

The
Mystery and Ministry
of
Human Suffering



By
J. N. HEY

Late Superintendent of the Aborigines
Mission, Mapoon, N. Queensland

NOT FOR SALE.

*To all who are lonely, 'sick
and suffering, this little book
is affectionately dedicated.
Also in loving memory of
those who have passed within
the veil, whom we have loved
and lost awhile.*

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FOREWORD BY THE REV. HUGH PATON.

I hold the writer of this booklet in the very highest esteem. His Christian character and his great work among the aboriginals win our admiration and appreciation.

He deals with a distressing problem. Who can explain pain and sickness? But Mr. Hey keeps a balanced mind. He avoids the extremes that do so much harm. He states that there have been cases of sickness where the prayers of faith were offered, but the request for healing was not granted. We are all familiar with such instances. It is wise to admit the truth in this matter. The faith of many has suffered through misunderstanding. So the writer teaches us that God can heal, but that He does not always heal. We are to trust His goodness and wisdom. Whether He leads us through sickness or healing, all will be for our good and for His glory.

This little book will do nothing but good. May it arouse our expectations, and lead us to a deeper and firmer confidence in God. I commend it to sick folks for whom we all entertain the deepest sympathy. It goes forth with my goodwill and sincere good wishes.

HUGH PATON.

St. Stephen's Church,
Phillip Street, Sydney.

*Foreword to the Second Edition by
Rev. V. W. Coombes, Superintendent,
Lady Willingdon Leper Settlement,
Church of Scotland Mission, Chingleput,
South India.*

Rev. J. N. Hey has been a friend to me for nearly twenty years. His consecrated life and loyalty to his Lord, combined with his many years of work amongst a disinherited and needy people and later long devotion to the ministry to the sick, entitle him to speak on this subject with the authority of both knowledge and experience. With the contents of this little booklet I find myself in substantial agreement.

The fact of Divine healing without means on frequent occasions cannot be disputed. Whether such a result should always follow the appeal to God by or on behalf of the sufferer, is a matter which with all other supplication, must be left by the believer to the infallible omniscience and love of the Father.

Suffering has always been a potential source of lasting good. It is often God's instrument to turn us to Him. When our feet are struck from beneath us our clutching fingers find the outstretched Hand and we learn to cling. When God puts us on our back, we learn to look upward. Such experience is often the Refiner's fire purging away the dross and preparing the heart and mind

for spiritual treasure. India recognized this truth many centuries ago. The path of suffering to many was the way of spiritual insight and attainment. And if sometimes this recognition has led to erroneous conclusions in the atmosphere of mysticism, resulting in needless pain, the central truth has not been dimmed. Mahatma Gandhi could win the allegiance and following of millions by the agony of fasting when every other means had failed.

The truth for the plain man is this. Suffering we cannot escape. It is of the essence of our existence. It makes or breaks us according to our reception of it. We may resent and rebel, but suffering is no whit lessened and its mission is frustrated. We may submit to the inevitable with the resignation of a fatalist, but such a course means purposeless passivity. Or we may seek the way of sublimation, transmuting mere endurance into co-operation with God and thus reaching the purposeful achievement on the highest plane. It is this last course which has enabled some of my leper friends one day to find the threatened futility of their appalling fate transfigured into the gracious and useful ministry of Christ-likeness.

I earnestly pray that the contents of this little booklet, flowing as they do from a heart rich in sympathy and understanding, will bring light and comfort and joy to many who are numbered in the fellowship of those who suffer.

VICTOR W. COOMBES.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION.

Divine Healing and the Mystery of Human Suffering has been out of print for some time and I have been repeatedly requested to make a second edition available, but could not see my way clear to do so because I felt that it would require a fuller exposition of sin, suffering and death than given in the first edition.

My visits to the various hospitals, homes for invalids and private dwellings bring me face to face with sin, suffering, heartache, and even at times, despair. At such times I often felt the need of a simple, lucid, comforting booklet of practical religion to place in the hands of the sufferers.

Sick visitation is very exacting; nevertheless my converse with many shut-in ones and the friendships established have done me good and enriched my life.

