, is to follow the example of Elijah. Not until he had swept away the idol worship on Mount Carmel, and brought back the misguided people to their God, did

he ascend the mountain top and enter into that wrestling in prayer and fight of faith, of which our text speaks. If our God, in the greatness of His love and mercy, has even once permitted us by a simple word of truth to shed light on someone's heart and life,—if we, like Nathan, have had been allowed to say to any one, "Thou art the man,"—if a sick person has gone away from us, as I once did from a brother who had become a prophet * to me, with the experience of the Samaritan woman, "He told me all things that ever I did,"—why should we not then with Elijah ascend even to the top of the mountain? When God Himself has committed to us for one of His children a mission of *prophet*, and when He has acknowledged and sealed it by laying our brother in the dust, why should we not step forward to the ministry of *priest*, and make intercession for such a brother, waiting upon God until He seal outwardly the deliverance, which He had already accomplished inwardly.

The victory to which all judgment should lead is that heaven may again open with visitations of grace and salvation, and therefore with the manifestation of all the gifts which God has given to His Son for the prisoners and captives.

* The office of prophet in counter-distinction to that of the priest and king was not in the first place to reveal the future, but the truth in every respect.

Perhaps, we might even go further, and it would be according to God's own mind, if in the power of the Spirit of our Lord, we were to say to a captive, "Thy sins are forgiven thee" (John xx. 23), and then to add in the same Spirit, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk" (Acts iii. 6).

Let us suffer ourselves to be led by the Spirit in the footsteps of Elijah ; let us follow all light, given unto us, honestly, faithfully, and boldly, and certainly the Lord will not rest until He have gathered, even in our lives, the full fruit of His sufferings.



X.

FROM MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

IN the course of my life I was led to the Lord's healing unexpectedly, without seeking it. After my conversion, in September, 1862, I had begun in the latter part of the Autumn of 1865, to seek earnestly and perseveringly the fulness of grace and life, until at Easter, 1867, I realised like cleansing waters flowing over my soul. In connection with this spiritual grace, the Lord gave me deliverance from an overstrain of brain, which had lasted for a long time, and was growing serious. This was granted me through laying on of hands by S. Z. From that time Jesus has been always my only physician.*

* How much better is it, however, for a child of God with thankfulness of heart, and in the liberty of the gospel to have recourse to a human physician, if this is in accordance with the light he has received, than to refuse medical help under the yoke of a human rule, and in a spirit of legality.

In the Autumn of 1869, while in Geneva, I was suddenly attacked by a pain in the head, which made me at once incapable of any kind of work. After waiting two months, during which I received brotherly and sisterly ministrations, through grace and judgment, being both raised up and broken down, but found no healing—the Lord came to my rescue and led me to one of His servants, who in more than one respect became to me a “prophet.” As I told him my story, and in so doing, mentioned a certain circumstance, I encountered a look from him which penetrated my very soul. I had, indeed, had a consciousness that this matter was not altogether right; but I had not yet seen and judged it in God’s light, and this was the first time I felt myself really guilty in regard to it.

Later on I spoke of my position in Geneva. I had been engaged there as evangelist since the summer of 1868, and about a year afterwards, that is a few months before my illness, I had sent in my resignation under the impression that it was the Lord’s mind that the labourers in His vineyard should depend upon Him directly for their support. I had done so with singleness of heart, considering it an act of faith. The Lord did not forsake me; but still a difficulty had arisen, which was the cause of my speaking to the above-mentioned brother about the matter. He said

to me at once, "Go back to your box," * finding it good for me to be under human authority. He added that he did not wish to lay any burden upon me ; and that the Lord would Himself show me His way. I took this bitter pill home with me, and had a hard time of it that evening, until I was willing to go back to my old position, and humble myself before my Committee. After I had experienced during an intercourse of several days with this brother, the powers of the world to come in more than one way, he received me on the fourth or fifth day, with the message, that the Lord had bidden him lay his hands upon me, that I might be healed of my disease, and become quite a "decided Christian." After his laying on of hands, the Lord gave him this word, "He has it."

