

The Ministry of Healing

The question of why man has illness and is called upon to suffer in this life has intrigued the minds of philosophers through the ages. As we treat the ministry of healing in this chapter, our prime concern has to do with healing by the laying on of hands as an ordinance of the church. We treat this in Part I of the chapter. Parts II and III are "Why do men suffer?" and "Healing by various means." The minister is called upon occasionally to counsel with those who suffer or are ill and these two last parts of the chapter are injected here for the purpose of suggesting some answers to this age-old question.

PART I-HEALING BY THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

(For an introduction to this part, read Doctrine and Covenants 42:12, 13.)

WHY THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

One of the conspicuous features of the early ministry of Jesus Christ was his healing of the sick. Those who are familiar with the Scriptures recognize that the sick were healed upon many occasions, both in the time when Jesus walked along the Palestinian roads and later among those of the New Testament church.

This was usually accompanied by laying on of hands. The following points indicate the significant role and the need of the ordinance of laying on of hands.

1. As with other ordinances, the ceremony of anointing with oil and laying on of hands gives special emphasis to that which is done. The ordinance can come as a climax to anticipation and special preparation. This preparation takes the form of prayer, meditation, and may include fasting, or even special efforts at repentance. In other words, when there is a special ceremony, the fact of the ceremony itself is an incentive for the person receiving the ordinance to make such preparation as will put him in condition to receive the spiritual effect of the ordinance.

There are times when laying on of hands is done as an emergency measure. At such times it may be performed in an environment which is not conducive to worship. God has on occasion recognized the ordinance performed under such circumstances, but it is still true that the ordinances are more effective if adequate preparation of all appropriate kinds is made prior to their being performed.

2. In the administration, the faith of the one seeking help is amplified by the faith of the officiating ministers. Private prayer may be effective but prayer is enhanced if more than one person is praying in faith for the same thing. The very faith of the one seeking help is likely to be strengthened by the fact that others he respects as ministers called of God are also exercising their faith with him on his behalf.

3. The Melchizedek order of ministry has specifically been given the gift and right to invoke special measures of God's healing power. In this, as in other ordinances, God has authorized his priesthood to act in the stead of Christ and he recognizes their ministry as authoritative when it is properly performed.

This knowledge also helps to strengthen the faith of the afflicted one who seeks the blessing. Thus the very powers of heaven are brought to bear upon the person's need because of the authority of the

ministry.

UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS IS ADMINISTRATION APPROPRIATE?

In general, administration may be sought whenever one is physically, mentally, or spiritually ill.

Physical ills fall into three categories: 1. short term, self-curing, 2. degenerative, or 3. psychosomatic. The gift of healing by administration is appropriate in any category of ailment among these three. There are some self-curing ailments the cure of which will be speeded because of the optimism and courage which can be promoted by administration, even though instantaneous healing may not be granted. In degenerative disease, the gift of healing may be exercised so that the afflicted one is restored to normal vigor. In some instances where outright healing has not been granted, the person has at least been relieved from pain or mental anguish associated with his affliction. But here again, the better the frame of mind of the afflicted one, the better his chances for recovery after competent medical treatment. In psychosomatic ailments, administration can bring blessing in any of various forms. The blessing of God may take the form of enabling the person to surrender self and thereby free himself from the stresses which afflict him. The blessing may be in the form of enabling him to recognize faulty attitudes or emotions so that he can better overcome them.

The foregoing is concerned primarily with physical ailments. Administration may be appropriately performed for some mental or spiritual conditions which cause distress even though direct physical suffering is not involved.

While there are many circumstances which would justify administration, the question often arises as to how severe an illness or other difficulty ought to be before the person is justified in calling for the laying on of hands. There is no simple answer to this. One rule of thumb which might be applied in the absence of other specific directions is: If the difficulty is serious enough to justify calling a doctor, it is serious enough to justify calling the elders.

There are three requirements for a rite to be recognized by the church as administration to the sick. There must be at least one elder of the church officiating. Two elders are preferred over one. Upon some special occasions three may be used; however, care should be exercised that the patient is not crowded nor the room congested by having too many persons present. When two elders are not available, one elder may officiate and, if possible, he should take with him a member of the Aaronic order or a good friend of the sick one. However, the Aaronic priesthood member is not to be allowed to anoint or offer the prayer as part of the rite.

A second requirement is that there shall be consecrated olive oil. The symbolism of the use of olive oil rests in antiquity. Shepherds of old carried a horn of oil to anoint an injured sheep and the religious use of the oil possibly may have risen out of this setting.¹ In this study we are not concerned with any medical values inherent in the oil. It is symbolic of the outpouring or anointing of the Spirit of God. It is in this light that the elder uses it in the ordinance.