Out of gratitude, though reluctantly, I have obeyed the inner voice and added two brief chapters to the original booklet, the outcome of my personal experience and from lessons learnt in touch with others. May my simple words make the path a little plainer for those in loneliness and pain and help them over the hard places to a fuller and richer life.

I send forth these lines with a whispered prayer that they may exercise a ministry of comfort and help in time of need or when called upon to face the sunset gate.

My thanks are due to the Rev. Hugh Paton for writing a brief foreword and especially to the Rev. V. W. Coombes for his foreword and valuable suggestions which are partly incorporated in this booklet.

I close these notes by putting on record the loving help and encouragement received from my wife in the preparation of this little book.

J.N.H.

Ashfield, 1937.

Foreword to the Third Edition, "The Mystery and Ministry of Human Suffering," by Rev. A. Asboe, Assembly Field Officer, Presbyterian Church of N.S.W.

I have great pleasure in acceding to the request of the Rev. J. N. Hey to write the foreword to the third edition of his excellent booklet, "The Mystery and Ministry of Human Suffering," because of our mutual associations with the Moravian Church, noted for its outstanding leadership in the Foreign Mission Enterprise, and also because of the many years of intimate and affectionate personal contact with his highly esteemed family and Mrs. Ward.

Space will not permit to refer to his consecrated life of sacrificial service as a pioneer missionary among our disinherited Aborigines in the Gulf of Carpentaria, nor of the incalculable blessing and inspiration Mr. Hey has been to countless sick, invalids and aged folk in his indefatigable silent ministry during the years of his retirement. Reading the contents of this booklet the man himself is revealed in all the grace of his Christian personality; wide in his sympathies, contagious in his friendship, modest and sincere.

The popularity and helpfulness of this practical booklet may be gauged by repeated requests for the publication of this new edition, revised, and additional apt quotations inserted. Previous copies have been circulated in America, Great Britain and throughout the Southern Hemisphere. Noted Churchmen, including a Roman Catholic priest, besides many sick folk, have expressed appreciation for the light and guidance on this mysterious problem of human anguish.

As one who has been through the "school of hard knocks" I find myself in general agreement, and can verify from my own suffering experience, related elsewhere in the booklet, the conclusions adduced in facing the problem from a Christian standpoint.

Characteristic of the author is his unselfish nature to seek no pecuniary gain from his laborious yet joyous achievement in the valuable contribution he has made to

the sick in the message on the printed page and his personal association with the distressed.

His best reward will be to know that those who receive a copy of the free distribution may find comfort and blessing, that it may be the handmaiden of hope to the despairing, cheer to the disconsolate, leading troubled hearts to put their implicit trust in Christ and His promises, and last, but not least, to do God's Will and glorify His Name.

This free circulation is made possible through personal friends of the author in their donations for this purpose as an expression of gratitude for his ministry. I commend most heartily to sick folks, for whom we entertain the deepest sympathy, this booklet with all good wishes.

A. ASBOE.

CHAPTER I.

SUFFERING RELIEVED.

DIVINE HEALING.

By Divine Healing we usually understand all manifestations of God's power in the restoration of health without the use of medical skill or remedies, but as the result of faith in the Divine Healer, and fervent, believing prayer.

For the Christian believer, however, any kind of healing, whether produced by skill, medicine or other human effort, is of Divine origin, because all these gifts possess limitless possibilities for the good of the human race. The miracles of healing recorded in the Gospels were next to Divine teaching, the most important and effective activity of our Lord during His life on earth.

Many physicians admit that they cannot heal, but are dependent on what they call "*Vis Mediatricis Naturæ*" (the recuperative efforts of nature), and not so much on the remedies employed, which only assist and stimulate in a greater or less degree according to the responsiveness of the respective patients.

Other medical men go a step further and ask God's blessing before undertaking any operation, or diagnosing the case they have in hand, thereby recognising God's Sovereign Power, which is continually working out His purpose, in sickness and health, through human agencies as well as without them.