Fourteen days elapsed without any signs of improvement. It was time for me to decide whether I should go back to Geneva or not, and when I asked Brother L., he bade me go, with the words, "To minister the Word of God does not make sick."

I went in faith. On the journey the pain became intense. When I arrived at Geneva, I found a letter from my former Committee, who had continued part

* The German term "Kasten," used by this brother (literally, "box"), conveys the idea of a place too small, of a position in which you feel uneasy, hampered in your movements, shut up as it were.

of my salary even after my resignation, and now invited me to attend one of the Committee meetings. I obeyed the call, and took my place as a deserter, while relating my story. The brethren received me with love, and replaced me in my former position.*

From this moment the power of the disease was broken, and up to the present it has never kept me back from any work. It did not disappear at once, but was like a dog chained in a corner of my brain. Whenever anything was not quite right in my relations either with God or man, whenever my conscience or mind was troubled, and my spiritual horizon began to be clouded, the old trouble at once announced its presence. Although I had previously been walking in the light, in obedience and subjection to the will of God, I was now *obliged* to fly to the Lord about everything, even my impressions and frames of mind, and to remain before Him until He removed the grain of sand, till my inner eye had again become "single," and my inner being "full of light." I was constrained to this if I would not fall a prey to my old enemy. Through my body I became the prisoner of the Lord.

It is obvious that in this way I came almost naturally to make a stand against pain or sickness, whenever

* Before a year had passed my "box" fell to pieces of itself, and without my raising a finger towards it.

they threatened me ; and by this making a stand I simply understand pressing closer to the Lord, seeking shelter as well as counsel from Him.*

About a year after my return to Geneva, at a time when, for eight or ten days, I was holding meetings every afternoon, I fell ill just after one of the meetings. It was shortly before my marriage, and I had gone to visit my betrothed. When my mother-in-law saw the state I was in, she did not allow me to return home, and wished also to postpone the morrow's meeting. But to that I would not consent. The following night there came a moment when I rose up in bed with the words, "I will not be ill." The details how I was led to this have vanished from my memory, but my wife still remembers the impression of solemn earnestness on my face which struck her as she came in. One thing I know for certain—it was not of the flesh, but of the Spirit ; it was not an act of self-will or natural energy, but an act of faith wrought by God. The Lord owned it, and the next afternoon I was able to hold my meeting as usual—I was healed.

* I did not learn to take refuge under the Cross of Christ till later. It was afterwards that the Lord led me to Isaiah liii. 4, and opened before my eyes the important connection between Matt. viii. 16, 17 and this passage in Isaiah, showing me that my Saviour had borne my bodily as well as spiritual sufferings and sicknesses on the Cross. Still later I received light on the significance of Jesus Christ's death on the Cross for my inward cleansing, and now there I find shelter from all power and every form of sin.

More than nine years later—I was then living at Peseux, and my first little pamphlet on “Sickness and the Gospel” had been published in French for about a year—I was attacked one day with fever, and was obliged to keep my bed. As far as I remember, I was perfectly restful and quiet during this illness. I took the disease as if it were a matter of course, without thinking of resisting it, without asking myself if any unknown sin or unfaithfulness might lie at the root of it. I was simply ill as any child of God might be who had never heard of healing through faith, never known or practised anything but to rest happy in his Father’s will without any Wherefore? The fourth or fifth day, when I was almost able to be about again, I had a visit from a sister, who had learnt to know the Lord as the Physician of the body, and who bore blessed witness to this truth. I hailed her visit as a welcome opportunity for admonishing her, and others through her, and showing her how very careful they must be how they went forward on this line; but the tables were soon turned upon me. Instead of convicting her, I sat there as the convicted one. She had, she told me, asked the Lord to raise me up, and had expected me to attend a committee meeting, to which I had been invited, but had failed to go. Though my non-attendance was of no consequence, yet I felt humbled and reprovèd. I do not

