

Thoughts on Ministry of Healing

(7) The Co-Working of the Divine and the Human (pages 111-124)

Summary:

Physicians themselves do not heal anyone. Their job is to help patients co-operate with the laws of nature and with God, who has implanted natural healing agencies in both body and mind. The greatest of these healing agencies is the gospel. When the gospel comes to a person, it frees mind and body from the anxiety, care and guilt that crush the life forces.

Thoughts:

This chapter expresses the point that the most effective healing ministry transcends the processes of nature by involving the healing power of Christ. (111-113)

According to this chapter, disease is to a large degree entwined with sin. Every practice that destroys mental, physical or spiritual energy is sin. Health is secured through obedience to God's laws. The Bible and science reveal the principles of life, the physician is to help others obtain a knowledge of these principles and, by obeying them, co-operate with God in the process of healing. This is very true, but needs to be qualified in our experience by the phrase "all other things being equal." All other things being equal, sin leads to disease and obedience leads to health (an expansion of the message of Proverbs). But in this life, things are not always equal. Living over a toxic waste dump without knowing it, for example, will undo all one's careful obedience (sin is not just specific actions, it is a power that seeks to rule all of life). In this life, the wicked sometimes prosper and the righteous suffer and are impoverished. If we don't emphasize this, reading this chapter could be further discouraging to the sick and depressed. (113-115)

Read without qualification these pages could also lead to a mindless legalism. But Ellen White in this case does the qualification herself. On page 115 she points out that the gospel of free grace is the crucial healing principle. Principles to obey without the gospel discourage and depress, the gospel brings the serenity and composure that truly heal. (113-116)

"Religion" is not just to be "value added" in the life and work of the physician, it is to be the influence that dominates all others. (117)

Most patients will have more confidence in a physician if they know he or she is a believer. They realize their lives are in the hands of another and that one small human mistake could be fatal. When they know the physician is praying they have confidence that God is guiding the situation. Faith also brings quietness and courage to the physician. (117-119)

Friends and family of the patient are often as wide open to spiritual care as the patient. (121)

Co-operation with God is a key element of the perspective outlined in this chapter. It is a distinctly Adventist perspective, more akin to Calvin than Luther. Science has its limitations, but Ellen White teaches us to study science and religion together. As a rule, God works in and through the laws of nature. One exception to the rule might be the resurrection of Jesus.

Given the more secular nature of society today, we might want to nuance a bit some of the overt witness that this chapter implies. We need to balance our obligation to tell the truth with the needs and capacity of the patient (111-114).

If you want to do God's work, you will seek the highest medical qualifications you can. (116)

For Ellen White the term “natural remedies” was probably narrower in focus than it is today. By this phrase she was thinking of water treatments and herbs, which was radical thinking at the time. Similarly, telling people to stop smoking was radical at a time when physicians were prescribing smoking for the lungs!

Quotable Quotes:

“Deliverance from sin and the healing of disease were linked together. The same ministry is committed to the Christian physician. He is to unite with Christ in relieving both the physical and spiritual needs of his fellow men.” (111)

“That which physicians can only aid in doing, Christ accomplishes. They endeavor to assist nature’s work of healing; Christ Himself is the healer. The physician seeks to preserve life; Christ imparts life.” (111)

“Sickness, suffering, and death are work of an antagonistic power. Satan is the destroyer; God is the restorer.” (113)

“Men need to learn that the blessings of obedience, in their fullness, can be theirs only as they receive the grace of Christ. It is His grace that gives man power to obey the laws of God. It is this that enables him to break the bondage of evil habit.” (115)

“Not all this world bestows can heal a broken heart, or impart peace of mind, or remove care, or banish disease. Fame, genius, talent--all are powerless to gladden the sorrowful heart or to restore the wasted life. The life of God in the soul is man’s only hope.” (115)

“The love which Christ diffuses through the whole being. . . frees the soul from the guilt and sorrow, the anxiety and care, that crush the life forces.” (115)

“The physician who is satisfied with a low standard of skill and knowledge not only belittles the medical profession, but does dishonor to Christ, the Chief Physician.” (116)

“The Physician should gather to his soul the light of the word of God. He should make continual growth in grace. With him, religion is not to be merely one influence among others. It is to be an influence dominating all others.” (117)

“ If the golden opportunity is not watched for, it will be lost. At the bedside of the sick no word of creed or controversy should be spoken. Let the sufferer be pointed to the One who is willing to save all that come to Him in faith. Earnestly, tenderly strive to help the soul that is hovering between life and death.” (120)

“The same power that Christ exercised when He walked visibly among men is in His word.” (122)

“The Scriptures are to be received as God’s word to us, not written merely, but spoken.” (122)