It is true that a custom of long standing among the members of the church has prescribed the use of olive oil on afflicted parts of the body. Some have used it for cooking oil. There are those who testify they have been helped by self-anointing. There does not appear to be any divine or scriptural direction in this procedure. Benefits which accrue therefrom are derived either from the medical properties of the oil or the faith of the individual. Certainly they lie outside the ordinance of laying on of hands for healing the sick.

The third requirement for the ordinance is an eligible patient or person who has made spiritual preparation and has an understanding of the ordinance.

ADMINISTRATION IS REQUESTED

It is the clear teaching of Scripture that the afflicted one should take the initiative in calling for the elders of the church.² This does not mean that the elders may not suggest administration, especially in instances where the afflicted one may be lacking in sufficient background of experience to understand that he ought to call for it. But the basic principle is that the one administered to must want it, if the ordinance is to be effective.

There are several reasons why this is true. The exercise of faith by the afflicted one is a requisite. In the healings which Christ performed, although there are some instances where faith on the part of the afflicted one is not mentioned, Christ specifically sought for faith, either by the sick person or by his friends or members of his family.³ More than once the healed person was told "thy faith has made thee whole." Other references clearly indicate the requisite of faith.⁴

Usually the patient can best judge for himself as to whether he has faith sufficient to call for administration, but sometimes he needs counsel. In some instances the patient may be one who has exercised considerable faith and diligence over a long period. But even such persons have times when their faith grows dim. He may need to have time for prayer and meditation in order that his faith may become strong again. He, himself, is best able to judge when this has been accomplished.

The forgiveness of sin is one of the promises associated with the gift of healing. Frequently there is an intimate connection between sin and sickness. James 5:15 is specific in the matter of forgiving sin. In Matthew 9:2-9 is the story of how Christ healed the man with palsy, but first forgave him his sins. It should again be noted that the forgiveness of sin is accomplished only upon the condition of repentance. The person who asks for administration is able to judge whether or not he has made any real attempt to repent and thereby put himself in such condition that he may properly receive forgiveness of sin.

The essence of all healing is the surrender of self-will to God's will. Christ himself, in order to find the necessary strength to face the crucifixion, had to pray, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." There are those who have found that the blessing of healing or at least relief from pain has been delayed because they have not yet been able to say in their hearts, "Thy will be done." This surrender is much more likely to have been achieved under conditions in which the person afflicted initiates the request for administration.

PURPOSE OF HEALING

It is not the primary purpose of healing to give a sign or to put on a show. Christ evidently sought to minimize the spectacular elements of his gifts of healing. In Matthew 8:2-4 is the story of the leper who was healed and commanded to "tell no man." In Matthew 9:33-37, certain blind men were healed and were requested to tell it to no one, but because of their marveling at this gift, they were not able to contain themselves and they "spread his fame." In Matthew 12:13, is recorded an instance in which sick were healed and charged not to make it known. Christ sought to avoid publicity, evidently because no one is convinced by a miraculous sign save he has some faith or desire to believe. Indeed, Christ said, "These signs shall follow them that believe."⁵ Then he enumerated the gift of healing as One of the signs. Men are not convinced by a single miraculous demonstration of the power of God. But such demonstrations, including the exercise of the gift of healing, may be given as additional signs or testimony to those who have already begun to believe.

Herein lies a flaw in the approach of the popular faith healers who make their appeal on the basis that healings are performed "before our very eyes." They seek to attract crowds on the basis of expecting to see the miraculous. This is exactly opposite to the way in which Christ himself proceeded.

When it is wisdom in God that it should be, and when other conditions are favorable, healings are given in order to:

1. Extend the usefulness of a life rich in service. Oft-times our capacity to perform useful ministry or labor is limited by physical handicap. In order that needed ministry can be performed, the gift of healing is sometimes granted.

2. Relieve pointless suffering. Certain ailments bring considerable suffering or pain with them. God is not so callous that he is indifferent to our pain. Sometimes he allows us to suffer in order that certain necessary things be brought about in our lives. Even so, he has compassion upon the suffering just as was said of Christ on one or more occasions: "He saw the multitude with their sick and had compassion upon them."

3. Extend a life to allow time for repentance. In such an instance, the healing of the body is not the prime purpose of God. It is in order that the soul might be healed that he in this instance grants healing to the body.