remember in detail what further passed within me. Without feeling myself guilty that I, till then, had quietly remained ill, but yet not without a certain sense of shame, I soon felt decidedly impelled henceforth in faith to take my position against sickness. I wrote to Neuchâtel—this was on Monday or Tuesday—that by God's grace I would take the meeting there which was appointed me for the following Sunday. Whilst still keeping my bed, I had received a card from Pastor Theodore Monod, with whom I had not had any correspondence for some time, inviting me to take part with him in meetings at Valence. My acceptance of this invitation was sent off at the same time as my letter to Neuchâtel. When Sunday came I was still weak, and had to stay over night at Neuchâtel, but I was able to hold the meeting. The next day I travelled to Valence, where the Lord restored me, in the course of the meetings, to my full health and strength.



XI.

HEALING AND THE ANOINTING OF THE SPIRIT.

AT the point which we have now reached, it is obvious that the question which engages us is intimately connected with the question of the Holy Spirit's guidance, with the *anointing*, as the Apostle John expresses it (1 John ii. 27). We can only walk on the ground of healing through faith and faith-health, so long as our fellowship with God is close enough for Him to be able to guide us in all things directly by His spirit. As the Israelites in the wilderness had to wait for a distinct direction from above, before they either struck their tents or pitched them, so will he who has the anointing be guided by the Spirit of God in all questions of what to do and what not to do, of going forward or keeping still, and that, so long as he walks in the



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singleness of heart and in the truth, with full inward assurance.

As hearkening to the voice of our God with full surrender of the will is the first and principal condition laid down in Holy Scripture, for being kept from sickness, so it is the only condition required for being led of the Holy Ghost. We must have become still and silent before our God. Let your heart make over to God even its faintest desires in unconditional agreement with all His will, and in fullest trust in His goodness and wisdom; let your mind be no longer occupied with any question but the glory of God, and you will realise at once that "the voice of strangers" will no longer disturb your ear; no earthly image or prospect will any longer trouble your eye; you will abide under the anointing.

He who is born of God, and has become a new creature, *has* the anointing. But the sheep can only recognise the shepherd's voice as long as it is deaf to that of strangers' (John x. 4, 5). "I can of Mine own self do nothing," said the Lord Jesus. "As I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me" (John v. 30 compared with Isaiah l. 4-6). If we would have God instruct us and teach us in the way in which we should go, if we would be guided by His eye, we must not be as the horse or as the mule,

and in nothing seek our own will (Psalm xxxii. 8, 9). We find the same truth in Isaiah xxx. if we compare the 15th verse with the 20th and 21st. "Thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength . . . yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."

How indispensable the anointing is, we especially discern when we would appropriate the promises of God given in Isaiah xl. 28-31. "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." According to this passage, we must *wait upon the Lord*, we must rest and cease from our own works (Heb. iv. 10), "not

finding our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words" (Isa. lviii. 13), if we would renew our strength. But in order to wait upon the Lord we must be acquainted with God's thoughts and ways. We must learn to distinguish what God would have to be done, and what He would have left undone, when and how He would have it done, whether by us or by others. The human heart, however pure its zeal for God's glory, however ardent its love to the Lord may be, is not able and cannot be trusted to decide in questions of the service of God. For instance, when we experience a feeling of fatigue or exhaustion, we can only know by the anointing, whether we are to see in it a sign from God that we are to stop or at least pause in our work, or whether it is a temptation from the enemy which we have to overcome in faith.

As long as we with our work stand under the anointing and move in God's line of thought, so long may we reckon unconditionally upon the renewal of our strength, no physician's prescription, no laws of nature, can bind us. The Spirit who leads us also impels, permeates, and strengthens us. In the same measure that a service which we do in our own strength exhausts us, will our whole being, body, soul, and spirit, be quickened when we cease to work ourselves, and surrender ourselves as instruments of the Holy Ghost.