All things animate and inanimate are of God. So is the skill of doctors, the various means used in healing, and the food we take to sustain life. All are God's gifts to men, and should be used with thankfulness and praise. Nevertheless, we know that hunger and thirst are signs of health and are normal conditions, but sickness and disease are abnormal. As we have already seen, nature is always at work to heal and to restore, but nature never satisfies hunger or thirst.

It is, therefore, essential and wise for the sick to desire to live and get well, and to put their trust in God. He is able to heal through natural laws, through means and without means. I always find that confidence in God, and in a lesser degree confidence in men or means, creates vigorous resistance against disease, because Divine laws and forces, of which we know very little, are thereby brought into operation, producing, in many cases, a speedy recovery.

According to Scripture, not all healing without means is of God. Satan is also working miracles, but not for the glory of God. Hence we are told to test the spirits. (I. John 4:1; Rev. 16:13, 14). The Christian Church has, more or less, all through the centuries, failed to make full use of the gift of healing, without means, which is clearly taught in Holy Scripture. Owing to unbelief, disobedience, division, decline of the faithful preaching of the word of God, compromising with the world and neglect of prevailing prayer, all of which produce separation from God, this Divine Power was gradually lost. All unused powers in time lose their effectiveness.

The paralyzing and devitalizing influences of our own day have still further ensnared us in

the humanistic philosophy and the material tendencies of the so-called human intellect; hence we have no time nor desire for the supernatural, which is our heritage. In a certain sense, Divine Healing is not only miraculous, but also the fruit of faith, love and obedience, according to the laws that operate in the Spiritual realm.

In the providence of God I was brought up in a Christian home, and early in life became acquainted with various forms of faith healing, both in the home as well as in some of the institutions for healing without means in Switzerland and South Germany.

My father died when I was still very young. I do not remember what attitude he took in regard to Divine or faith healing, but I have been informed that he had a perfect faith in God, and when asked on one occasion by a friend, when nearing the end, if his trust in God had not weakened through his suffering, he replied: "I have complete trust in God, and the finished work of Jesus is my only hope for salvation. If He leads me through pathways of suffering and in ways I do not understand, it must be for the good of all and for His glory."

My mother, though using medical skill for some years, eventually placed her trust in God alone, simply because the doctors told her that she could live only for a few months, and further treatment was useless. From that time she placed her trust in the Divine Healer, and was assured that her prayers would be answered in God's own way and time. Not long afterwards a great change for the better took place, and though never very strong, her complete trust in God generated all the strength she needed for many years to discharge, day by day, her duties

as a mother with a large family of fatherless children. Her prayer life, her trust in God for every need proved a great blessing, not only to her children, but also to the whole village where she lived.

During one of my holidays, when a student, I spent some time in the institution for healing by faith and prayer of Pastor Stockmeyer, Hauptweil, Switzerland, to study the Scriptures, in a Christian atmosphere and under the direction of men who believed and practised healing without means. I was greatly impressed with what I saw and heard, realizing every day that Christ is indeed the Fountain Head of all vitality of life—spiritual and physical. The philosophic training I received afterwards, and the teaching to use the intellect rather than to be guided by the conscience, somewhat weakened my faith in Divine healing. My views, however, on this very important teaching have not greatly changed since, but have been slightly modified, chiefly because of the great danger there is in dealing with such a subject. There have been men and women who were led into unbalanced and extravagant positions through self-interest and false interpretation of Scripture, bringing thereby reproach and dishonour upon the name of Christ.

Nevertheless, I am satisfied that, if the leaders of the various denominations would seriously, unitedly and prayerfully study the whole question of faith healing, without bias, on Scriptural lines, present the result to the Christian public and teach it to young and old in such a way that it would be understood, stressing especially God's high and holy purpose in regard to suffering and sickness, it would prove a great blessing to

the suffering ones in our midst; and, besides, it would constitute a powerful antidote against certain anti-Christian movements which are undermining the faith of many and leading them astray. Simply to attack or belittle these cults will not help us much, but we must offer the suffering and tempted ones something that will afford them comfort and help at the most critical time in the unfolding of the Divine purpose in their lives. Signs are not wanting that the various Christian communions are standing on the threshold of a new period of co-operation, closer union in intercession and a stronger belief in God's omnipotence. Dr. W. A. Guthrie quite recently wrote in the *Scotsman*, a well-known paper, in reference to a meeting he attended of Christian leaders: "I came home from the gathering with a vivid impression of the hunger of many who were present to win souls for Christ and a Divine dissatisfaction with themselves, which is usually the prelude to miracles."