4. Improve the person's health enough so he can serve the needs of other persons dependent upon him.

God has other reasons which may apply to specific individuals. It should be noted that whatever the specific reason for healing in a particular instance, God does not grant blessings without purpose. If we receive any kind of blessing, including the blessing of healing, he holds us accountable for the use which we make of it. If a life is extended in order that the person has time for repentance, and yet he fails to repent, that person has the more to answer for. If one is healed and strengthened in order that he may minister better to the needs of those who may be dependent upon him and he fails still to fulfill his obligations, he has the greater sins to account for. If one is healed to increase his faith and to give him a testimony of the love of God and yet fails to let that love shine through his life, he has the greater sin to answer for. Conversely, if one's life is extended and with that extended time he applies himself to the service of God and his fellowman, then he has the greater blessing accruing to his account.

THE USE OF OIL BY THE ELDER

The elder uses consecrated olive oil in this ordinance. This means oil which through prayer has been consecrated for this purpose. The consecration does not impart new properties to the oil but sets it apart for this purpose alone. There is no scriptural authorization for its use by anyone other than the elder. The prayer of consecration should be reverent and to the point and addressed to God.

Although the oil is to be "poured" to symbolize the unction or pouring on of the Holy Spirit, it does not require "bathing with oil." In this regard, the *Priesthood Manual* advises:

"Sometimes requests are made [to the elder] to anoint afflicted parts of the body. This is *not* advisable and *must* not be done. The elder should anoint the head only, for the anointing is not for medical purposes, but is a symbol of the anointing of the Spirit of God. One drop of oil is sufficient, and preferably anointed on the forehead."⁶

PROPHECY AND ADMINISTRATION

Another belief, held by some, is that during the prayer of administration the elders will be given insight by the Spirit as to whether the afflicted one will be healed. This has been true in some instances. Many elders can testify of having some spiritual leadings concerning the sick one.

But in times past, some elders have allowed their human feelings to interfere with their better judgment. This problem is touched upon in the revelation in Doctrine and Covenants 125:15, "Prophesying over them that are sick in administering to them has been a fruitful source of trouble among my people. They must observe that this they are not required to do except there be a direct manifestation of the Spirit which may direct it. Pray over the sick, anoint them with oil, as commanded in the law, and leave them in my hands, that the Spirit may deal with them according to my wisdom."

PROOF OF HEALING

There are those instances in which God has miraculously intervened on behalf of some faithful member of the church. Numerous authentic testimonies of such instances have been given. But it is also true that there are many instances in which we have no clear-cut proof as to whether God has intervened. This is because we have no "control experiment"; that is, we do not know what would have happened had there not been administration by the elders. We cannot conduct the proceedings as we would a laboratory experiment, in which in one instance an essential ingredient is included and in another, omitted. However, there are instances in which the sickness clearly took a turn contrary to the common medical experience.

In any case, the primary purpose of the blessings of God is not to give us testimonies which show us to be superior to our neighbors. Recall the principle that these gifts were to follow those that believe, not to pave the way for belief. The gift of healing, like all the other spiritual gifts, is "given for the benefit of those who love me and keep all my commandments, and him that seeketh so to do, that all may be benefited, that seeketh or that asketh of me, that asketh and not for a sign that he may consume it upon his lusts."⁷

POINTS APPROPRIATE TO BE COVERED BY THE PRAYERS

It is common practice for us to use two prayers in the process of administering to those who are ill. These two prayers may be offered by a single elder if he has to officiate alone, but usually they are shared between the two elders called upon to administer.

The first prayer becomes something of an address of anointing. It may vary considerably in approach, considering the individual situation of the recipient. It takes the form of an address to the individual and sometimes, if the occasion warrants it, may be an address to God to assist this person in preparation for receiving the anointing. There should be an acknowledgment of the fact that this is an act of faith and a statement of the purpose for which the recipient is asking for administration. Throughout the prayer there should be evoked the assurance of the sufficiency of God to meet the need of this person and the willingness on the part of all to abide by the manner and timing of the Lord. It is proper close this prayer with the word "amen," because amen simply means "so shall it be," or "so be it."

The second prayer is the prayer of confirmation and is always addressed to God. In this, all of the

elements of worship should be incorporated-including the recognition of the power of God, our dependence upon him, and the expression of thanksgiving for the privilege of experiencing the ordinance.

The prayer should ask for the spiritual, mental, and physical blessings that are needed for the person. The words should be chosen carefully so that there is no implication of ideas out of harmony with the gospel truth. Sometimes all three of these blessings are needed by the individual, while other times only one or two may be needed.

