

# HEALING AND THE SPIRIT

by

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*One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.* St. John 9:25.

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## I. TOWARDS A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF HEALTH

The concept of health is much vaster than a casual appraisal would lead one to believe. In its most immediate context health is a state of well-being in which the person is living at the peak of his condition. His body is performing its manifold functions effortlessly and his mind is alert, active, and properly directed to the task at hand. In a state of health, there is an absence of awareness of the body as a separate part of the person, and there is such a complete involvement in the matter at hand that the personal consciousness merges with it. Thus, there comes about a loss of separate identity in a participation in work that transcends the isolation of personal, selfish existence when the personality is in a state of health.

It is convenient at the outset to delineate man's constitution in terms of the healing process. Man may be considered a triune being -body, mind, and spirit. Of course, this statement itself will arouse violent controversy in many philosophical and scientific circles, but in terms of the total healing process, all three aspects of man must be recognised. A very powerful school of thought accepts only the physical body, and believes that the intelligent responses of behaviour that emanate from it are due entirely to the brain's activity. While such a belief makes for a more scientific appraisal of human behaviour, it is quite inadequate to explain the manifold nuances of human life and endeavour. The aspect of personality that feels (emotionally), thinks (rationally), and wills cannot be adequately equated with mere bodily activity; indeed, it directs much of the body's action and in states of aberration can cause enough physical disturbance to make the person feel ill. The relationship of body and mind is a perennial philosophical problem. It has eluded solution on a rational basis. Some of the most important data have been derived from psychical research, and these seem to indicate that the mental function is distinct from the bodily activity of the individual. At the present state of understanding, it seems wisest not to be dogmatic, but to accept that mind is intimately related to the physical body during earthly life, yet can occasionally function at a distance from that body.

An important part of the mind is the inner identity of the person: that which makes him a unique being. This is recognised in terms of moral choice and value judgments. It represents a permanent focus of consciousness, and is largely unknown. In religious thought, it is called the soul; in existential psychology, the term transpersonal (or spiritual) self is used. The discovery of the centre of true being is the greatest quest in life-indeed, it is not too much of an exaggeration to describe it as life's meaning, and the attainment of this knowledge is the ultimate objective of the healing process. The soul is not to be seen as something apart from the personality (which is the body-mind complex). It is enclosed in the personality and shines through it when there is real health. All too often, however, the lower aspects of personality, based on outer conditioning and the demands of the body, prevail and the person functions more as an intelligent animal than as a human being.

The third component, spirit, is more difficult to define. It is the most exalted part of the soul and is known by its action in driving man on to final completion. The spirit is present in all men; it makes them dare new ventures, and so actualise (or makes manifest) their latent

talents. It is through the spirit that man knows of God; indeed, the spirit is the inner Christ, or that of God in every man, as the Quakers so admirably describe it. Whenever we move on to new ventures it is the spirit within that draws us on, but in the early stages of development the action is often perverted by lower animal drives from the unconscious realm of the mind. It is only in the fulness of being that the spirit is experienced directly in what is called mystical illumination, of which there are many grades. More will be said of this later on.

### **The Categories of Health**

In considering health, one is soon struck by the large number of diseased people. The focus of disease may be a sick body or a disturbed mind, or else the soul may lack direction. We are, in addition, all members of the society in which we live, and there can be no individual healing except in the context of communal health. In the words of St. Paul 'we are members one of another,' and a strong indication of health is an inner awareness of this fundamental community of souls. It can be seen, even on this basis, how vast are the ramifications of health. It embraces preventive and therapeutic medicine, psychotherapy, and also aspects of sociology and economics. These fields are now so well established that they require little further elaboration. They tend to be so taken for granted that many people believe they constitute the whole of the healing agencies. Thus it is often believed that if people were properly housed, fed, educated, and under expert medical supervision they would in the course of time reach perfect health. Yet even in advanced Western societies the figures for severe mental disease increase alarmingly, while the abuse of drugs threatens the stability of many young people.

Let it be said at once that the established medical and psychological agencies of healing are the most important ones at man's disposal at present. Many people are so unevolved in consciousness that only dramatic bodily intervention will make any impression on them. Even those who aspire to a heightened awareness soon learn to their cost that they are not 'above' the care of the physician. Likewise, the springs of hatred and jealousy, often masked by superficial piety or even social philanthropy in earnest aspiring people, come to the surface in due course as either bodily disease or mental breakdown, and these need to be dealt with by skilled psychotherapists. There is no escape from the mundane agencies of healing for any of us. Nor should we regret this. Our tradition affirms the holiness of matter, and this includes the body and the earth of which it is a part, and from which it acquires its nourishment. Of course, medical treatment has its own hazards as well as its blessings. Detractors are not slow to point to the incidence of adverse drug reactions, some of which are lethal. There is indeed no cause for complacency in this matter, nor in fact is there any in the medical profession.

But the greatest danger besetting any profession, especially medicine and the Church, is the assumption of an aura of infallibility. This takes the form of the group in question having a monopoly of the whole truth so that anything outside its ambit is false. Any inconvenient insight that conflicts with traditionally held views is denounced as a heresy. But this very heresy arises as a protest against the arrogant exclusiveness of a particular doctrine or creed.

The more certain one is of the correctness of one's position, the narrower is one's vision of truth. We are all explorers into a world largely unknown, and it is the enclosure of our mental processes that deludes us into thinking that we are in possession of the way to all knowledge in our particular field of endeavour. The heretic in turn stresses his particular insight past the point of reason to a new fanaticism. This is the real condemnation of heresy that it leads to a fatal lack of balance. In the healing world, this imbalance is notorious. There are atheistic materialists, amongst whom are many medical practitioners, who see healing only in terms of the physical body. On the other hand, there are some psychotherapists so deeply committed to various psychological theories to the exclusion of all else that they believe all bodily disease has a primarily psychopathological basis. All other factors are dismissed as secondary. Then there are other branches of healing, derisively called 'fringe medicine', that acknowledge psychic and spiritual realms of personality that are usually avoided most assiduously by the orthodox healing fraternity. Many such groups have a religious basis, either an accepted higher religion of the world, or else such recent additions as Christian Science or Spiritualism. Much as such groups have been derided, they deserve recognition for drawing attention to an aspect of personality that cannot be ignored if healing is to be attained. Once again, however, they have erred in claiming a primacy for their particular insight while ignoring or undervaluing other very important factors.

Real healing should transcend prejudices and strive towards the alignment of the complex personality with the world in which it lives. Let us therefore revere the doctor's skill, the nurse's loving care, the psychotherapist's patience, the contact healer's psychic gift, and the devotion to duty of the many ordinary people who serve in unspectacular, humble occupations. All are potent forces of healing, bringing order to the chaos of life and guiding the sick and deranged to a fresh awareness of meaning in the world. It is in the cooperation of these various agencies that healing reaches its greatest power. Let it be said finally that the spiritual aspect of healing includes all these channels. It is not to be regarded as something apart from orthodox healing, but rather as the uniting influence that pervades all the modes of healing, organising them into purposeful activity.

### **FORGIVENESS: GUILT AND CONSCIENCE**

To be able to forgive another person the wrong he has done us is difficult; to forgive ourselves is scarcely possible in the range of human consciousness we share in this world of limitation. And yet it is in forgiveness that we know God, for until we learn how to forgive others we cannot experience the forgiveness for our trespasses that comes from God. It is in our clinging on to guilt, in our refusal to envisage the possibility of healing of the whole personality, that the continuance of our ill-health, our malaise, is often brought about.

The fact of sin is ever before us. It is indeed part of our human nature, and is seen as that impulse that separates us from the fullness of relationship with other people and encloses us in a shell of isolated exclusion. We live by the circulation of psychic energy that extends to all

our fellow creatures and emanates from the Divine source. Indeed, this rather materialistic analogy gives us some conception of the Holy Spirit (the Lord, the Giver of Life) and its workings amongst us. Whenever we commit a sinful, or selfish, act we exclude the Holy Spirit from us, and we suffer. Even a break in psychic communion from a single other person affects one's own well-being, and the more spiritually evolved one is, the more aware one is of this deficiency of outpouring love in all directions. In this respect, the more spiritually unevolved individual appears to be at an advantage over his more sensitive fellow, for he is less concerned about breaks in friendship and communion with those around him. Indeed, he may be so self-contained as to be oblivious of the opinions of others, and may ride roughshod over their feelings with equanimity. But the cost is his own isolation. No one in his vicinity, even those bound to him in blood-relationship, will eventually care for him, and his end is likely to be particularly unattractive. On the other hand, a psychically aware individual will regret any breach which he may have caused in a relationship, and will soon humble himself sufficiently to admit his fault to the other person and thus to repair the breach. It is in the act of atonement and the complementary act of forgiveness by the other person that a growth in the relationship occurs, and at the same time, each personality, exposed to the truth of its own sinfulness, develops a greater understanding of its full nature and potentiality. The awareness of one's present inadequacy is the beginning of healing. The ability to open oneself to the inflow of Divine Grace is the mechanism of healing.

And yet we seem to be making mistakes the whole time. As St. Paul lamented, 'For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present in me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members' (Romans 7: 19-23). It does indeed seem that there is something rooted in our animal nature which leads us to self-exaltation at the expense of self-integration and community living. Is there something in the very root of our being that is sinful and corrupt? While certain aspects of traditional Christianity would confirm this and indeed emphasise it, it seems wrong to postulate that man is inherently corrupt without at the same time affirming his potential divinity. In the Incarnation, we see the juxtaposition of the human and divine natures and their complete merging in the person of Jesus Christ. We must hold to the hope that the body of mankind following the light of Christ may also realise the spark of divinity in itself. Without this hope life becomes a meaningless succession of sensory stimuli leading to no fulfilment of the personality.

Since we are created by God, we must accept that all of us, body and mind alike, is good-for God saw that His creation was good, in terms of the very revealing story of the creation described in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis. It follows that we must start the process of self-exploration in an attitude of wonder and thanksgiving and not with a feeling of guilt and shame, as Adam did when his knowledge of separate identity made him aware of his own nakedness. The cry of the Psalmist, 'I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: Marvellous are thy works and that my soul knoweth right well' (Psalm 139: 14), is at once both the delighted awareness of the child and the rapt contemplation of the seer. In the awareness of truth childlike wonder is magnified to eternal illumination. We have

furthermore to accept ourselves as we are, remembering that many of our qualities, both those that are generally considered favourable and unfavourable, have been brought in with us as part of our special incarnation. In this respect the genetic make-up of our parents determines much of our personality and we cannot escape the effects of heredity or of the particular conditioning we receive in our childhood. Spiritual philosophies that dismiss the material fact of genetic inheritance are blinding themselves to the reality of the situation. But in addition to the inherited and acquired traits of our outer personality there is an inner nature, or soul, that can work within the limitations and the range of these personal characteristics. In some people the action of the soul, which is our real understanding of the will, triumphs over adversity and develops the innate talents as fully as possible. Other people are so bowed down by the weight of limitation that they will never be able to do much with their lives. And here we have cause for much reflection.