The more the Lord gets us thus in hand, the more sober will be our mind, the more assured our heart, the more steady our walk. We are no longer the victims and playthings of our moods and impressions, and we escape the depression which otherwise so easily settles upon our spirit. We gain power over the influences which press upon us from without, through circumstances and individuals, weakening and troubling us. Most children of God will have proved what a direct influence these have upon the body. Nervous natures especially know how much their bodily well-being depends upon their spiritual state, upon a steady and assured walk under the discipline of grace, under the leading of the Spirit.

The supernatural strength which the Lord gives at special times and for special duties, is a further experience which every child of God may already have had. How often has the Lord come in and borne you up wonderfully and mightily through night-watches by the sick, in the service of the poor and outcast, in preaching and the ministry of souls, in the most varied circumstances of life, wherever He has clearly and positively shown you a duty, and that duty one for which you had absolutely no power or time, no energy or ability. He has made that to be a means of refreshing and strengthening to you, which, according to human foresight, and in the natural

course of things, must have exhausted if not utterly crushed you.

The Lord never requires of us but one thing—that we should show ourselves to be true children of Abraham, not considering our body, though it were “as good as dead” (Rom. iv. 19 *R.V.*), but waiting “upon the Lord.”

It gives a blessed freedom of action, when we no longer need care for anything except the claims of the service with which the Lord, according to His good pleasure, has entrusted us, leaving everything else, especially also our body, to the care of the Lord. The Lord is the only infallible physician, and it is for Him to have the last and decisive word in everything.

How is it, then, that so many of God's children are able to cast on Him all cares except that which affects them most—the care of their bodies? Why can they not trust the Lord with their bodies? Is it not written, “Casting *all* your care upon Him, for He careth for you” (1 Peter v. 7)? And again, “I am the Lord that healeth thee?” Is not the reason with many that they are not walking under the anointing, that they are uncertain as to what the Master has commissioned them to do, and what they have undertaken of themselves?

Some have raised the objection that Epaphroditus was sick for the work of Christ (Phil. ii. 25-30), but

certainly we are not to understand by this that the Lord had laid on him a measure of work which *of necessity* caused him to be sick—a work for which He had not provided him with sufficient strength.*

We have already remarked that we are most liable to be sifted by sickness when in the most direct service of the Lord. The more complete and pure our self-sacrifice in this service is, the more precarious will be our situation, the greater our danger. He who lives by faith and serves the Lord in faith and love walks upon the water, and one side glance, one moment's wavering, is enough to make him sink. Here it is well that he who "thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." May God keep us from blaming in word or thought a servant of God for whom the Bible has only praise. So much is certain, He Who stretched forth His hand to Peter in the midst of the waves had mercy also on Epaphroditus and with him also on Paul (verse 27).

Would that God's servants who are obliged to suspend their work in the Lord's vineyard, whose heads are wearied and nerves over-strained, would wait upon the Lord until it becomes clear to them what has not been of the Spirit in their work or in their life, until

* It would appear from verses 25-30 that Paul is speaking of a perhaps exhausting or perilous journey which Epaphroditus had undertaken in the service of the Lord.

the Lord can fulfil Isaiah xl. 31 in them. Would that, instead of quitting their posts in discouragement, they would "humble themselves" under the mighty hand of God, that He might raise them up in "due time" (1 Peter v. 6).*

The Holy Ghost guides us within the lines which Holy Scripture has traced. Through the Word of God the Spirit of God wrought faith in us and quickened us (Rom. x. 14; Gal. iii. 2). The Word, the written Word, remains to the end of our Christian life the foundation on which the Holy Ghost builds all His work. The Holy Ghost is He Who leads us into all truth, but He does it, in the first place, by reminding us of what Jesus has said (John xiv. 26); and all the unbelief in the Lord, of which the Spirit convinces the world (John xvi. 9), springs from unbelief of that