There is no need to outline in detail the specific facts of the illness, nor is it wise to dictate to the Lord that which is best or the manner in which the need shall be supplied. A general reference is sufficient rather than keeping the Lord up to date with current events." It does not seem wise to barter with the Lord for a blessing. If there are features in the life of this person that need to be rectified, this is a matter of confession between him and his Lord. It is not so much "*If you will heal me Lord, I will do such and such,*" as it is "*I confess my sins which made me unworthy of thy love and I trust in thy goodness to help me make my life worthwhile.*" The prayer should be fervent and from the heart, filled with faith and spiritual power, allowing for the Lord's will to be done, and trusting in his judgment. Quietness and serenity and confidence are the best atmosphere and attitudes out of which the service becomes a worshipful experience neither too short to be perfunctory, nor too long to be wearisome.

Ministers who are called upon to administer to the sick should make spiritual preparation through private prayer. This goes beyond the call of righteous living, but certainly does include it. It sometimes is helpful to the elders to have special prayer prior to entering into the home or into the hospital.

WHAT THE RECIPIENT OF THE ORDINANCE SHOULD KNOW

Since the ordinance should never be forced or unduly prompted by a second party and since this act is an evidence of faith in God, there seems to be some degree of preparation necessary on the part of the recipient to make this as effective as it should be. Any member of the church having faith may request it and nonmembers who are contemplating baptism or who have established connections with the church and have faith in God and in this ordinance may call upon it. Repetitious administration without discretion certainly ought to be discouraged, but administration more than once for a given illness is permissible. There is one exception to the requirement that the recipient request administration and that would be in the case of small children, the mentally deficient, or persons who are unconscious. Then administration may be requested by someone in the family or by a close friend.

It is well for us to keep in mind that this ordinance involves a promise for the forgiveness of sins. Inasmuch as the forgiveness of sins must be preceded by repentance, members should be instructed with kindness and in love that their request for this rite implies that they are in a condition of contrition and desirous of doing all that can be done toward righteous living.

There are three general types of individuals who should not receive this ordinance; they are those who have been persuaded to condescend for it against their own wishes, those who are testing the gifts or the church through it, and individuals who are seeking sympathy or attention or demanding unusual gifts to accrue thereby.

THE PLACE AND TIMING OF THE ORDINANCE

Administration to the sick is a worship experience. It should be entered into, therefore, with the proper atmosphere of reverence. The nature of such administration discourages its use in public services.

It is usually a very personal matter between the person and his God. Also, there are those who are not prepared for the ordinance, but who, being highly suggestible, are led to ask for administration when they witness the ordinance in a public service.

Prior arrangement for administration to the sick should be made with the presiding elder or such persons as he may appoint so that the worship experience may be planned adequately and have distinct value for the person receiving it. For this reason there should not be a service containing many administrations, for this tends to deal with it on a wholesale basis rather than upon the individual need.

There are some places where the ordinance may be administered which by their nature seem to be preferred. The sick should have opportunity to make preparation through prayer and meditation, if this is at all possible. Although sympathetic friends and relatives may be present, the presence of skeptical or idly curious persons or a predominance of non-members should be discouraged. If the administration is in the hospital room and it is a multiple bedroom, arrangements should be made to set up screens or to draw curtains so that there will be privacy.

If the patient is ambulatory and is able to use the church facilities, the pastor's study or some special room which is set apart for this purpose and for privacy is acceptable.

HOSPITAL TECHNIQUE

The minister who is called upon to officiate in this ordinance at a hospital should remember that he is a guest of the institution and, therefore, should maintain courteous and favorable relationships with the attendants. No more than two elders ought to be taken to the hospital for administration to the sick. Although the timing is not always easy to select, it is preferable that the elders arrive just before visiting time or immediately after. A little consultation with the hospital authorities will acquaint you with their routine. Sometimes they will suggest a time that would give you maximum privacy with minimum interference with their work. Unless a patient is in a private room, it is advisable to have as few guests or spectators present as possible. Certainly there should be no more than two at any time in a ward.

Upon arrival at the hospital, the elder in charge should always announce himself to the information clerk, introducing his companion and advising the clerk of the purpose of the call. When the clerk informs them of the room number and floor, the elders should go directly to the floor supervisor, introduce themselves, and ask permission to see the patient. They should solicit her assistance in showing them to the patient's room, never failing to be courteous and to thank her for the service given.