The materialist would, of course, deny the special determining characteristics of the soul, asserting that the ability to triumph over disabilities or to be crushed by them is also part of one's inherited nature. It is impossible to decide between these two points of view on a purely rational level; one has to face the existential fact of one's own being and set it fearlessly in face of the environment from which one arose. The vast differences in qualities and aspiration that may be seen among members of a single family do suggest that something more is operative than mere genetic variation. It is this personal uniqueness that forms the outer basis of our true self, or soul. Whatever may be the origin of the particular qualities we bring in with us in this life, it is essential that we confront them directly, accept them, and learn to love them. In this action we see the beginning of forgiveness.

### **Conscience**

For what are we to be forgiven? And how do we know that we need forgiveness? We need to be forgiven for our selfish actions, our sins against ourselves, our fellow men, and against God. We know of our need for forgiveness through the awareness of guilt. Guilt is the inner manifestation of the outer action of sin. But why do we feel guilty, and is not guilt a useless burden that ought to be shed as soon as possible? To understand all these questions let us first consider something that lies deeply rooted in our own self-awareness, our conscience. The conscience, once a fact of the greatest importance in man's moral attitude to the world, is now scarcely regarded as a meaningful concept in psychological theory. The reason for this is clear enough. What would appear to be a simple inner mechanism for choosing between the right and the wrong action is now seen to be infinitely more complex. Our tendency to decide between various courses of action is determined not only by the conditioning of the family and the society in which we are born and receive our education but also by the ideals of that particular society. The artificial ideal situation imposed from without by the social ethos of a particular age forms what Freud calls the super-ego, and he (and many others) believe that we are driven unconsciously to conform to an externally derived source of authority which we equate with the ultimate good. Such a super-ego could, and frequently does, embrace a concept of a personal god judging us, and whom we are obliged to worship in abject servitude. If we fail to conform to this ideal, which is really, a malicious artefact, we feel guilty and believe we have sinned. Part of psychotherapeutic practice works to free the

person from this enslavement to an arbitrary, blind external authority. Here guilt is a positive menace, and it is to be removed speedily if the person is to move to spiritual awareness.

Another externally based source of conscience is group loyalty. Men are more susceptible to this than are women, and in the ethos of the school-boy the refusal to tell tales against a fellow to one higher in authority is commendable. If we betray someone on this level, even in a situation where such an action is really necessary for the wider good of the community, we feel guilty. Neither the Freudian super-ego nor the fact of group loyalty is intrinsic to the person himself. They are externally imposed sources of authority. They cannot be denied or removed, for we act in community and not simply as isolated units. Thus the moral attributes of a particular society and the interest of the particular group in which we function are neither necessarily good nor bad. At times we may have to contravene both the conventions of our society and our smaller group. It is here that a third, most important, aspect of conscience reveals itself.

This aspect of conscience is the action of the true self, or soul. It has to act to assert what it believes to be the truth, whether artistic, humanitarian, or frankly spiritual. In so doing, it nearly always contravenes the ideals of the social super-ego in which it was nurtured, and by opposing itself to the welfare of the group in which the person finds himself, it leads to the alienation of that person from his social environment. One need look no further than the lives of the great artistic creators to see how they jeopardised their very existence in refusing to conform to popular taste. The same applies even more strongly to the social and political reformers who would not tolerate the social injustice of their times, and sometimes paid for their intransigence with their lives. And on the religious level the ministry of Christ speaks eloquently of One who could not accept the current spiritual valuations of His time and sacrificed Himself for the salvation of the whole world. Here we see the full flowering of conscience, radiating as an unquenchable light from the soul and testifying to the reality of the Holy Spirit in man. The true light of conscience is the light of the Spirit in the soul. It cannot be denied, for it is the Truth in each person. It is this experience that testifies to the uniqueness of each person, and it also indicates that the soul is never complete except when working in intimate communion with all other souls in a concern of transcendent importance. Only when man works from the height of his true being is he really fully human, and only then does he know freedom, the freedom of the Truth of God.

It is apparent therefore that a feeling of guilt may stem from a betrayal of the social super-ego imposed from outside, a betrayal of the group in which one lives and works, and also a betrayal of one's own inner nature. One remembers the terrible question of Christ, 'What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' (Mark 8: 36). It is the third betrayal that is the most appalling, and yet in order to avoid it one may appear to have to betray the society and the group one lives in. But the assurance also comes from Christ, 'Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it' (Mark 8: 35). If we see Christ and the gospel in this context as the highest good, manifested in Christ's whole ministry, we realise that if we act in accordance with that good, there is no ultimate betrayal. Certainly the society and group from which the rebel has sprung will misunderstand the motives of that person, and his

opposition to the customs of the time will occasion much hatred against him, but in the course of time he will be understood and revered by the society whose outlook his witness has helped to change. But even here there is a danger: not every inner call to change the consciousness of society is necessarily inspired by the Holy Spirit. It may arise from base personal motives of power, hatred, and assertiveness. This is why we have to try the spirits, as St. John points out in the fourth chapter of the first letter. If the spirit is of the nature of Christ, redeeming the world or some aspect of it to a greater nobility, purpose, and communion, then it is right to proceed. But at all times there should be a deep commitment to the society and group in which one is placed. One may have to break loose from the restricting conventions of all such societies and groups, but one should never place oneself above them or consider oneself superior to them. If one's inner attitude is right, one need fear no permanent disruption of community with those that one has known previously. Yet the temporary break in communion is very shattering, and one needs much faith and love to proceed.

It is evident that guilt is a complex emotion. It may be occasioned by our failure to live up to some externally imposed standard, to which it may be impossible for us to conform. It may be due to a quite mistaken conception of our responsibility to group cohesion. The number of 'devils' that beset man is enormous, and the great majority of these are products of his own imagination. If we could only fulfil those potentialities within our reach and stop yearning for that which is not in our power to possess, we would lose much guilt and be far happier in our personal relationships. But there is also a guilt buried deep in the souls of all of us, a guilt based on the eternal conflict between the unconscious animal mind and the spirit which leads us away from mere self-concern to communion with God. The more spiritually evolved one is, the more loudly does the clamour of the guilt impinge on one's consciousness. St. Paul says, 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3: 23). This guilt cannot be explained away as a mere psychological mechanism; it is very near the heart of man's condition in the world, and is the preserve of the great religious traditions. It sometimes takes the form of that divine discontent that stirs all creative geniuses, whether in art or science, to greater efforts in the face of public apathy or hostility. It may lead the rich young man to Christ in order that he may learn the secret of eternal life. It never leaves us free, for it is the inner compulsion to obey Christ's commandment, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect' (Matthew 5: 48).

### **FORGIVENESS: THE HEALING OF SIN**

How is one to be forgiven for a great injustice done to another? How in turn can one forgive an injustice done to oneself? These are immense questions. Let it at once be said that forgiveness does not occur merely on a rational, or intellectual, level. Certainly one can affect to forgive someone else for a wrong committed by pardoning him and shaking hands together, but apart from the attitude of superiority this engenders that militates against a real reconciliation, there will be left a rankling reservation in the heart that destroys real



trust. True forgiveness comes from a much deeper part of the personality than the rational mind. It comes from the soul, indeed from the Spirit, and its source is God not man.

It is only when we are able to forgive ourselves our deepest faults that we can start to forgive another person in earnest. When we commit a sin, which, to recapitulate, is a self-exalting action done to the detriment of another person, we soon become acutely aware of our fault. This is due in part to the action of the injured person, but mostly to our own inner judgment. We are in fact judging ourselves the whole time, and our inner feeling of guilt is a measure of the distance we have fallen short of God's glory which is known in the heights of the soul. As we have already noted, it is the spiritually advancing person who is most aware of his sinfulness; indeed, at times his burden of guilt may be unbearable. Isaiah expresses this very forcibly, 'We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags' (Isaiah 64: 6). But this burden of sinfulness and guilt can distort a person's whole life and cause severe mental disturbances, which may in turn have important physical consequences. A sin-conscious religion is a loveless affair and it tends to emphasise personal salvation at the expense of God's universal love. We have first to learn to love ourselves so that the forgiveness of sins may be a meaningful transaction.

### **Self-Acceptance**

To love oneself is a lifetime's work. This love means an acceptance of ourselves as we really are, so that we do not need to boost ourselves with external attributes. A selfish person is one who is, at least unconsciously, aware of his inadequate personality, and he tries to shield himself from this admission of insufficiency by grasping from those around him. In this way, he hopes to supplement his lack. Thus a person who is insecure in himself, due almost always to inadequate love at an earlier part of his life, will strive for security in wealth, power, or social position. Such a person is in fact dominated by his sense of inadequacy and driven to the acquisition of money or prestige. The end-result of this type of life is very well known to doctors and psychotherapists: increasing alienation from the community and ultimately a breakdown of body and mind. If only we realised that we are lovable as we now stand, because God created us and loves us, we would not need to boost ourselves with things that are not essential. It is frequently a complete mental or physical breakdown that brings the person to his senses that his real value lies in what he is and not in his external attributes. When we love ourselves in this way, we do not need to seek for wealth or power for self-aggrandisement, and at last, we are free from the thralldom of outer things. From this, we see the necessity for accepting ourselves as we are, and loving ourselves, including our shortcomings. The important thing is always to be oneself fully, and not simply the pale image of some imaginary or real hero. To accept the limitations that our incarnation has thrust upon us is an act of great wisdom. To work within those limitations to the best of our ability in order to give something unique to the world is an act of faith and courage. It is our very weakness that is the stepping-stone to self-mastery. This is something everyone with a defect that resists healing should remember: 'My strength is made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12: 9).

The ultimate basis of healing is the entry of the Holy Spirit into the whole personality through the soul. It is our feeling of guilt, or unworthiness, which impedes this inflow. There are, as has already been made clear, some aspects of guilt that are thoroughly destructive to the personality, and these should be expunged by critical analysis. Among the most important of these destructive feelings of guilt is our failure to accept ourselves as we now stand. How can we start to accept ourselves? By diverting our concern away from our own personal problems and becoming more aware of the world around us. It is by active participation in the world that our place is found within it. This is not simply an act of personal will; it is also the grace of God taking us, as we are in this moment of time, and placing us lovingly in the full community of man. As we give of ourselves in faith to the world around us, aware as we may be of our great shortcomings, we are accepted for what we are by the world, and in this transaction we find we are able to accept the world with greater affection and respect. Let it be repeated: this acceptance is God-given, a thing of grace, for in our weakness God's strength acts. It strengthens us and aligns our will to that of the cosmic purpose in which the will of God is known. As we are accepted by God in the world for what we are, so we begin to accept other people for what they are, and not for what we believe they ought to be or can be in the future. To be able to see others and ourselves as points of divine development in a cosmic process of evolution is to be able not only to accept but also to forgive and to love what is in existence now. To love a present infirmity is the way to its ultimate healing, a healing not of itself alone but of the entire personality.