Some very striking cases of Divine healing in various forms have come under my personal observation during the last few years, where believing sufferers, after being pronounced incurable by leading doctors, have received healing through faith in and prayer to the Divine Healer.

Mr. A. ———, a school teacher, becoming gradually paralysed, the doctors pronounced his case hopeless, and he was taken to a home for the aged and infirm. Being a fine Christian man, he became reconciled to his unfortunate position. Shortly afterwards he was encouraged to place his trust completely in his Heavenly Father's care, and plead God's precious promises, which he did. To-day he is in good health, serving his Lord and Master faithfully.

Mr. Th——'s case was diagnosed as cancer of the throat. His speech was completely gone and he was artificially fed. His near relatives despaired at first of any hope of recovery, but prayers were made on his behalf by many of God's children, and he left the hospital three weeks afterwards, fully restored.

Mrs. B———was informed by a specialist that an operation was essential to remove a tumour. Reluctantly the lady acquiesced, as no other course seemed to be open to her. Prayers were offered and perfect trust in God's omnipotence was granted her. When the doctors arrived to operate, it was found that the growth had dried up. "His touch has still its ancient power."

Rev. A. Asboe, whom I have known for many years, and who experienced a fruitful and faithful ministry in Queensland, and now is holding a responsible position as Field Officer in the Presbyterian Church of N.S.W., received the reward of his faith at the Hickson Mission some years ago held in the Cathedral in Brisbane. He was suffering from the effects of infantile paralysis and was obliged to lean for aid on a stick and repeatedly fell whenever traversing rough ground. He walked up to the altar of the Cathedral assisted by the stewards. After the laying-on of hands he returned to his pew without assistance, and ever since has been able to walk without a stick. Circulation of the blood in the paralysed limb returned, and, with exercise, the leg has improved to cause no further anxiety.

My brother, who was for twelve years a medical missionary in Africa, where some cases of Divine healing came under his notice, and who has since established a large practice in the Old Land, writes in his latest book, seventh edition,

"Fountain of Health," as follows: "Healing through believing prayer, asking in faith, is the most natural, the most ideal and the most unique method of healing, because it helps us to visualise the creative powers of God making all things new, body and soul."

Those who have read the story of the Revival in Russia before the great war, will remember how Lord Radstock had toiled without respite, denying himself with severity that he might give largely to his multifarious charities. His lungs were seriously affected, and he found himself at the breaking point when there came the call to take part in the great revival. Without hesitation he responded, against the advice of doctors and friends, but the moment he crossed the frontier God healed him. He knew that His servant had to endure hardships. He gave him health and strength, as well as a new and wider vision to understand the complex and varied aspects operating from time to time in the Kingdom of God.

Luther, when sitting at the bedside of his dying friend and co-worker, Melancthon, wrestled with God in prayer for a time. Suddenly he took his friend by the hand, and, with a new faith and assurance, he exclaimed, "Philip, be of good cheer, thy work is not yet done; thou shalt live," and from that moment Melancthon recovered.

All throughout the history of the Christian Church there have been individual leaders who believed and taught that God can heal physical infirmities and give strength to others to be able to do His Will in spite of bodily weakness. These men believed that the age of miracles had not passed away, and should remain with us till the triumph of the Cross should be fully manifested. He is "the same yesterday and to-day and for

ever." Let me mention just a few who believed in Divine healing: Iremæus, Tertullian, Augustine, Luther, Bengel, Trudel, Blumhardt, Stockmeyer, Hudson Taylor, Mueller of Bristol, Franke, Grossner, Harms, Zeisberger, Surgeon, Pastor Hsi, and others, all of whom have experienced healing by prayer and faith.