Upon entering the room, consideration of the physical circumstances should be given. When two or more elders officiate, it is best for one of them to be in charge. This may be determined by their office, official status, by age, or other means of agreement. Any visiting which is done prior to administration should not be on a social basis, but in setting the patient at ease and preparing for the atmosphere of worship. There should not be social visiting following the administration. The patient will then be left to meditate upon the word of the Lord. If it is deemed necessary, a preparatory prayer may be offered in the presence of the patient. The ministers may stand or kneel according to their desires, but the preparatory prayer is optional and not an invariable rule.

One of the elders will anoint the head with oil. It is not necessary that a different elder shall confirm, but it is permissible. The oil vial should be one with which the elder is familiar so that as he anoints and pours on the oil enough shall be used to decently represent the symbolic outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but not so much that it shall be unduly messy. While the patient is being anointed, the other elder stands with bowed head. Sometimes the assisting elder may receive the vial of oil from the one who is anointing,

recapping it and placing it where it will not be in the way.

The address of anointing should be very brief and is not designed as one of intercession for the specific needs of the occasion. The prayer of confirmation which follows the anointing is offered while the elders lay their hands gently upon the head of the sick person. This laying on of hands should be gentle but not so light that it cannot be felt by the patient.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. An elder called upon to administer to a woman should not go into her sleeping room alone, nor should the elder presume to anoint or handle the body of the patient at any time. The anointing is for the head only.

2. In case of contagious disease, the elder should exercise caution that he not become a carrier of the disease. The physician should be consulted, his permission received, and his instructions followed in this matter.

3. The clothing and the person of the elder should be clean.

4. Bad breath should be carefully avoided. Each individual thinks himself to be inoffensive in this regard. He can easily be wrong. Make use of mouthwash or other dental deodorants.

5. Do not offer favorite home remedies or prescriptions for medical cure or interfere with a doctor's order.

6. The elder should always call back in person or by telephone to give assurance of genuine interest in the patient and to determine whether there are other needs to be met.

7. The minister enters the sick room as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. He performs his ministry in the spirit of love and mercy. It is neither his prerogative nor ethical for him to berate the sick because of neglect which may have eventually resulted in their sickness, or to use this as the occasion for seeking to proselyte.

PART II- WHY DO MEN SUFFER?

The fact of healing has not alleviated the problem of suffering in the world, but in reality has brought this problem into sharper focus! Why do men suffer and why do some continue to suffer? It is recognized that there are some limitations upon the gift of healing by the laying on of hands. It would be wise for us, therefore, to consider why there is suffering among men on earth in relation to this gift.

We should note that God has not promised we should escape suffering. Indeed, as we look through the Scriptures, we note that suffering often has a definite function, notwithstanding the operation of the gift of healing. To some persons, all suffering is a judgment for sin. This is not the total picture.

FAITHFUL SERVICE SOMETIMES INVOLVES SUFFERING

In the tenth chapter of Matthew, Jesus Christ gave counsel to his apostles prior to sending them out in their ministry. It is significant that in this chapter they were warned of the many hardships they would be called upon to bear. This story is told in verses 3 to 38, from which the following passages are quoted: "Ye shall be hated of all the world for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another; for verily, I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come. Remember, the disciple is not above his master; nor

the servant above his lord. It is enough that the disciple be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household. . . Fear not them who are able to kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

This foregoing does not suggest an easy life for those who, mindful of their duty, follow the paths of Jesus Christ. Not all of us are called upon to make the particular sacrifices or to undergo the particular trials that were indicated would be the lot of the apostles. But in a measure we all share in these same things as we embark in dutiful service of Christ.

WHY DO PEOPLE SUFFER?

1. Pain is a protective device. Physical pain is given to us in order that we may learn in early childhood to avoid injury and death.

There is a sense in which pain is a protective device spiritually. The Lord told Adam that as children grow up "sin conceiveth in their hearts, and they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good."⁸

We might taste the bitter in the form of physical pain as a consequence of our wrongdoing, but this bitterness may also come in the form of mental anguish, remorse, or sorrow. By it, we may learn to avoid injury in the spiritual realm.

2. Lack of faith may cause or prolong suffering. When it comes to the ministry of healing, the pathway of faith is a two-way street. One of the necessary conditions for healing is faith.⁹ Some may continue to suffer simply because they do not have faith to be healed. A lack of faith on the part of the ministry also may be a factor, as illustrated in Matthew.¹⁰

3. A third function of suffering lies in the law of recompense. We are free to choose that which we will do in a large measure. Especially is this true in the spiritual realm. We are not free to choose the consequences, however. "Whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye also reap," is a good quotation. It indicates that a certain choice results in a chain of consequences. Sometimes our choices bring the consequence of suffering.