* These remarks on Isaiah xl. do not contradict the fact that the condition of a child of God on earth remains a condition of *weakness*. We run our course here below in the midst of the greatest weakness (1 Cor. ii. 3). Suffering and privation are our portion (2 Cor. vi. 10; xii. 10). The life of Jesus will be made manifest in our body only so far as we are always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. iv. 10). As long as we are in this tabernacle we do groan, being burdened (2 Cor. v. 4). We wait for the redemption of our body (Rom. viii. 23), but at the same time God must show His strength perfected in our weakness, and for this reason must have our members free for His disposal. As soon as we walk by faith we become in very deed strong just where we feel ourselves weak, and we are able to do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10; Phil. iv. 13).

which is written. "O fools," said the Lord to the disciples at Emmaus, "and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke xxiv. 25-27). The Lord said to the Jews, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me" (John v. 39). We cannot claim that the Spirit of God should lead us step by step in our work for the Lord, unless we have been trained for that work. But only the Word of God can train us for the service of God. "All Scripture," says the Apostle, "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, *that* the man of God may be perfect, *thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17).

To search the Word and to obey the Word are the essential conditions for the solution of all the questions which occupy us. If God's Spirit is to speak to us directly, if our inner ear is to be opened to His voice, we must begin by hearkening to *all* and doing *all* that the Lord teaches us in His written Word. The sin of the Pharisees, placing human teaching and human ordinances above God's Word, is again to be found in

the Church. In the views and convictions we form, in the direction we follow, we are influenced more than we are aware of by traditional opinions, or by the example of others. We are apt to rely on those who are generally received as authorities, especially if they are men of God worthy of our highest esteem. Almost everywhere we find wanting that independence and perseverance which will send Christians to the source and make them draw light and life directly from the Word of God.

Thus the anointing of the Spirit and the Word of God belong together. He who abides under the Word and under the anointing will no longer be determined and impelled by man : he abides in direct and exclusive dependence upon God the Lord, and it is only thus that the path of healing by faith can be trodden. It is a way in which the Lord must be able to impel or restrain us according to His good pleasure. As Paul had simply to bow to the Master's word : " My grace is sufficient for thee," so to-day that disciple of the Lord who, resting on the Word and in the obedience of faith, makes a stand against sickness, must be ready at any moment to allow himself to be held back by the Lord, without knowing the reason why. After the most decided stepping out in working faith, having boldly appropriated and firmly held the divine promises, he must be ready to stop at the first sign

from God, and return into an attitude of calm and quiet expectation, resting and glorying in God's all-sufficient grace,* and being anxious only to let Him have His own way with him. And again, as he was ready to retire from a service of active obedience into an attitude of passive subjection, he must continue to be willing to return to the path of active and energetic obedience, and take up a position of contest and resistance against the enemies of Christ, be it sickness or death, as soon as the Master shall call.

*We do not mean to say that a smaller measure of divine grace is required for active co-operation with God's mind than for quiet subjection to His dealings.



XII.

CLOSING REMARKS.

HE who treads the path of resistance to sickness and death under the divine anointing, he who in faithfulness and humility allows himself to be guided by the Word as well as the Spirit of God, shall not long walk solitarily. More and more the Lord appears to be turning the attention of His children to this subject, moving them here and there simultaneously and directly by His own Spirit. And may we not expect to receive through every honest child of God whom His Spirit stirs up to enter into this path a new measure of light and strength, so that we shall be able to press forward with more definite assurance, following the Lord, till by His coming, He manifest the final solution of all questions and difficulties.

We live in a time when the Lord is drawing together a little band of believers who only need to have God's mind unfolded to them in His Word, in

order to believe and obey Him at once, fully decided to follow and serve their Lord. At the same time the Church of Christ, as a whole, has made progress, in some way at least, and in spite of periods of error and declension. She possesses to-day an amount of light and knowledge of God and His salvation such as she has never had. If this is, in many respects, a dead capital for the mass of Christians, the little flock of "the seven thousand" is appropriating and multiplying it all the more faithfully.