But what are we to say of the serious sins we have committed against others? These cannot be dismissed merely as inevitable episodes in our spiritual evolution. While we are all in the process of becoming more fully integrated people, we are also perfect in ourselves at any moment of time. Thus do the two antithetical processes of becoming (in time) and being (in eternity) converge in the moment of action. It is the betrayal of another in a moment of high tension that exposes the weakness of both parties. As we sin against another, so we leave him bereft of that which he holds dear, and at the same time we are shorn of our mask of morality and decency. It is this process of mutual unfoldment that makes the act of betrayal, the commission of sin, an inevitable part of the incarnational drama. In a world of cosy goodness where people were always pleasant to one another there would be no growth to Christ, Who is neither cosy goodness nor formal pleasantness. He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the truth that sets men free, free from dependence on things, on ideologies, and even on conditional friendship. So long as a relationship depends on mutual deceit, on evasions of essential truth, that relationship is merely temporary and is doomed to collapse. So many human contacts are of this type: superficial conversations and meetings masquerading as friendship. Much religious observance is likewise a scratching on the surface of the concept of God rather than a transforming encounter with Christ in the depths of one's being.

We thus begin to fathom the paradox that a personal betrayal, a sin of great magnitude, may be the means of our first glimpse of divine justice and mercy. It all depends though on our state of awareness. The unaware will sin on, oblivious of the havoc they are causing and the suffering they are courting. But one who is spiritually awake sees, as a result of the sin, both his own dereliction and his means of transformation. If he can only humble himself

sufficiently to acknowledge his shortcoming both to himself and to the person he has offended, he will move to a new level of awareness and be no longer susceptible to that particular temptation. It might be deduced from this that we should do all in our power to ensure that the sin is forgiven by those whom we have injured. But this is not the important part of forgiveness. Indeed, in many of the disreputable things we do, no one else is aware of our action or thought. If we were to exteriorise our feeling of guilt, the listener might, in all charitable indulgence, forgive us willingly, and yet the knowledge of the sin remains within us. 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' asks St. Paul. And his answer is, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with my flesh the law of sin' (Romans 7: 24-25).

### **The Act of Forgiving**

It is Christ in us that both judges the sin and forgives it. The very perfection to which we strive is the knowledge of God in Christ who is enthroned in the Spirit, that most exalted place in each soul. Inasmuch as we have acted, spoken, or thought in a way that diminishes another person (and therefore ourselves, for we are all members one of another in that body of creation that is the Body of Christ to be consummated fully on the day of total redemption from sin), it is Christ in us, the working of the Holy Spirit, that judges. How can we ever bear the pain of that judgment which tells us how greatly we have fallen from what we might have been? There is clearly nothing that we ourselves can do to repair our action. The forgiveness comes from Christ, not from our own intellectual faculties. And yet the glory of this judgment is its absolute mercy when we have confronted our defect in courage and in clear vision. We have only to dedicate ourselves in true selfless service to the world for the Divine Energies to infuse our souls, and then we are reborn. A new vision of reality opens to us, and we see our erstwhile defects in a new light, the light of Christ. He not only forgives but also redeems. Thus when we are shown, in our own being, the radiance of God's unconditional love, a love that we have only to receive in childlike openness, the past can be faced not only with equanimity but also with a love and wonder that surpass description. This is the experience of forgiveness: we are able to forgive ourselves because Christ, embodied in radiant love, has forgiven us. He makes no demands, nor does He dictate our further actions. He sets us free from the bondage of guilt so that we may start a new spiral of life. This is the experience of forgiveness that the prodigal son first felt in his own heart when he was in greatest desperation, and it was fully realised in the total acceptance by his father.

Let it be said at once that this forgiveness does not in any way erase the effects of the sin we have committed. Justice is not cancelled out by mercy, but it is made bearable, even helpful, through mercy. Thus the person we have wronged must be recompensed to the best of our ability, and a crime may require a severe penalty in the judgment of the law. But none of these penalties assumes the terrible aspect of self-destruction that it would to the unforgiven man. Indeed, such punishment is seen to be the fulfilment of the world's law, and thus is a new adventure in living. Since we have been redeemed from sin by Christ, it makes little difference whether the world at large thinks well or ill of us. The seat of judgment is on high, and we are both the judge and the accused. This is why we are told, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: for with what measure

ye mete, it shall be measured to you again' (Matthew 7: 1-2). We are, in our unenlightened state, in no position to judge ourselves, let alone anyone else. But when Christ lives in us the judgment brings its own remedy, a change in consciousness to a new understanding of God's love for us.

The ultimate result of unassuaged guilt is remorse. This eats into the personality and destroys it. We cannot forgive ourselves, but through faith in God our sin can be redeemed. And as we begin to forgive ourselves, so we find that we can tolerate others better and really begin to love them. This love is not a false view of other people, averting our full vision and pretending the marring features do not really exist. On the other hand, true love is honest. It sees straight, neither judging nor condescending. It values the other person for what he is, and makes no demands on him. It flows out in spontaneous blessing to God that His creatures (including oneself) are as they are. And when we behave in full consciousness as we are, the false valuation we place on external attributes will be exposed, and we will look for a deeper understanding of our true nature. It is thus that we see Christ. The mystics believe that He rose from the dead, because they know He is risen-risen in their own souls. Thus the Incarnation has to be repeated in the lives of all believers before they can know Christ. A mere creedal affirmation on an intellectual level-often mistakenly equated with faith-does not transform the personality. Unless Christ is seen to live in the personality, one's belief is of little account. And let it be said that Christ grows in one as one progresses in the spiritual life. The true conversion is a lifelong process; it may indeed be punctuated by remarkable inner experiences, but the real growth is unobtrusive and largely unnoticed by the person himself. Those around him, however, are aware of the change. This change is not one of militant enforcement of a new way of life but of a broadening-out of the personality so that one becomes more loving, more understanding, more open-hearted, and less dogmatic in one's views. Dogmatic sentiments are usually props to uphold a shaky ideology. Once Christ is known there is less need for dogma. Instead, dogma is seen to be merely the gateway to a more complete understanding of life.

### **The Atonement**

In the forgiveness of sin, we begin to understand the Atonement.

We believe that Jesus, though sinless Himself, took on all the sin of the world, and that in bearing this terrible load even to death on the Cross atoned for the world's sin. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself' (2 Corinthians 5: 19) is St. Paul's statement of this action. When we atone for our sins, we are reconciled to those against whom we have sinned. But how can the atoning sacrifice of Jesus relieve us now of the burden of sin? It is evident that there is still much sin in the world two thousand years after the Incarnation. Yet Jesus shows us, in His passion, the way to reconciliation. So sensitive was He psychically that the full load of the world's grief and woe were known to Him, and at the time of His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane he felt this burden fall directly on Him. He had to bear the full shame of the world's guilt and even experience that momentary doubt of God's all-pervading presence on the Cross; He asked, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Mark 15: 34). But he persisted to the end, and death was swallowed up in victory. The sin of the world

was consumed in transcendent glory. In this way, man was shown a new view of Divine Love, one that immersed itself directly in the human situation and sank to the depths of man's degradation--even to the darker regions of the after-life which are called Hell or Hades. But all, even the most sordid, could be redeemed from the darkness of sin (which is dark, because it excludes the light of communion with others from the self-exalted sinner) by opening itself to the Light which is Christ. Thus, the level of awareness of the whole world has been raised by the witness of Christ Incarnate. This applies not only to those who call themselves Christians but also to the world at large. The witness of Christ extends to all men who sacrifice the smaller self for the greater Self, which embraces the community of man and is of God. The spiritual evolution of all men has been quickened by His witness, and He is with all those who sincerely repent of their sin and flow out in unreserved love to their fellows. It is to such that the word Christian should apply. It is a mark of the poor spiritual state of Christianity that so few of its members have reached this level of awareness. When the Christian community knows of the Atonement of Christ in its own experience, the Body of Christ will really have formed, and all men will eventually be included in it by their own inevitable choice.

How frequently Jesus told those whom He had healed, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' He forgave while incarnate, and now He forgives through the Holy Spirit all who have faith in the cosmic process, the flow of life. It is the spirit of forgiveness that guides the mentally distraught slowly back to equilibrium. It brings about the slow, undramatic healing of the body, and above all it is the integrating centre of the personality, for it works at the level of the soul. Eventually it takes man above the concern for personal justice to the realm of universal love.

### **FAITH**

'Thy faith has made thee whole' is a statement of Jesus that frequently follows a healing episode. Indeed faith and forgiveness are the two attributes seen most often in healing, and it is important to enquire into their nature.

Faith in its most elementary usage means a feeling of confidence that a certain measure or remedy will succeed. This feeling of trust is a necessary prerequisite before treatment on a material or mental level can be embarked on. If a patient has no faith in the ability of his medical attendant he is very unlikely to benefit much from the treatment, and complications are more likely to supervene than they would have done had there been better cooperation between the two people. Such confidence can be used by the imagination to an extent that the patient really improves apart from any active treatment. People who are very weak-willed can have suggestions implanted in their minds from outside sources, and these ideas may then produce corresponding mental states and affect the bodily condition. Hypnotic suggestion is an extreme example of the power of thought (the hypnotist's) in influencing the mind and body of another person. How hypnosis works is still not understood, but its use as a psychotherapeutic agent is now well established. Even a state of insensibility to pain or of unconsciousness itself can be invoked by the power of suggestion acting on a hypnotised person.

Suggestion plays an important part in all healing processes. This is very well recognised in medical practice. It has been found repeatedly that inert material that cannot be distinguished by the patient from powerful drugs may have a remarkably ameliorative effect in many chronic diseases that are at present still incurable by medical means. Thus, before any new drug can be certified as useful, an elaborate double-blind trial is carried out. This is devised by statisticians who have no contact with either the patients or the medical staff. A range of patients suffering from the disease in question is selected, and half are given the new drug while the remainder are given an inert preparation that resembles the trial product. In this way neither the patient nor his attendants know whether he is getting the trial drug or merely the inert preparation, which is called a placebo. Only then can the value of the new drug be fairly assessed, since the power of suggestion will play its part equally in both groups of patients. It is not unknown for the placebo to work better than the new drug! But its effect is temporary only. Thus suggestion has only a limited therapeutic value, and it is justly distrusted by all experienced doctors and psychotherapists. This primitive type of faith, or suggestion as it really should be called, depends on the gullibility (or suggestibility) of the patient and the personality of the attendant together with the scientific (or occult) paraphernalia that he uses. It depends on the capacity of the patient's mind to be dominated by that of a stronger person. Far from setting him free, it places him in greater dependence on another's will.

In the realm of unorthodox healing suggestibility also plays a large part, so much so that antagonists of this type of practice class all its practitioners as 'faith healers'. This implies that their results are purely due to the power of suggestion. Such healers not unnaturally resent this aspersion, which would imply that they are merely successful charlatans who have no positive basis to their skill. Whatever may be the basis of any form of successful healing, and by success I mean permanence, one must look further than superficial suggestion. Certainly the healings that Jesus wrought involved faith of a very different character from the suggestion that has been discussed above.