4. Suffering may produce an empathy on our part which makes us able to appreciate the suffering of others. From it we will know how to have compassion for others who have pain.

5. Through suffering we may learn obedience to the commands of God.¹¹ Since disobedience brings suffering in one form or another, God allows us to suffer in order that we may learn to be obedient. This is not because he does not love us; it is out of his love for us that he uses suffering to lead us toward him.

6. Suffering stimulates us to seek God. Sometimes we have a tendency to believe we are totally self-sufficient. It is in times of suffering, when we have done all that we know to do and the suffering continues, that we turn to God; recognizing a power over which we have no control and through him we find life's greatest joy.

7. Pain often accompanies growth. The very process of physical maturing sometimes brings about a certain amount of pain or physical discomfort. Certainly the process of emotional maturing brings some adjustments which are painful. If in the process of growth we have not grown properly, sometimes there must be pain in order to correct our malformations. We recognize this when our children go to an orthodontist for the straightening of their teeth. The process may be a painful one. Many children have endured the process of straightening their teeth over a period of four and five years in order to be able to acquire a beautiful smile or have a malformed mouth corrected.

This, too, is true of our spiritual adjustments. It some-times is a part of going away to college or into

the armed forces or to any other spot in life wherein our childhood ceases and we become separated from our parents. A part of the pain lies in homesickness which is sometimes as severe as actual organic illness. In our growth morally we mature into the kind of person our God would have us be. If there is some malformation of our spiritual life or if there is some immaturity in it, there may be a painful process as we grow emotionally and morally to become the well-adjusted individual we ought to be.

8. A persistent affliction tends to be both a stimulus and a means of keeping us humble. Paul touched on this point when he spoke of the thorn in his flesh, "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong."¹²

You will note that Paul, while recognizing the humility which his suffering brought upon him, also recognized that it created in him a strength, or in other words, it was a stimulus to him.

9. There is something about suffering that causes a vicarious feeling on the part of others who are around persons who suffer. A classic example is given in Alma.¹³ The Anti Nephi-Lehi's who had made a pledge never to bear arms again simply lay down in front of the advancing Lamanite army. Over a thousand of them were killed but other Lamanites became moved in their hearts by this wanton slaughter and many of them repented of their ways and were brought into a new relationship with God. The record tells us that those who were killed were not lost and that they were the means of bringing many more than the number killed into the knowledge of God. By some present standards this seems a hard thing to bear, or even to consider as a worthy thing, but when we look at suffering from eyes which are attuned to eternal values and not by the short range of human views we can see a greater value to this type of suffering.

We are told that the shepherd upon occasion, when his sheep came to a moving stream of water and as he sought to cause them to cross the stream, was confronted with a ewe which refused to cross over on the other side. It became necessary for him to do something so he reached down and picked up the ewe's little lamb and carried it across the water in his arms. Invariably the ewe crossed over with him. The suffering of a little child has brought many parents to their knees before God when nothing else would do so. The suffering of a loving mother has brought many criminals to repentance when they saw what their life of crime had done to one they loved dearly.

GOD IS STILL MINDFUL OF US

Although we may be called upon to suffer, this does not mean that God has forsaken us. Indeed, he has promised us that while we endure suffering, he goes with us, through our suffering. He told the disciples that as they suffered persecutions there would not a hair of their heads fall unnoticed. We cannot always explain why certain ones are called upon to suffer as they do, but we know that there is a divine law of recompense which says that suffering shall be repaid manyfold. If we remain faithful and diligent in our suffering, we ultimately shall be blessed and strengthened by the experience. The Psalmist caught the essence of this as he wrote, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou prearest a table before me in

the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."¹⁴

PART III - HEALING BY VARIOUS MEANS

While there is the provision in the church for the ordinance of healing by the laying on of hands, it should be clearly understood that there are many mechanisms by which healings can occur. Moreover, there are many claims for healing by the power of God, other than by the laying on of hands by the elders. In order to understand these things more clearly, and in order to see how they are related to the ordinance of the laying on of hands, we consider in this part various means by which healing may be brought about. Let us first consider some of the categories of illness.

CATEGORIES OF ILLNESS

Dr. Howard W. Haggard, for years a member of the staff of the Harvard Medical School, once wrote a book called *Devils, Drugs, and Doctors*. In this book he classified all ailments into the following three categories:

1. Short term, self-curing ailments. These are the variety which when left alone will take care of themselves by the capabilities within the body to set aright the ailment. In this category are the common diseases which run their course without permanent effect. Perhaps the most frequent example is the common cold.

