

Spiritual Healing.

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Some aspects of healing in relation to the Christian religion, with especial references to the new psychology and what has become known as spiritual healing, were traversed by Canon Percival James, in a sermon in St. Mary's Cathedral, Auckland. The service had been specially arranged in connection with the Medical Conference, the President, Mr. Carrick Robertson, and many delegates attending. There was a very large congregation.

It was an historical fact, said Canon James, that the force which had most powerfully developed and guided the movement of medical and surgical science had been the Christian religion. Christianity had given to the doctor's calling its dignity and sacredness, and had been the motive of that unselfish service which was the noble tradition of the profession. Christianity built the hospitals. And the nursing profession—perhaps the noblest that women could enter—had its origin in the self-dedication of holy women to the service of the Lord Christ.

The fulfilment of God's promise of "gifts of healing in one Spirit" was to be found to-day in the patient labour and the beneficent skill of those who brought the resources of science to the relief of human suffering. The triumph of Christianity over disease began with the dawn of the age of science, when men gained a new conception of faith in God that He meant them to "work out their own salvation"; not to fall down in dread of advancing disease, beseeching God to have mercy, but to co-operate intelligently with God's ways of ordering the world.

A PERIOD OF SUPERSTITION.

"In the slow and painful advance of medical science toward freedom of inquiry and practice, the sternest struggle has ever been against superstition, which is equally the enemy of true religion," continued Canon James. "History shows that the periods of great wars have always been favourable to the growth of superstition. Beginning early in the war with the notorious fiction of the 'Angels of Mons,' there has been evident in the last decade a widespread and amazing credulity and appetite for superstition.

"This temper has tended to mar the usefulness of a really great movement within the Church—

popularly known as 'spiritual healing.' Rash and irresponsible fanatics have tried to mix up the movement with magic; and this is the more deplorable since the movement itself is most salutary—recalling the attention of Christians to the value of religion as a healing power, and rescuing this function from the neglect of which the Church has been guilty."

LAMBETH COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

The Lambeth Committee of 1920 requested the Archbishop of Canterbury to appoint a committee to give guidance to the Church as to "spiritual means of healing," said the preacher, and a strong committee of clergymen, representative of all shades of opinion, and of leading English medical men, had been engaged in prolonged investigation and deliberation. It had recently issued a report, which would be welcomed by all thoughtful who had the interests of the Church at heart.

Not the least valuable was the negative side of the report:—"Our committee has so far found no evidence of any case of healing which cannot be paralleled by similar cures wrought by psycho-therapy without religion, and by instances of spontaneous healing, which often occur even in the gravest cases in ordinary medical practice. No sick person must look to the clergyman to do what it is the physician's or the surgeon's duty to do." Such authoritative utterances ought to put an end to a language about "miracles of healing," which is in conflict alike with the truth of science and the interests of religion.

MENTAL HEALING.

Speaking of the remarkable discoveries of the new psychology, and their effect upon the healing art, the Canon declared that the doctor could now "minister to a mind diseased." Psycho-therapy, though in its practical application hardly out of the experimental stage, was quickly taking its place among the methods of healing employed by the trained physician.

In the future the physician would find a potent auxiliary ready to work in close and loyal co-operation—the minister of religion. It was largely the clergyman's work. There was no question of the clergy becoming "dabbling amateurs" in a most perilous enterprise, in which they would be

a terrible menace to their patients. The Church was alive to the need, and was determined to furnish skilled men, learned in such studies as the psychology of religion, and particularly in moral theology, and prepared by a thorough training, discipline, and apprenticeship to become competent “physicians of the soul.”

The greatest medical psychologists recognised

that the religious instinct was a fundamental characteristic of man, and acclaimed the immense health-giving and health-restoring power of religion. Men were moving slowly, but surely, toward a working agreement between the two great professions, which joined in their labour for the relief of human suffering.—*Auckland Herald*.