The faith that is of spiritual import must be distinguished from suggestibility. It is not faith in a drug, or a personality, or even in an ideology. It is not faith in a religious proposition or even in the contents of a scripture. In all these examples the essential freedom of the spirit is laid in bondage to an external source of authority, and this prevents the full flowering of the personality. Anyone who bases his faith on an external source of authority, no matter how exalted its ideological or credal content, is liable to be disappointed in the course of time. Thus it comes about that growing children often lose their religious 'faith' as they grow in understanding of the world's mechanisms. The fact of unmitigated suffering can destroy conventional religious faith very easily; indeed, in the face of such suffering the fact of God may seem a hollow mockery. 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen' is the definition of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (11: 1). It is a gift of God, the gift that leads man from the unknown to the known.

The heart of the mystery of faith lies in the paradoxical aphorism of Pascal, which was enunciated at an earlier period by St. Augustine, 'I would not seek Thee had I not found Thee.' It is our inner knowledge of perfection, which is the veiled presence of Christ in all of

us, that leads us on to a quest for this perfection in material substance. Job had spent his whole life in worshipping God according to the prescribed ritual of his group, yet he was infinitely further from the true knowledge of God in his early period of affluence than he was during the terrible suffering he endured, which seemed to be the negation of all divine love. Nevertheless he could say, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him' (Job 13: 15). This is the faith that saves; it leads us through the hell of so much material living to the uplands of the spirit where we may see the Divine Reality as Job saw Him at the end of his dark agony. This saving faith is a faith in the rightness, the fundamental goodness, of life itself despite all superficial indications to the contrary. It is our innate knowledge of God; it gainsays all the evidence of things seen that speak of meaninglessness and chaos, and it actually transmutes them to God's glory. For He is everywhere, as much in hell as in heaven (as the glorious 139th Psalm proclaims). The Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of Life, and it is enthroned in the Soul as the Spirit of each one of us. But we can ascend to it only by faith.

It is the gift of faith that lightens our darkness. The humanistic materialist can see no future for the individual after bodily death, whereas the spiritual man (not to be equated by any means with the conventional religionist) sees beyond death to a new vision of life eternal. This vision is derided as mere wishful thinking by the materialist, and it must be admitted that the factual evidence of survival is still not scientifically incontrovertible. But the spiritual man has an organ of inner vision which can see, admittedly darkly as through a glass, beyond the world of the senses to the potentiality of a new creation. Thus faith is never blind; it is based on a higher intuition firmly founded in the soul, though as yet not properly brought down to the domain of the reasoning mind. It is the work of our life on earth to make these intuitional glimpses actual facts of existence. But the reasoning mind is set on accepting only the tangible data of experience as real, as indeed it must if we are to live successfully in the world from day to day. It is an old aphorism from the Indian mystical tradition that 'the mind is the slayer of the Real.' This is because the reasoning mind analyses intuitive impressions and discounts them. It is only too ready to usurp the function of exploration into the unknown that is the preserve of the higher intuition. Reason analyses and codifies new information, separating what is true from what is false by trial and error, but it is an impotent guide in the unknown realm of becoming, which is the inner nature of the life that we lead. This is why intellectuals and philosophers of the contemporary schools fight shy of considering such topics as the meaning of life or its sufferings, the nature of the true self and its immortality, and the fact of death. Since they are barely tractable to the unaided reason, it is far better to leave them alone, either dismissing them as meaningless concepts, or else escaping into social platitudes about measures that can be adopted to make life less dangerous and oppressive. In a very real way the alleviation of suffering can diminish the value of life by abolishing the poignancy of experience that makes life valuable. It all depends on the view we have about suffering, and how best it ought to be dealt with.

What did Jesus really mean when He said, 'Thy faith has made thee whole'? What faith did those who were healed have in Jesus? It may indeed have started as the mere attraction of a powerful personality with overtones of suggestibility, but it is hard to escape the conclusion that soon something else was added to this: a realisation of a new mode of living, of being, speaking through Jesus, so that He was not just another man with an unusual healing gift. His

teaching, which was the greater part of His ministry, was not like that of the scribes, but was infused by an authority that commanded instant attention because of its content. Likewise His healing revealed something to the infirm that spoke beyond the physical nature of the man to the Divine nature embodied in it. Those who were healed were shown a glimpse of Divinity, though at this stage in the ministry of Jesus they would not have been able to put this intuitive judgment into thought. It was after the Resurrection and the downpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples that the perpetual action of God in healing was made clear. Thus those who were healed by this meaningful contact with Jesus (and this does not apply to all the healings recorded in the Gospels) were lifted up to a new level of awareness of the fundamentally Divine nature of creation and could have faith in its workings through the ministry of Jesus.

Thus true faith is a state of openness to new possibilities. It does not demand the abolition of the rational critical faculty, still less need one be suggestible or gullible. It means the giving of oneself in complete trust to the agency at hand. Above all it necessitates the banishing of fear, which closes the personality and prevents the accession of a new understanding of life. Thus does perfect love cast out fear, for in such love we are completely open to the other person, giving freely of ourselves and receiving freely from the other. The real faith is acceptance of our own hidden potentialities and the working with them in life so that we may reach maturity. Faith is not only the willingness to receive but also the will to proceed despite all dangers and difficulties until the end of the way which is life eternal. Unless we can approach the many experiences in life with an attitude of childlike trust that all is potentially good provided we have the strength to persist, any future action would be intolerable to contemplate. Fortunately there is a strong element of faith built in to all of us, and this serves us well in everyday life. This faith is tested in times of adversity, and it is then that it assumes its saving quality. When we have come to the end of our own resources and realise that we of ourselves can do nothing, it is faith in the power of God that animates us, and that power, once invoked, carries us along to self-mastery and world service.

#### Positive Thought in Healing

There is a tendency in some quarters to stress the power of positive thinking. This in itself is a good thing, but a great deal depends on the content of the thought. St. Paul says, 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things' (Philippians 4: 8). It is indeed valuable to have such things in mind when one is confronted with the sordid details of worldly life during much of the time. There are schools of thought that believe that disease itself may be banished by refusing to accept its existence in reality. There can be no doubt that the mind tends to magnify the slightest manifestations of ill-health until they assume gigantic proportions, and it is good if a neurotic person can learn to think in terms of success rather than failure, of health instead of disease.

But we must always be honest. The dark is as real as is the light, and the deficiencies of our personalities are as important in our development as are our assets. To acknowledge only



the good while denying the existence of the bad is simply auto-suggestion, the implanting of an ideology into our own minds derived ultimately from an external source. Thus, what is called the power of positive thinking, while undoubtedly important, needs a careful reassessment. What should be powerful about constructive thinking is the ability to face oneself as honestly as one can-remembering that the amount one really knows about one's true identity is still very small. If one can face all the contrasting facets of one's own nature with equanimity, one need no longer ignore or avoid contemplating the darker side, but can instead accept it with love, treasuring it for the insight it gives one into the difficulties of other people as well as for the vantage point it affords one of progressing towards the fulfilment of one's own personality. This is true healing. Thus the right thoughts to have in one's mind about any situation are firstly an honest appraisal of that situation and secondly an attitude of faith that all will be well through the combined action of Divine Grace and one's own efforts. In such an attitude there is no need for the recitation of positive thoughts that often run counter to one's own inner feelings and knowledge.

### Paranormal Healing

The phenomenon of paranormal healing is as fascinating as it is enigmatic. That there are some people with a healing gift is an undoubted fact, but the nature of the gift and how it works are as yet unknown. As already noted, sceptics attribute it to the power of suggestion. The practitioners, on the other hand, call it spiritual healing, but if spirituality is that quality that leads man to his final encounter with God in unity, there must remain much doubt about the spiritual nature of both the healer and the gift in many instances of such healing. The terms paranormal, or psychic, healing seem to be the most acceptable, for the phenomenon is part of the wider realm of extrasensory perception, and occurs as unpredictably as do other psychical phenomena, such as telepathy and clairvoyance.

Each practitioner tends to have his own theory. The most popular ones are those that postulate a healing force (magnetic or radiesthetic healing) emanating from the healer, and those that accept the ministrations of intermediaries from an after-life state as the essential healing agent (spiritualistic healing). In fact, the two theories do not necessarily conflict with each other; if discarnate 'guides' are indeed responsible, they might use a 'magnetic' or 'radiesthetic' healing power. It must be added that there is, as yet, no scientific basis for any paranormal healing force, for it cannot be demonstrated or measured by scientifically acceptable instruments. Likewise, the spiritualistic view is not proven; even when the healer does appear to be genuinely 'taken over' by another personality, this could be attributed to a complex sub-personality in the healer's unconscious mind masquerading as a separate entity.

The only definite attribute of paranormal healing is its unpredictability. It is like one born of the Spirit blowing where it wills, and no one can tell whence it comes or whither it goes (St. John 3: 8). The numerous accounts available of such healing from the pens of the healers themselves or their advocates are notable more for their uncritical enthusiasm than for the light they shed on the subject. The great majority of those treated for chronic disorders do not get a permanent cure, but then the same may be said also of the more orthodox types of healing. It is evident that neither are great spiritual qualities necessary in the healer nor need

the patient be filled with faith in the healer. Sometimes it is the sceptic who benefits, while the believer may not improve at all. Clearly much more research is needed in this challenging area of healing with medical cooperation to assess the results scientifically. At present it must be regarded as an important adjunct to the rational healing agencies at our disposal, and it should be treated with the respect it deserves.

#### Conclusion

Faith is the gift that leads us through the darkness of the unknown to the light of understanding which is of God. In our journey from darkness to light we have many encounters, some pleasant and some unpleasant. The man of faith accepts them all and learns from them. He may be led along strange paths to a greater understanding of truth, but his faith in God's creative love leaves him open to the Holy Spirit, which is the power that impels him on to self-realisation. If suffering can be seen in this light, faith becomes the very way of healing.

#### v. THE WAY OF SUFFERING

The place of suffering in the perfection of personality is an agonising consideration. Suffering can be regarded as the malalignment of the personal life with the flow of the universe. It is manifested internally as pain, mental distress, and loneliness and externally as disease, isolation, and antisocial activity. It is indeed worth while remembering that anyone who flows out in hatred to another, from whose mouth issue words of calumny, and from whose body descend violent blows on other people, is in a state of suffering. Spiritually minded individuals tell us to pray for such a person, and they are quite right. Prayer when properly conceived puts the evil-doer in the community once more and thereby obliterates his isolation. The proper treatment of criminal activity may necessitate punitive action to safeguard the community, but unless it is implemented by acceptance and love of the criminal, it will never effect his redemption. Whenever we suffer we are put out of the life of the community from whence we derive our sustenance, and it is in considering the cause and effect of this isolation that we may come to an understanding of the part suffering plays in the healing of the personality. It is not too much of a paradox to speak of healing through suffering.