2. Disorders of mental or emotional cause. These are so-called psychosomatic diseases. In such ailments the physical symptoms are very real. The pain is real, the effects may be permanent, but the cause of the disorders is not physical. It arises out of emotional disturbance, or mental stress, or nervous tension. This category accounts for a large portion of our present ailments. It is for such ailments as this that reputable doctors have prescribed pills that contain nothing more potent than sugar.

3. Degenerative diseases, which if not treated will result in death. Tuberculosis, cancer, meningitis, and cholera are examples. The regenerative healing processes with which the body is endowed are unable to cope with these ailments, unless there be some help.

It should be borne in mind therefore, that when we speak of healing the sick, we are dealing with many kinds of illness of various degrees of severity, and even of mental rather than physical origin. Any legitimate treatment, with the help of a doctor or of an elder, may be appropriately applied to an ailment falling in any of the above three categories. Of particular interest is the second category, disorders of mental or emotional origin. Several books have been written dealing with the cause and the cure of such ailments. (One of the early ones in the field was *Managing Your Mind*, by Kraines and Thetford.)

Sometimes the ailment of this kind results from nervous stress brought on by a reaction to our environment. A woman living with an unpleasant mother-in-law may be under such stress that she develops very real physical symptoms. In this case the cure will not be found in physical treatment, but in inducing her to change her attitude toward the situation in which she finds herself. Such help might come from a medical doctor, or it might be received from a psychiatrist, while the patient seeks the help of God through private prayer and possibly by the laying on of hands of the elders.

Another example of such ailment is an injured person who is unable to make the effort necessary to overcome the effects of the injury. A man crippled in an auto accident might find it difficult to walk again, even after the effects of the accident have disappeared. This is what is commonly called a "mental block."

He is having the same difficulty as the once-lame dog who continues to walk on three legs even though his fourth is quite capable of being used. In this very significant category of ailment, what is really needed is healing of the mind, not of the body. We are just beginning to learn something about the psychosomatic sicknesses.

It is important to bear in mind when considering so-called faith healings that within the range of psychosomatic ailments there are many which are cured if the patient can be brought to believe that he is cured. This explains the use of the impotent sugar-coated pills prescribed by many a physician. This also would seem to account for many of the so-called miraculous healings performed at ancient shrines¹⁵ as well as by popular modern faith healers. This also explains that there continues to be a need for the intervention of God in many instances when the healing arts of the medical profession are not effective. This also seems to explain the close relation between sickness and sin hinted at by James.¹⁶ Many of our physical difficulties arise out of sin in the form of faulty attitudes. We fail to surrender self; we carry pride, ambition, self-esteem in ways which are not in harmony with the will of God. In our failure to surrender these things we develop within ourselves stresses which result in physical difficulties. The basic treatment required is not to remove the physical symptoms so much as it is a healing of our soul. Such healing is possible only on the same terms that forgiveness of sin is possible; namely that we repent, that we review ourselves to discover those areas in which we yet need to surrender ourselves to God.

FAITH HEALINGS

The Scripture tells us that the prayer of a righteous man is much availing. There is no Scripture which says that God will not or cannot heal those who are not of his church, nor that he will not heal by any means which he deems appropriate. It is thus possible that any righteous man who prays in faith may indeed receive some physical help as a result of his prayer, even by intervention of the power of God. Note, however, that, as discussed above, the form of healing may help in his mental outlook rather than in changing his physical being. This does not rule out the possibility of actual physical miracles as the result of the prayer of the faithful man.

No modern doctor will dispute the proposition that many of humanity's demonstrable physical ills can be caused by what may be loosely called (for lack of a better term) mental, emotional, or spiritual factors. It is axiomatic today that such intangibles as fear, worry, guilt, hatred, resentment, jealousy, and anger can produce physical illness. In many cases, when these unfavorable factors are removed, the illness will disappear quite miraculously. We have hardly scratched the surface of this most fascinating field of psychosomatic medicine as yet, nor have we even begun to understand the astonishing practicality of Jesus' spiritual and moral laws *as* they bear upon our physical health.

"On the other hand, some human ills are demonstrably physical in origin. Unless you believe in the old Gnostic heresy that there is no reality in matter, you must admit that a splinter in the finger or a cinder in the eye is not a spiritual or mental matter; it is physical.

"The pain which follows has a definite and exclusively physical origin.