It is only fair to state that there have been cases where prayer was offered and child-like faith was in evidence, yet no Divine healing was granted, but in many such instances where healing was denied, the sick-room became a Bethel, and the testing was turned into victory. Thus, instead of healing, the sufferers became partakers of Christ's suffering and holiness, which is a greater honour in the Kingdom of God than physical health, and the spectators were made to realise that they were standing on holy ground.

A serene old man, on being asked how he viewed his enforced leisure with its increasing infirmities, replied: "Life involves two kinds of discipline, the discipline of activity and the discipline of inactivity." Most of us prefer the former. He might have added the discipline of health, with its responsibilities and the discipline of sickness, with its promises.

Any student of the Word of God who has witnessed faith healing must come to the conclusion that God exercises His Sovereign Power in accordance with His Divine Will, Wisdom and Purpose. If we fully yield to His Will He will lead us, whether through sickness or health, to our ultimate good and to His glory. His grace is always sufficient for His children, as Paul so well knew, and it often far transcends our expectation, and the new light and experience of His keeping power outweigh the apparent disadvantages.

Hudson Taylor once told his audience that his greatest spiritual blessings had come to him in connection with his various sufferings, and that the most important advance movements in the China Inland Mission had come as a direct result of some physical breakdown through which he had passed. Speaking of her husband's sufferings, Mrs. Taylor said: "The times of his bodily suffering and physical weakness were not times of spiritual declension, but rather of times of his closest communion with God, and a deeper penetration into unsolved problems, making for greater progress."

Luther, the great Reformer, once said that before every great effort, God sent to him some special trial, to draw him nearer to the Divine power.

Such statements should bring comfort and consolation to God's people who have to pass through great temptations, trials and sufferings. Evangelist Tunley once said: "When we reach the Glory Land we shall see that He chose for us what we would have chosen for ourselves, had we been able to see as He sees."

"No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless, afterwards it yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." We must not, however, deceive ourselves. In regard to suffering much that is laid at the door of a chastening God is "Man's inhumanity to man." God is not responsible for all trials; much of the evil in the world to-day is the outcome of our own making, our modern civilization and the principalities and powers of darkness. God does sometimes allow such evils to come to us, as seen in the Book of Job, and in the life of Joseph, but

He turns them into a blessing if we seek Him with all our hearts.

In the light of what has been said, we must come to the conclusion that Divine healing is not a reward for holy living, nor can God's silence, when we cry to Him, always be taken as a sign of disfavour or lack of faith, but rather as the exercise of His Sovereign Will, which is love.

It may also be well for us not to lay undue emphasis upon the importance of life and of health. God may, in refusing to heal, teach us to be willing to be absent from the body, and at home with the Lord. Through all the ages His wisdom has chosen some to glorify Him by patient suffering, others by the gift of health and strength, but be it on the mountain top with its wider vision, or in the valley of humiliation, there are the same Everlasting Arms.

Whatever our experience may be, the fact remains that He is able and willing to heal to-day all manner of diseases, because He has said so in His Word, and has shown His healing power in our very midst, allowing us to witness the manifestations of His Divine creative and healing energy. It must be left to Him to heal, when, where and how He wills.

Many passages in Scripture clearly indicate that Divine healing is the will of God. Let us mention just a few: "With His stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). "I am the Lord that healeth thee" (Exod. 15:26). "Who healeth all thy diseases" (Ps. 103:3). "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" (Mat. 8:17). "They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover" (Mark 16:18). "Is any sick among you" (James 5:14). "They anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them" (Mark

6:13). "If I may touch His garment I shall be whole" (Matt. 9:21).

In connection with these quotations and other passages, it has been said that the Lord's commission to the Apostles to heal does not apply to the present day, as the age of miracles has passed, and that, whatever has been accomplished since, in that direction, stands in a different relationship to the healing during the time of Christ and His Apostles. Be that as it may, God is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever. Miracles are God's opportunities to manifest His power, wisdom and grace even to-day, according to our faith. Paul said to King Agrippa: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" If God has power to raise the dead, should He not also be able to heal and restore the body?