The one certain thing about man is his inherently incomplete state. His awareness of his own isolated identity-however inadequate his recognition of that identity is-puts him in a state of antagonism with the boundless world around him. This is described theologically as sin, and it is man's natural condition. When seen in this light, it can be accepted as a fact of life, and need no longer occasion feelings of guilt or revulsion. In the Judeo-Christian tradition this sense of isolation is believed to have followed from the Adamic fall from grace, but many contemporary thinkers see man's development as part of an evolutionary process, and

attribute his separative nature to his personal development. It is certainly part of his work to transcend the separation of sin by living in greater community with his fellows.

In modern sophisticated society it is all too easy to merge so completely in the mass as to lose one's own identity completely; indeed, this extreme conformity is part of the 'image' of a successful man. Conformity consists in reducing one's true being to fit in with the current mode of thinking of one's community. It may be a contemporary Western capitalist mode, or a proletarian communist one, or even that of the younger generation with its distinctive nonconformist type of conformity in dress and general behaviour. But the main thing is to fit in with one's particular group. To be an outsider is the ultimate tragedy, for it leads to suffering, and in the present highly materialistic mode of life, laced with platitudinous social doctrines of ease and comfort for all, suffering is above all to be avoided. Since, however, the course of life on a material level moves inevitably to such uncomfortable facts as ageing, disease, and physical death the fact of suffering can never be entirely transcended; the topic is simply avoided in polite society. In this respect we may contemplate the story of Gautama's early life: one of an Indian prince immured in a wonderful palace where the sordid side of man's life never intruded. Only when he came of age did he learn of the existential facts of disease, old age, and death, and then he could contain his spiritual questing no longer. He knew that only by immersing himself in all aspects of life could he understand the mystery of suffering and help mankind to transcend it. And in his quest he experienced that illumination that caused him to be called the Buddha, the Enlightened One. Modern 'enlightened' man seeks for palliatives for suffering, as much to allay his conscience as to assuage his discomfort, but until he has faced suffering as directly as Jacob contended with the angel or Christ faced His own agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, he can never know himself, and therefore never know God.

This then is the meaning of suffering in the spiritual development of the individual: it stretches his experience of life and leads him to that centre in himself where peace and stability are known, the centre of the soul which is the Spirit. And yet healing puts an end to suffering. The object of the healing process is to produce harmony in the individual. Here we come upon a great paradox, one which is resolved only when we reach a cosmic level of understanding. Suffering is man's inevitable experience as he traverses the path of purification from the lower animal nature to the higher spiritual nature. This path is the way of union of the soul with God through the two intermediate stages of purgation and illumination.

How austere is suffering! It detaches the facade of successful living and unmask the soul as does nothing else. Modern depth psychology has discovered what the great creative writers and the mystics already knew, that the unconscious aspect of man's mind is the real energising force of the psyche, and it is through the unconscious that we know ourselves in the deep centre of the soul, and we know of God immanent also. But in the unconscious there are various organised psychic elements which are called complexes. Some of these are related to unpleasant experiences in the past that we have not fully assimilated, and others are part of the shared inheritance of mankind. The most important of these complexes is a concentration of the negative qualities in us all that we do not like to face, let alone

acknowledge. These qualities have an earthy realism about them, and are usually a bundle of sensual and aggressive drives that are not attractive in polite, conventional society. This complex is called the shadow, and it is most prominent in conventionally good people with all the right thoughts and attitudes! Yet deep down in their unconscious there is a veritable cesspit of sexuality and assertiveness, as dark as their aspirations are bright. Furthermore, we all inherit aspects of sexuality opposite to our physical sex. Thus men have a feminine element called the anima and women a masculine element called the animus. All these figures may emerge in dreams suitably personified, and they often obtrude in daily life when we are off our guard or placed in a difficult situation. Now these complexes, and many others also, are not fundamentally evil, though we in our stilted ignorance may judge them so. On the contrary, they have to be properly integrated into consciousness if we are to be fully mature people. They are as much part of ourselves as is our body, and we cannot obliterate them no matter how much we may reject them. It is the process of suffering that brings them to our awareness in a way that we cannot ignore, and only when we have assimilated them fully into the personality can we begin to find wholeness.

What is brought into consciousness systematically and progressively on the psychoanalyst's couch, is manifested more slowly but even more thoroughly in life itself. Our painful rebuffs, our repeated failures, our constant mortification, and the errors of judgment that all too often cloud our personal relationships are the dismal cause of suffering in life. What we have striven for most intensely is that which seems to elude our final grasp. Our friendships founder in betrayals, often precipitated by minor disagreements. We eventually learn bitterly that 'there is no health in us.' Our suffering, based on our own ineptitude and the deceitful ways of the world, leads us to taking a poor view of life itself. Whatever we choose in these circumstances seems to be wrong. 'There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death' (Proverbs 16: 25), and Jeremiah laments that 'the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart' (17: 9-10). This is the true awareness of the suffering man, and it is his own higher nature that is the judge. Those of poor spiritual understanding can scarcely know this feeling of dereliction, for they have not gained sufficient insight to see themselves properly in the light of eternity. It is those in whom the inner light of Christ burns most strongly who suffer most, but this suffering is more like a blessing than a curse, because it is our first positive intimation of the glory that is to be revealed in us.

Each painful encounter reveals the depths of the unconscious in greater clarity, and we begin, ever so slowly, to know what we are composed of and what we are destined to become. It all depends on one's awareness of reality and the view one has about life. The spiritual man sees every new development, no matter how painful it is, as a challenge to further exploration both into himself and into the unknown world. He takes on all suffering as a new adventure, a movement away from personal isolation to a greater participation in the world. But it is no longer the superficial world of conventional acquaintances; it is a life in depth, of knowing the deep things of God through the working of the Holy Spirit. Every darkness in the universe is mirrored in a darkness in our own psyche—indeed man has been created in the image of the whole universe, and there is that of God in him that promises his eventual deification, as already manifested in the Incarnation of Christ. Each suffering

exposes our shadow nature, one of self-interest, aggressiveness, and, above all, terrible fear of the unknown that is hidden behind a mask of arrogant intellectual omniscience in our rational conscious life. What is brought out into consciousness, whether by psychotherapy or in the process of life, no longer has the psychic power it possessed when hidden in the unconscious. It can be faced, for it is not a terrible monster but only a terrified child. It is a remnant of the little self we had long ago, even as a child. It needs caring for and loving, not rejecting. If only suffering could be seen as the natural path of the soul to its own completion, the painful episodes of the world would be seen so much more as worships rather than merely as wounds, as Juliana of Norwich understood well. Jesus, in her vision, informed her that 'it behoved that there should be sin, but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.'

The glorious truth is that when we have confronted all the parts of our nature-body with its sensual impulses and mind with its emotional unrest and unconscious complexes-and really started to integrate them purposefully and lovingly with our total personality, the pearl of great price in the centre of our being becomes visible. This is the true self or soul, and in its holiest part the Spirit, or the light of God, lies immanent. Thus the way of suffering, of total commitment of oneself to the world, of the acknowledgement of total expendability in the world's service, is the way towards the knowledge of God. And remember, we know God as the chosen parents in the Bible knew each other before a blessed offspring was conceived. This knowledge is not an intellectual appraisal and understanding but a total commitment of the whole personality in love and dedication to the highest that we can conceive by the light of the intuition. It is the supreme act of faith, our greatest response to life itself.

There is nothing like suffering to reveal the source of joy that lies beyond all pain, all changes, all fortune. No one can dream of true healing until he has learnt the lesson of suffering well, and has prevailed against it as Jacob prevailed against the angel (Genesis 32: 24-30) in whom he saw God's power face to face.

### Unmitigated Suffering

How can one deal with suffering that appears to be unmerited and that continues despite all attempts at healing and against all prayer? This is the deepest and most terrible question that man must face. A certain part of the answer lies in the attitude of the sufferer. The unenlightened person merely rails against the source of his pain, even cursing God as Job's wife advised. He sees no purpose in life, and magnifies his sufferings until they overwhelm him and all those around him. Eventually he is completely isolated, and unless a new consciousness breaks into his personality, his life will have been a sad failure. There are very many people in the world who see their misfortunes as part of a vile conspiracy of cosmic proportion working against them. That there may be serious defects in their own personalities which have thwarted their endeavours is a consideration they cannot entertain. As a man sows so shall he reap is part of the cosmic law. In the Eastern religions it is called karma, but the important thing here is not the ensuing suffering so much as the opportunity this gives one to attain to a greater understanding of the Divine law. Thus there is suffering that is absolutely necessary for our deliverance from selfishness, or sin, in order that we may

love the community in which we serve. Any superficial 'healing' of such suffering cannot be expected to have permanent results until there is a change in the attitude of the sufferer. Until then he will go to doctors, psychotherapists, and psychic healers in turn but get no permanent relief. This is why these avenues of healing can never be considered the full answer to health, though one must add that if only psychotherapists could reach the spiritual, or superconscious, level of the psyche as part of their remedial work they might hold the key to healing. But then they would usurp the function of the priest! Indeed, the healer of the new advent will have to be a medically knowledgeable, psychologically trained spiritual director!

But there is also suffering of such magnitude that compassion flows out in protest against it. In many instances the person is spiritually aspiring, no doubt with the failings we all share as human beings, but nevertheless of good desert. The passion of Christ is the highest example of this type of suffering, though it should be remembered that His agony was of short duration compared with the years of unspeakable torture endured by political prisoners and the victims of the concentration camps that have so disgraced our present century. Others suffer the agony of bodily dysfunction with unremitting pain or else the deprivation of a vital function like vision or hearing. While pain may be relieved by drugs or surgical procedures, these sometimes leave in their wake a confusion of consciousness so that the person is not fully himself. It is hard indeed to comfort the victim of such terrible suffering. Job's comforters were themselves confounded in the presence of Job's obvious innocence.

In the face of unrelieved suffering there are two negative reactions.

The first is to justify oneself against God (or the cosmic process for those who are atheists), and the second is to castigate on self for the terrible sins one has committed or one's lack of faith which has prevented healing. The first way is that of the spiritually undeveloped person, and one can only hope that the compassion he finds in those who care for him, and the example he sees in other more terribly afflicted sufferers around him may cause him to reflect more deeply on the existential situation that confronts him. He may see God in his neighbour, and then the agony of his suffering will have been worthwhile. The result will be a dedication of himself to a higher ideal of life. The second way is that of the earnest seeker who has still not been liberated from a destructive, penal theology. He sees suffering as part of his unworthiness, and cannot imagine forgiveness. He may also be resentful that those whose lives have been less edifying than his own seem to get relief while his own distress continues unabated.

If God is known by His outpouring of love to His creatures, so that we can say with St. John, 'He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love' (I John 4: 8), it is clear He does not visit unmitigated suffering on any of His creatures. The Incarnation tells us of His deep concern with the agony of the world, and of His constant action in alleviating it by taking on the sufferings and transmuting them to blessings by love. The total disorder of the world, animal as well as human, speaks of suffering beyond mortal conception but it is the suffering that leads to growth and a new creation. Those august souls that are bearing a quota of agony beyond any personal desert will be seen to have moved beyond personal responsibility to

universal love. Such suffering reminds us of the sacrifice of Christ who came into the world to save sinners. St. Paul says of himself, ' ... 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' (Colossians 1: 24).