Furthermore, it is a striking sign of our times that positions of prominence, such as that of an Apostle Paul, or even that of a reformer, are more and more rare.* The sound of the footsteps of our approaching Master more and more rises above every human sound. Every mountain and hill is brought low. Whatever light and knowledge one member has received direct from above, becomes the common property of the body, as soon as this member has yielded his natural life as buried with Christ, allowing

* It would seem that a few decades back, circumstances were somewhat different from what they are now. The richly blessed Dorothea Trudel, who went home September 6th, 1862, stood in quite an exceptional position with the testimony which was committed to her. She also bore a thorn in the flesh for her humbling, but with her crooked spine she compassed an amount of work which is truly astonishing. Pastor Rein, in the Grand Duchy of Baden, held a similar position to that of Dorothea Trudel in Switzerland. He went home in the year 1865.

himself to be nothing but a bearer of divine light. We must be in our own eyes simply vessels and instruments, our entire personality, yea, even that individuality which God has committed to us, and which is precious in the sight of God, must first pass through death and resurrection, before the Master's image and mind can be impressed upon us sufficiently clearly to be recognised by those afar off. We must die and be raised again, before the light committed to us can find its way into our brother's heart, and become the common property of the body.

Through all the outward divisions of the Church of Christ, there is growing up between its *living* members a deep and mutual heart intelligence, there is a bond formed which encloses the different members, shielding and upholding them to a degree which Paul in his time did not enjoy.

It seems as if the present time, however sad it may be in other respects, offered new privileges to God's people, new possibilities for the building up of the body of Christ, that is for the realisation of Eph. iv. 15, 16. Let us only watch that our fellowship with the brethren be always in spirit and in truth. Let us walk in truth and uprightness, fearing self, and esteeming others more highly than ourselves. Let us not selfishly follow our own satisfaction in seeking out those who are of our own way of thinking, and

therefore congenial to us, but cultivate conscientiously, with forbearing love, communion with those who are further off, whenever the Lord opens the way; let us, in our intercourse with others, aim at being built up in the inner man, according to the Spirit, and seek by their gifts and experience to make up for any deficiency in ourselves, with a view to the glory of God and greater fruitfulness in His service; and we may be certain that we shall find in our communion with the brethren the wholesome discipline, the spiritual help, control, and balance, we need.

Such fellowship will guard us against the peril of exalting our own gifts and experience, against the dangers of our position and calling. We shall, in this way, not only be guarded from the outbreakings of our own inward corruption, but also from the lies and machinations of the wicked one, who in the guise of an angel of light seeks to drag into the abyss all who press forward into a real scriptural Christianity, and who desire to live for God's glory only.

May all those who through their inner and outer leadings, have received light on this special question of healing through faith, deal conscientiously with the talent committed to them; may they go forward fearlessly on the path on which the Lord has set their feet, yet never further and never faster than the Holy Ghost gives them liberty. "If any man serve Me, let

him follow Me ; and where I am, there shall also My servant be " (John xii. 26).

There is no question here of worthiness or unworthiness. We live in a time when everthing is speeding onward, and hastening towards the coming of Christ. However far behind our fathers we may be, yet, if the Lord is really at the door, as we ardently hope, we can adoringly understand why He has been pleased, in spite of all our unworthiness, to give, just at this time, more light on the position which the Holy Scripture takes up against sickness and death. To withstand sickness and death, within the lines of God's Word and under His guidance, is indeed nothing, but giving the Spirit of God liberty of movement within us, that He may, even now, quicken our mortal bodies (Rom. viii. 11), and making room for the life and resurrection power of Jeſus Christ, that He may gain in us the victory over death and corruption, and thus prepare our bodies for the glory, so that body, soul, and spirit, shall be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thes. v. 23).

GLORY BE TO GOD AND THE LAMB.