"Many ills are not so easily catalogued. Any good book on practical psychology or psychosomatic medicine will give case history after case history to show how a change of mental or spiritual outlook has cured cases of gall bladder trouble, ulcers, asthma, arthritis, skin eruptions, and even tuberculosis. There is a demonstrable relationship between wrong mental, emotional, and spiritual attitudes, and the susceptibility to such things as broken bones and infectious or contagious diseases which are caused by well-known families of bacteria. It is difficult or impossible to draw the line between physical and spiritual

in many cases. The doctor does what he can on the physical level, but unless he can straighten out the patient's mental, emotional, and spiritual attitudes which give him a susceptibility toward disease, he may cure the gall bladder only to discover that the patient has developed appendicitis or stomach ulcers. Therefore the doctor and the elder work together.

"The elder has no monopoly on the utilization of God's healing power. No elder ever healed a patient. No doctor ever healed a patient. All he can do is to remove the causes of disease when possible, and put the patient into such a physical condition that God's healing power can complete the healing process.

"It is a significant fact, all too frequently overlooked by our people, that in all of the Three Standard Books there is no mention of the *gift* of healing. Always it is in the plural-"*gifts* of healing." Some of those gifts are exercised on the spiritual level by the elders under God's special authority. Other gifts, equally God-given, are exercised by the physician, the surgeon, the nurse, the therapist, the dietitian, the pharmacist, the laboratory and X-ray technician, under the authority of their specialized skill and intensified training and experience. Latter Day Saints are not the sole recipients of these blessings either. They come through countless thousands of reverent, dedicated men and women of all faiths, who perform miracles surpassing in some respects any of those recorded in the Bible. Let no man scoff. I say this reverently."¹⁷

It should be noted that God himself has recognized the legitimate place of the physician in several ways. One of these is given in Doctrine and Covenants.¹⁸ In this section, provisions are made for the building of a sanitarium to be operated by the church and the appointment of the church physician who, with his associates, should combine the functions of the doctor and the elder.

MECHANISMS OF DIVINE HEALING

We have already mentioned that there is no Scripture which says God will not recognize the prayer of a faithful man, no matter who or where he is. He can heal by means which seem appropriate to him. In Christ's ministry there are a number of healings recorded which did not involve the laying on of hands. He healed:

1. By the touch of the hand. He healed the leper¹⁹ and Peter's mother-in-law²⁰ by the touch of the hand. He healed certain blind men by touching their eyes.²¹
2. By speaking the word. The man with the withered hand was thus healed.²² The man with palsy was evidently similarly healed.²³
3. By someone touching his garment. The woman with the issue of blood was thus healed.²⁴ Also certain other sick were thereby made whole.²⁵
4. Healing at a distance. The centurion's servant was healed while some distance from Christ.²⁶ Similarly the daughter of the Canaanite woman was restored.²⁷ Notwithstanding the foregoing, the ordinance for the laying on of hands for the healing of the sick has very real value. Its importance should not be minimized.

Suggested Scripture Reading

D. and C. 127:1, 2

Matt. 8:2-4

Matt. 8:14, 15

Matt. 9:35

Matt. 20:34

Matt. 12:11
Matt. 9:7
Matt. 9:26
Matt. 14:30
Matt. 8:5-13
Matt. 15:21-27
Jas. 5:14, 15

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1. Ps. 23
 2. D. and C. 42:12; Jas. 5:14; D. and C. 23:6
 3. Mark 16:16-19; Luke 5:12, 13; Matt. 17:15-21
 4. Acts 3:16; Ether 5:10-22; Mormon 4:87; Jas. 5:15; D. and C. 34:3; 42:13
 5. Mark 16:16
 6. *Priesthood Manual*, 1950, edition, page 47
 7. D. and C. 46:4
 8. Gen. 6:57
 9. D. and C. 42:12, 13
 10. Matt. 17:15-21
 11. D. and C. 102:2
 12. II Cor. 12:7-10
 13. Alma 14:49-55
 14. Ps. 23
 15. For example, the famous healing shrines at Lourdes, France, and at Beaupre, Montmorency County, Quebec. For a recent discussion of these shrines see *The Church and Healing*, by J. Scherzer, Westminster Press, pp. 135-142.
 16. James 5:14, 15
 17. *Saints' Herald*, 1955, p.346 (April 11 issue, p. 10), Evan Fry

18. D. and C. 127:1, 2

19. Matt. 8:2-4

20. *Ibid.*, 8:14, 15

21. *Ibid.*, 9:35; 20:34

22. *Ibid.*, 12:11

23. *Ibid.*, 9:7

24. *Ibid.*, 9:26

25. *Ibid.*, 14:30

26. *Ibid.*, 8:5-13

27. *Ibid.*, 15:21-27