We are not alone in the world. As part of a complacent and brutal society we have contributed, albeit unconsciously, to the degradation and squalor of the criminal, the hatred of the insecure racist, and the violence of the warmonger and the agitator. There is no one in this world who is entirely innocent. It is therefore not only fitting but also a privilege to take on some of the sufferings of the world and, by God's grace, to transmute them into blessings for many by our example of love and dedication.

Do not let anyone search for vicarious suffering either to tempt God or to display his own fortitude and indifference to pain. The answer to suffering is action taken to relieve it. Indifference to the suffering of another, whether animal or man, is a great evil, for we are bound to help those in malalignment with the cosmic flow to regain their equilibrium. To ignore suffering in another is to place oneself in psychic mal alignment also; to relieve suffering may afford the victim his first glimpse of God's love as reflected in his fellow man. And he who has alleviated the pain sees something of God also. As suffering is relieved so does the sufferer rise higher and ever higher in the understanding of God's love. Thus his selfishness becomes less intense. When perfect health is attained by all God's creatures, we will all have returned to the Divine source, and there will be no more suffering. Remember the glorious vision in the Revelation of St. John the Divine, 'And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new' (21: 1-5).

But until that day when man will awake a new being, cleansed from his selfish nature and in union with all life and with God, who is in life and who transcends life and time in eternity, there will be suffering. Christ will indeed be in agony until the end of the world, as Pascal knew. But the agony of Christ is the experience of darkness, its assimilation into the very marrow of existence, its transfiguration, and its ultimate glorification. When man ceases to think in terms of one life only, but works in eternity, punctuated by a rebirth sequence in the world of becoming-a world of time-space limitation-his sufferings, however intractable they may appear at any moment, will be seen to be the presage of a wider scale of awareness and a nobler life in the future.

### The Meaning of Suffering

It therefore follows that suffering teaches us of our fundamental malalignment with the will of God. Even those who are apparently happy in a pleasant environment of superficial

acquaintanceships are deluding themselves. They are like Jonah, sleeping in a ship that is in imminent danger of sinking. The sleeper must awake and arise from the dead if Christ is to give him light (Ephesians 5; 14). This awakening brings its full share of suffering with it, as the person realises the extent of his lack. It is in patient endurance moved by the constant search for true healing that man comes back to God, who is his eternal home, but from whose hospitable abode he must travel far if he is to establish his Divine sonship as seen in Christ. Thus the parable of the prodigal son is our paradigm of man's eternal quest for that healing which is God. It is known as a father from the beginning but approached as a son only at the end of life's strange journey.

## VI. HEALING AND THE ABUNDANT LIFE

One of the more painful lessons that we all have to learn is that healing is a gradual process. If we look only for bodily healing we soon realise how elusive it is. Certainly there may be a cure for the more acute complaints we all undergo, due as much to the short duration of these as to any outside help. It is the natural power of healing inherent in the body that does the work, while the medical practitioner acts mostly to put the body in the best situation for its own healing powers to function properly. But as we grow older the more chronic complaints begin to appear, and these are, at least in our present state of scientific endeavour, seldom curable. Nevertheless, many such conditions can be ameliorated and the patient learns eventually to live within his body's limitations. Often he may visit a psychic healer, and sometimes he may feel considerably better for the healer's ministrations, but in the great majority of instances there is a relapse into ill-health again, and various other healers are consulted. The ultimate outlook for this type of person is not very favourable, although the enthusiasm that is engendered in trying! various new unorthodox therapies, whether dietary, herbal, or frankly psychic, may help to exclude more destructive thoughts from his mind. This criticism does not imply a general denigration of unorthodox treatment; it does on occasion work, though mostly in conditions that have a well-known natural tendency to fluctuate. The criticism is based rather on the type of thinking that equates healing with anyone particular therapy to the exclusion of a wider view of human personality. The healing agencies at our disposal, ranging from the medical practitioner to the psychic healer, embrace only the fringe of true healing. At most they can put in order some localised disease, but on their own they will never lead to health, which is essentially a spiritual state of being. The abundant life that Jesus spoke of is the measure of true health, and it is our attitude to life itself that determines the quality of healing we may experience.

As has already been noted, the two most potent qualities in the healing process are faith and forgiveness-faith in the ever-present love of God and forgiveness both of ourselves and of others for what we are at the present moment of time. But these qualities are more than merely prerequisites for healing, they are the basis of abundant living. Abundant living does not mean living at a hectic tempo in order to compete with and enjoy all the pleasures and attractions of the contemporary scene. It means living in full command of body and mind, so that the enormous potentiality latent in all of us-except those who are severely subnormal



mentally-can be fully realised. This is called 'self-actualisation' in contemporary transpersonal psychology. It is an inelegant word, but it means not only a realisation of one's true being, or soul, but also a development of the personality to its highest potentiality. The potentialities latent in us can be divided roughly into two categories: those that are peculiar to us as individuals, and those that are our shared birthright and our promise of ultimate deification in union with God. It is in realising these potentialities that we may, through a knowledge of Christ, come to an attainment of the perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, as St. Paul writes in Ephesians 4: 13.

The qualities with which we are endowed as individuals include such attributes as physical prowess, high intelligence, business acumen, organising ability, social graciousness, artistic talents, and psychic gifts. In our scale of values some may seem more exalted than others, but this judgment is fallacious. In any group endeavour there should be as wide a diversity of individual talents as possible. There is as much place for the more worldly attributes of wealth and organising ability as there is for the talented artist and musician or the psychic healer. What is important is the way in which these talents are used. If employed on a purely selfish, acquisitive basis they become the foundation-stone of an edifice of glamour, greed, and self-destruction. If used for the good of others, the person realising that he himself is merely a humble steward of the gift, these qualities are of the highest value in ennobling the lives of all the members of the community. Thus we should cultivate our talents assiduously and with gratitude, and cease to envy those with other, apparently more spectacular gifts. Little do we know of the lack and inner deficiencies of those whom we may be tempted to envy on a superficial level of awareness!

But the attributes which matter most are those that we all share, at least in potentiality. These are universal compassion, spiritual vision, endurance and long-suffering, faith, hope, and love. The reason why we share them is because they are of God, not man. Whereas the individual gifts are inborn, given to us by God in terms of inheritance for our special work in life, the truly spiritual gifts mentioned above are far beyond our grasp, but are given to us as we aspire towards that unknown God who fills our souls, but whom we do not know until we fulfil our lives in courage and in truth. It therefore follows that our way of life leads us to a knowledge of God in Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14: 6). When we live in the light of our true identity we live in abundance, and this is the truth that sets us free. What is the way of life that leads to healing? It is the same abundant life that Jesus came to proclaim. It is a complete transcending of self-concern to a concern for all men in a dedication of the self. Here there is a great paradox. It is embodied in a quotation already noted, 'Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it' (Mark 8: 35). This losing of life does not necessarily mean physical death; it means a surrendering of the old circumscribed self in pure faith for love of another person-or many people, or the world, as in the Passion of Jesus. In this sacrifice one is shorn of all outer conceits, of all the attributes that one has believed to be vital and by which one has identified oneself, and one is suddenly aware of a new realm of existence. This is one in which the true self, or soul, is free and in communion with all other souls and with Christ. He is the eternal Word of God, and by Him we apprehend God the Father. 'By love may He be gotten and holden, but by thought never' writes the author of *The*

Cloud of Unknowing. The love that leads us to God is Christ. As we give of ourself in faith so the Divine love fills us and unites us with all that is.

The soul is not circumscribed, likewise our identity is not exclusive, but it flows into all we touch and care about, and it fills all we do with our own essence, our own flavour. This is the mystical vision of unity in diversity, of union of man and God, where neither loses identity but where there is complete reconciliation in love which binds and transforms man. It is in this way that we are to be partakers of the divine nature, as gloriously promised in 11 Peter I: 4.

When a man can attain to this knowledge of the Self through Divine grace, his healing is well under way. This vision brings about the repentance that the Gospels so frequently speak about. The Greek word is *metanoia*, a change in mind, which is more accurately a change of heart. If one had to give an anatomical situation for the soul, an impossible proposition on a scientific level but conceivable mystically, it would correspond, at least in its outflowing tendency, to the heart-in fact, of course, it should permeate the whole personality. This change in one's mode of thinking about life is a gift of God. The repentance we feel for having committed a wrong against another person is also a change in mind, and it is inspired, as already noted, by the Holy Spirit, which is God immanent in each of us. But repentance, or *metanoia*, on a wider scale leads to a complete reorientation of our views about life and the actions accruing from them. We are indeed born again, as Jesus told Nicodemus (John 3: 3-8), and all things are made new. Now there are many schools that teach positive thinking along these lines, but although the metaphysic is often sound enough, it seldom produces a real change in the personality. This is because *metanoia* is an active process in which the person is changed through participation in life and the gift of mystical vision. As he has given of himself in true faith and selfless service, so he receives a glimpse of Divine reality. The fact of eternal life has to be experienced in this way; it cannot be taught, still less can it be learnt through constant repetition. This is why life on earth with all its limitations and suffering is so supremely necessary for the soul's growth and the personality's integration. And once the vision is afforded the tenor of life changes: it becomes increasingly harmonious inwardly and more abundant in the world.

#### The Way of Life

Jesus said, 'Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it' (Matthew 7: 13-14).

The Buddha spoke of the Middle Way and described the Noble Eight-Fold Path that leads to Nirvana, in which selfishness is quenched in the ocean of indescribable Reality. This is the life of abundance, and one that cannot be contemplated too raptly. The main feature of the narrow middle way is its austere normality. It does not embrace violent extremes of asceticism or flamboyant fanaticism. It is completely unglamorous and unspectacular. It demands absolute attention to the matter at hand, for in such immediate unreserved attention one is in communion with God. A state of recollectedness to God is one of prayer, and in perfect working in the moment one is working in remembrance of God. The Eight-Fold

Path described by the Buddha starts with Right Belief, a realisation that suffering is due to the selfish desires of the isolated personality. Then follows Right Resolve to do the work; Right Speech; Right Action based on charity; Right Means of Livelihood; Right Effort to control oneself; Right Attention (or Recollectedness). The end is Right Contemplation in which one attains unitive knowledge of God (or of the Ground, as non-theistic Buddhists would prefer to call it). The path is one that moves away from personal desire. But in fact none of this is possible without Divine grace. Right contemplation is given, never simply achieved, and the seven preceding steps are guided by the light from on high the light of the Soul (the Spirit) which is the Light of the World (Christ). A great deal of confusion prevails about the value or danger of desire. Let it be clearly understood that if desire were completely eradicated from our personalities, there would be that stasis which is true death. Desire is the stimulus that awakens the will, the action of the soul. Jesus said, 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God' (Luke 22: 15-16).

The desire that binds us to suffering and mortality is a desire for personal safety, even a desire to know God personally. For no matter how exalted such personal desire is, its motive is selfish and separative. The desire that leads to liberation, that brings the experience of salvation, is the desire to do God's will through love for Him and all men. Then one loses one's life only to know of a realm of being which is eternal. No wonder the path that leads to life is so narrow, and so few find it. It is as remote from the sanctimonious puritan as it is from the sensuous hedonist, for both have a consciousness rooted in self-interest. It is the poor in spirit, the humble, the simple, that have the kingdom of heaven-and not as a future promise but as an ever-present reality.

### Acceptance

Acceptance is the loving confrontation of all we are and have to God's greater glory. It uses every present asset and liability as a stepping-stone towards perfection. We accept our talents with gratitude as we grow in God's service, but how hard it is to accept our disabilities. At most we resign ourselves to them in as good a grace as we are able, and tell ourselves that we must do our best under these circumstances. But acceptance is not a mere bearing, it is love. It is a love of everything about ourselves, seeing each part as a potential manifestation of God's glory. This is the final answer to an apparent denial of healing. How often are apparently saintly people denied bodily healing despite their patronage of all the known agencies, from the doctor to the priest and the gifted healer. Some feel it is their unworthiness that has stood in the way of health, others feel bewildered that God does not heal them so that they could serve Him more perfectly with a sound body, and many more are filled with resentment and bitterness. If only we could see our present discontent, our innate weakness as the very way of ascent to a knowledge of God, our whole attitude to illness would change. Instead of looking merely for as speedy a cure as possible, we would be concerning ourselves with our part in helping others and in lifting up the consciousness of the dark world around us. In such a state of awareness there would be a tendency for healing to come much more rapidly than usual, and where it failed to show itself in the expected

way, there would be such an exalted vision of real service that the ailment would cease to claim our entire attention and would fall into the background of the world's tragedies.

Acceptance is a blessing of God for what one is, and what the world is, in every moment of time. It does not ignore or explain away the darkness and tragedy that surround the world. It accepts them as challenges and blessings, knowing that, in a mysterious way, the dark is the gateway to the light, and suffering is the prelude to brotherhood and communion. Acceptance strengthens spiritual vision, and brings the deep things of God into mortal sight. It makes all things new, seeing the halo or radiance that surrounds the dense material universe, and which promises the spiritualisation of matter. Then every new situation, no matter how forbidding it appears, is seen as a manifestation of the Divine glory, and life becomes a supreme adventure. Only when our wounds are accepted and loved can there be any assurance of healing. But at this stage personal healing becomes an irrelevant concern, for what now matters is the healing of mankind.

From this a pattern of healing becomes clearer: firstly relaxation of the body despite the difficulties of the moment and then a giving of oneself as a living sacrifice to God in whom all things are perfect. In practical terms this means the willed relaxation of body and mind in the radiance of God's love, the process of contemplation. It is in the relaxation of the body that the Holy Spirit can infuse it and initiate the healing process. As the mind yields of its clamant stream of ideas that are miscalled thoughts, it reaches that stillness in which the will of God is known. This is how repentance occurs, and how it leads to a new perspective of thought, a real positive thinking, one that comes from the depths of the soul and not merely from some outside source in the world. In its fullest application this contemplation in silence reaches the height of prayer, as one gives of oneself unreservedly to the Most High in love and devotion. When this mystical prayer is known, one's afflictions cease to impinge on one's consciousness, and healing commences. In such prayer one does not even need to ask for healing-and our petitions are usually admissions of ignorance of the Divine purpose-for one is in communion with the source of Healing, which is God in Christ.

## VII. THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF HEALING

While healing is a profoundly spiritual process, many of its agencies function on physical, mental, or predominantly psychical levels. Spirituality, however, is not something apart from the world; it is rather to be seen as the dimension of reality that pervades matter, imbuing it with meaning and with a potentiality for creative transformation. Thus it is wrong to separate what is rather ambiguously called spiritual healing from medical practice, psychotherapy, or unorthodox treatments of various types. What determines whether a healing agency is spiritual in intent is the personality and attitude of the doctor, therapist, or healer, as the case may be. If the attitude is one of deep concern for the patient as a person and of reverence for the skill or gift, the healing is spiritually based. Thus many doctors who have a warm relationship with their patients and care deeply about them are manifesting a spiritual

healing gift in addition to their important technical skill, which is the basis of medical treatment. Many such doctors, and their noble predecessors in years gone by, would be bewildered to be told that much of their professional success was due to their innate spirituality, their great love for their patients which radiated from their personalities. Some would admit to an agnosticism about the existence of God, and yet they are all humble witnesses to the Divine light in their constant ministrations.

It is not unknown for surgeons to pray before operating-admittedly this must be very rare today but it was less uncommon a century ago. Such a recollectedness of God is a very present attribute of spirituality. But let it be said at once that even the most devout prayer will not turn an indifferent surgeon into a fine one. Prayer and holy living are no substitutes for professional competence; what they do is to imbue the competent doctor with a greater awareness of the Divine Presence which commands his faculties and guides him through difficulties to ultimate victory. Likewise a psychotherapist or psychic healer who cares deeply for his patient's welfare and is prepared to give of his utmost for the patient, is spiritually guided. This caring shows itself not only in the professional contact but also in the progressive education of the afflicted person to a broader understanding of his problem and its solution. The solution is not entirely circumscribed by any healing agency, but is deeply related to a change of heart towards the illness and the patient's situation in the world. Let us also remember that healing is part of the ministry of each one of us. The warm hospital visitor can accelerate the recovery of a patient by his very presence; others alas have the contrary effect by their egoistical conversation, gloomy outlook, and malice towards particular people. The helpful shop-assistant, the kindly garage attendant, the friendly cleaner, and many other humble, unrecognised folk whom we encounter in a day's work, are real agents of spiritual healing. We feel better for having met them, and do not know why. It is because they have allowed the radiance of their presence to shine on us, and have lifted us from a gloomy selfish view of the world to a realm of pure felicity. If we could only practise awareness of others and start blessing them for being themselves, both they and we would know something of spiritual healing by the power of God.

It is in the realm of psychical healing that spirituality is especially important, because the healing gift is a mysterious and powerful one, and can be easily abused. That a gifted psychic healer, producing many remarkable results, need not be endowed with spirituality (which is the quality that leads a person to a greater understanding of the love and presence of God) is seen dramatically in the life of the monk Rasputin, whose evil escapades and disastrous effect on the Russian monarchy are too well known to need description. And this type may be found among any group of gifted healers, though fortunately the great majority are clean living, often extremely generous, and sometimes truly spiritual.

### Charismatic Healing

Where the psychic gift, which appears to be an inborn quality, approaches true spirituality in dedication, we are entitled to speak of charismatic healing. This is the gift of the Spirit described by St. Paul in I Corinthians 12. It is not inappropriate to quote the entire passage, 'And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But

the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will' (verses 6-11). The charismatic gift is the result of the spiritual life; it marks the beginning of a new phase in the discipleship of the aspirant, just as the downpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples at Pentecost heralded the awakening of the Holy Spirit (Christ in you, the hope of glory) in each of them. The gifts of the Spirit, to be effective and not merely agencies of glamour and self-exaltation, must be transfigured by love. A charisma is not merely a gift of the Spirit, it is a gift consumed in selfless love of God made manifest in the world by devotion to one's fellow-man.

A charisma leads to the dedication of the whole being of the aspirant to God's will. While the gift is psychic, the dedication and vision attached to it are spiritual. Although St. Paul rightly stresses that each person has a special gift of the Spirit, the Spirit also endows the person with the wisdom, knowledge, and faith to integrate the gift into the wider community in which he works—the developing body of Christ. St. Paul exalts love over even the best spiritual gifts in the famous passage I Corinthians 13, 'And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love' (verse 13).

Charismatic healing is alone truly spiritual healing. It may develop in a previously gifted psychic healer, or it may suddenly appear in a person well on the way towards the unitive life in God. In the Roman Catholic tradition evidence of such spiritual manifestations, sometimes called 'miracles', is sought when the canonisation of an exceptionally saintly person is considered. Personally I do not like the concept of miracle, which is usually defined as a special manifestation of God's power in the performance of a supernatural event. It seems wiser, in the present scientific framework of thought, to see all events, no matter how unusual they may appear to us, as essentially natural. If God cannot be seen in the marvellous facts of present living, He is unlikely to make Himself known to us by extraordinary revelations that defy the natural law. The natural law is surely God's manifestation and working in the world of cause and effect. It is our own spiritual blindness that limits our understanding of this law. When we have attained spiritual vision, the facts of spiritual healing, at present so miraculous that most people refuse to accept them, will be as tractable to reason as are the laws of chemistry and physics. The saint has attained a wider control of forces of nature that are still outside the understanding of most people. But he uses them to God's greater glory, for he has no longer any need for personal aggrandisement.

Another spiritual gift that may lead to healing is faith. This is an unusually intense faith in the love of God despite all suffering. It is the faith that is sufficient to remove mountains which St. Paul speaks of in I Corinthians 13: 2. This is the faith that may suddenly lead to a dramatic cure, instantaneous and complete, of a person so incurably ill that no rational agency of healing could hope to help. The extremely rare, but well authenticated, healings at Lourdes

come into this category, as do the remarkable healings of chronically bedridden people, close to death, who suddenly take up their beds and walk. The healing of Dorothy Kerin is a well-attested example of this type. Such healing transcends the realm of psychism to pure mysticism. There is no human agency involved, only the power of God in Christ. It would seem as if the afflicted one is consumed in God's love, and that the physical body is transfigured by the uncreated light of God, as was seen in the Transfiguration of Jesus. The spiritual implications of this type of healing are immense; it represents the summation of the healing process. It is not different in type from the slower, undramatic healing where faith plays such an important part, as has already been discussed. It differs only in intensity, as the circumscribed physical vision is transcended by a wider psychic vision, which is in turn swallowed up by the all-embracing cosmic vision of the mystic. This gift of faith in God, a true poverty in spirit based on humility, leads to the beatific vision of God, and union with Him as the Divine lover.

### Healing and the Sacraments

An important part of the ministry of Jesus was healing, and, as we have noted, healing is numbered among the gifts of the Spirit. Jesus promised His disciples that they would do even greater works than they had seen Him perform (John 14: 12). In the apostolic period healing played an important part in the work of the primitive Church. St. James especially commends the prayer of the elders of the Church over the sick man and the anointing with oil in the name of the Lord (5: 14). It is sad that this important ministry appeared to become defunct as the Church grew in stature and power. No doubt the level of spirituality of the priests waned as the claims of universal power dominated, and the gifted psychic healers were excluded from the Church since they might compete with the priests for authority among the congregation. Indeed, the terrible persecution visited upon those possessing psychic gifts by the powerful priesthood of the middle ages (and even later) is one of the great blots on the reputation of the Christian Church. Fortunately the breach is at last being healed, but a great deal of work still remains to be done. Amongst the foremost healing groups of recent times have been the Christian Scientists with their strongly-held mental affirmations, the Pentecostals, who cultivate a very emotional type of spiritual outflow, and the Spiritualists, who have shed light on the after-life and believe in the active collaboration of discarnate entities, or 'guides', in the healing work undertaken by their mediums. While none of these movements can compete in its fulness with the Catholic faith, each has shed much light on paranormal and mental aspects of healing, and to this extent deserves credit. If the Church had been more faithful to the healing ministry and acknowledged the Communion of Saints as a very real fact, these recent religious developments might have been unnecessary, but now they are an established part of the spiritual consciousness of our time, and must be given due recognition. Indeed, in the current climate of atheistic materialism that dominates the seats of learning and influences the young in their thinking, these agencies of healing

should be treated as allies of orthodox Christianity. If properly understood they could shed much light on the more obscure teachings of Jesus and on His ministry.

It could be argued that the very fact of attendance at a church service fortified by the sacrament of Holy Communion ought to effect a spiritual healing. A great deal depends on the attitude of the person, the congregation, and the officiating priest. If the congregation could be prepared for the celebration of the Eucharist, the sacrament would gain tremendously in spiritual power. The uniting love of a congregation and the dedication of the priest could transform the sacrament to an act of spiritual healing. While one would not deny the intrinsic holiness of the sacrament irrespective of the participants, there can be little doubt that it is raised to a greater spiritual level by the love and dedication of all those who take part.

As regards special healing services in which there is a laying-on of hands by the priest, a great deal depends on the instruction of the congregation and the dedication of the priest. Some ministers have a natural gift similar to that possessed by psychic healers, and they will need little encouragement in starting healing services. Others who appear to possess no great healing gift may be more reticent, but I think they are wrong in trying to avoid the challenge. After all, it is the Holy Spirit that heals; the healer is at the most a humble servant of God, and who can say what unlikely channel He may use to manifest His Grace. The same argument applies to the sacrament of Holy Unction. In all such healing services it is most important that those taking part be instructed about the deeper issues of healing: that it should transform the whole personality and not merely effect a bodily cure. There should be no element of superstition about it, nor should results be eagerly sought; if they do not appear at once, there will then be less disappointment and disillusionment. As has already been emphasised, healing is a slow, undramatic process; indeed, instantaneous cures, though most encouraging, may interfere with the even course of the person's spiritual development unless he is properly instructed.

It has been the view that only an ordained priest should practise healing. Certainly his training and ordination should endue him with spirituality such as to make him a fit servant of Christ, but in fact God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10: 34), and all are potentially His ministers, as the most impressive witness of the Religious Society of Friends throughout three centuries bears full testimony. The vocation of a priest makes him a particularly suitable agent of healing, the more so if he has a natural gift, but all men are potential healers as they develop spiritually. A warm, friendly, open person emits a healing radiance whether he be a priest or a layman. The two pitfalls to be avoided in the ministry of healing are timidity in the face of a sceptical, intellectual congregation and exhibitionism when there is a natural gift and a considerable number of good results. Faith in God's providence and humility about one's own powers are safeguards against fear and pride. They are numbered among the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5: 22).

### Prayer and Healing

An important part of the healing ministry is intercessory prayer. Some people call it absent healing. The basis of intercessory prayer is communion with the afflicted person through the



power of the Holy Spirit. It is not to be looked on as a direct request to God that another's suffering may be removed-for this implies that God visits suffering on those who displease Him, a most primitive and unworthy view of the Divine nature and one utterly opposed to the Divine love manifested in the ministry of Christ. It is rather to be seen as a realisation of the spiritual unity that exists among all men, for we are all members one of another. When we attain spiritual consciousness we are not only in communion with God but also with all created things. This is the nature of mystical union: all things are everywhere and all is all and each is all, and the glory is infinite, as Plotinus wrote of the spirits in heaven. When we understand healing to be the process by which the whole personality is integrated into the cosmic flow, the potential body of Christ, we can see what an exalted part prayer plays in it. It is not concerned in persuading the sufferer to change his beliefs according to a scheme that others accept; on the contrary, it leaves him free. What prayer does is to assure the afflicted, on the deepest level of being, that he is cared for and that he is a part of the communion of life that is the full Communion of Saints. This is the heart of spiritual healing, and it finds its apogee in intercessory prayer. And let us remember that whenever we remember a person in our thoughts with loving concern we are praying for him. Prayer really starts to live when it escapes from the imprisoning bonds of ritual, stereotyped utterance and becomes part of our inner consciousness during the daily task. When St. Paul instructed his flock to pray without ceasing this is surely the sort of prayer he had in mind: a constant recollectedness of God's presence seen especially in our work and in our relationship with each other.

## Conclusion

There should be no conflict between the various categories of healing: God shows His power in all of them. What is needed in all those ministering to the sick is humility. The medical attendant must necessarily be in command because orthodox medical treatment is still the first and most effective defence against the inroads of disease, and is likely to remain so for the broad mass of humanity for a long time to come. But it can be augmented by the healing ministry of the Church and the prayers of the patient's family and friends. In this respect it often happens that prayers from a disinterested stranger are more effective than those of close relatives who may be too distraught emotionally to be able to maintain a clear perspective. Nor need the help of a gifted healer be spurned. One has noted over and over again how those prayed for have had an easier convalescence after a major operation than might have been expected, and their quota of pain has often been quite small.

In this respect it is futile to make scientific claims about the value of prayer. A trial in which some patients are prayed over and others not would be very difficult to assess, and in any case we know nothing about the range of the power of prayer. The object of spiritual healing is to help the natural recuperative processes of the body, not to compete with or supplant other therapeutic measures. The last thing that is wanted is competition between healers of various types; it is their active collaboration that is to be fostered. This means a greater willingness to learn on the part of all those engaged in tending the sick. In this way unorthodox therapists would show less tendency to exaggerate the magnitude of their

results, while medical practitioners would learn more of the remarkable powers of the cosmic process that derives from God.

#### VIII. THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

The Apostle's Creed affirms the resurrection of the body. No thoughts on healing would be complete without allusion to this theme. No doubt it originally implied that at 'the last day' we should all rise from the grave and prepare for a final judgment. This approach to survival of death is no longer credible for modern scientific man; indeed, the Greeks distinguished between body and soul, and in the Platonic tradition it was the immortality of the soul that was stressed. St. Paul states in I Corinthians 15 that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption (verse 50). He also says of the resurrection of the dead, 'it is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living Soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that which was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven' (verses 42-47).

The body that contains the soul after physical death is clearly not a body of flesh and bones. Pauline thought concurs with Hindu teaching that there is a 'subtle' body, or probably a number of such bodies, that enshrouds the liberated soul after death of the physical body. Modern Theosophical teaching has named and typified these bodies, some allegedly more material than others. While this scheme has much to recommend it, and has been confirmed by gifted clairvoyants, there is a danger that in the enthusiasm for after-death existence especially prevalent among Spiritualists, the enduring sanctity of the physical body may be neglected. It was the vital Jewish insight, inherited by Christianity, that body and soul form a complete unit, so that man may be considered an embodied soul. The physical body is more than a mere vehicle for the soul during its period of incarnation; it is the temple of the Holy Spirit, a temple not built with hands. To dismiss the physical body as merely an expendable covering of the soul is to deny the holiness of matter. It can never be emphasised too often that spirituality pervades the most material functions of life as well as the most sacred; the sacred and the secular flow into one stream and are together glorified in and by God.

While the physical body as we know it cannot be immortal, inasmuch as it disintegrates after death, we should see beyond its present form to its spiritual essence. The Transfiguration of Christ is our clue to the glorification of the matter of which the body is composed.

In this event the disciples had reached a state of understanding, or illumination, in which they could see the radiance that permeated the body of Jesus, and it is probable that the flesh of His body was undergoing a spiritualisation as His ministry neared its end. The remarkable events after the Crucifixion, in which the body disappeared from the tomb, speak of the complete transmutation of the flesh to a spiritual form which could be moulded by Jesus and materialised as He wished. There is much in this episode that rings true so that it can be accepted without recourse to dogmatic biblical fundamentalism. But even if to some

it is merely a marvellous myth, we should remember that myth is a symbolic way of illustrating mystical truth, for mystical insight is in itself essentially ineffable.

While we in our present state of consciousness can scarcely hope for a similar transmutation of our bodies after death, it may well be that a subtler transmutation is occurring in the body throughout life, at least in those who are aspiring to spirituality. Perhaps some aspect of the physical body is incorporated into the growing soul, for while we would not deny its immortality, it is surely growing in stature throughout existence, and establishing its unity with other souls as its growth proceeds. It seems that the growth of the soul depends on the way it glorifies matter. It uses matter for its incarnation (or incarnations) but the matter is to be progressively spiritualised by the soul, until a new existence is experienced in which earth is no longer a place of limitation but rather a realm of spiritual freedom. These thoughts are clearly very visionary and incomplete, but they are a vital aspect of the Christian manifestation in which the Word not only was made flesh but is also illuminating flesh with a knowledge of God in all generations. This may be the ultimate realisation of the 'mystery' St. Paul described in I Corinthians 15: 51-55, when man will be changed in the twinkling of an eye, the dead being raised incorruptible and those alive being changed. When the corruptible shall have put on incorruption and the mortal immortality, then shall come to pass the prophecy: death is swallowed up in victory. While on one level of interpretation this may allude to an imminent eschatological prediction of the end of the world, on a much broader universal level it surely looks to the consummation of all things in Christ, who is the Word in all generations, and who has to incarnate in the souls of all men before their glorification can take place. Elsewhere St. Paul's vision proclaims that the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption (the shackles of mortality) to enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Romans 8: 21).

Healing is thus not only personal and communal, but is also concerned with all the creatures of our world and the matter of the earth, whose elements make up our own bodies. There can be no individual healing while the earth is abused, animals exploited and ill-treated, and the atmosphere polluted. While we must tread with balance in all things and avoid negative fanaticisms that would lead us to fail to relate to the world, it behoves all spiritual people to combat the pollution of the earth and to respect all sentient beings. Although we exist in our temporary earthly state by preying on the mineral, vegetable, and animal creation, and can never entirely escape from this predatory necessity while we are in the flesh, let us treat all things with respect and concern, showing that reverence for life that is the real recognition of God immanent in all His creation.

The whole process of incarnation, surely repeated in this world (or elsewhere) on successive occasions, has to take its course before man can attain to the fulness of Christ's being, and in so doing raise up matter to full spirituality as did Jesus with His own physical body. In a very real way this is the process of healing. It is something infinitely greater than the mere alleviation of disease or even its cure; it is the transmutation of the physical body to spiritual radiance, a radiance that emanated from Jesus during the Transfiguration and has also been noted as an emanation from some of the greatest saints. The transmutation of the body is

our best preliminary insight into the nature of its progressive resurrection, which will be complete only when the whole world is consummated in glory.