It is our prerogative to bring our needs and wants before God and claim His promises with much expectation, being assured that He knows our deepest needs better than we do ourselves, but we must come in humble submission, saying: "Not my will, but Thine be done." "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" The greater always includes the lesser.

God delights to see His children bring large petitions to Him, depending on His bounty for what they need, not always what they want. If we give Him in all our affairs the right of way, then we can be sure that He will supply not only our needs, but He will also protect us from the anti-religious movements which are rapidly gathering momentum in our day and generation. It is our want of faith that stands in the way

of experiencing more fully His blessings for body and soul. Of Nazareth, it was said that "Jesus could do no mighty deeds there, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick people and healed them. And He marvelled because of their unbelief" (Mark 6:5, 6).

Some years ago a small girl, poorly clad, looked longingly through the closed iron gate into the King's garden in London, coveting some of the beautiful grapes for her sick mother. At that moment the gate opened for the Prince of Wales to pass through. He noticed the girl, spoke to her, and she told him her story. The Prince took her into the garden and requested the gardener to give her some large clusters of grapes for her sick mother. The girl offered the Prince her penny, which was all she had, but he said to her: "The King does not sell grapes, but he delights to give."

God also delights to give, but it behoves us to surrender our will to Him, trusting that whatever He may choose for us must work out His design in our lives. To this end we have the Guide and Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to lead us in all the truth, and to give us the petitions we should ask for, teaching us when to pray, how long to continue for ourselves and others. This is vital in regard to all our temporal and spiritual needs as well as in our intercession for all men, because we know not what is truly relevant to the conditions and needs of the world to-day.

We should also remember that as long as there is known and unforgiven sin, there is, as a rule, no Divine healing possible. "Thy sins are forgiven thee" comes before healing.

A medical man, a patient in one of the big hospitals, wanted to know why there are so many

failures in connection with Divine healing. I referred him to Peter's experience when he momentarily looked at the waves and lost sight of Jesus. Whenever we seek Divine healing, Satan is sure to disturb our faith and confidence. We must keep on trusting our Lord and plead His promises till the answer comes, or until He assures us "My grace is sufficient: My strength is made perfect in weakness" (II. Cor. 12:9).

In the mission field, God's manifestation in cases of sickness and want is often recognised to a greater extent than at home, because to the primitive people, a dramatic revelation of Divine help may be needed.

From those of us who have the full Word of God, the clear revelation of the Holy Spirit, and who have made our garments white in the blood of the Lamb, it is required to present our bodies unto God as a living sacrifice, and let His Sovereign Will determine how best we can glorify Him, whether in life or death, in sickness or health, and the nature and quality of the final harvest will show how far we have been faithful to the trust committed to us.

CHAPTER II.

SUFFERING TRANSFIGURED.

Human suffering, merited and unmerited, has perplexed the minds of many people all through the ages. Pain and suffering are the lot of every human being, rich and poor. Job said long ago: "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards."

There are two kinds of evil and pain in the world. The one from the wrong choice of our wills, called sin; the other from our environment such as war, social wrongs, destructive forces of nature, mental and physical persecution, etc. These all produce in varying degrees what is recognised as suffering.

The philosophy of life is only understood in proportion to our realisation that this present life is but a preparation for the fuller life to come, which is endless.

Our modern age has invented and discovered many improvements by means of medical science and allied humanitarian efforts, to relieve pain and make life easier. For these we should be very grateful. All good gifts come from God. On the other hand, we must recognise the fact that we live in a stage of deep transition. The simplicity of the faith of our fathers has been shaken to its very foundations. Loosed from their moorings, many of our spiritual values of earlier days have been destroyed. Prayer, for many, has become almost meaningless and archaic, and multitudes, being without hope or faith, attempt to smother the choking bitterness of pain

and disappointment by nervous activity, excitement and pretended gaiety. Yet there is no need for despair.

God has a plan for every life and that plan is noble and beautiful. We should carefully listen-in to God for the details of His plan, which will be revealed to us step by step. Furthermore, if we have failed God can and will re-make us, if only we give Him the right of way. There is no blind fate which predestines us to failure and perdition. No one need fail, in spite of sin and folly. Those who do fail are leaving God out of their lives, fighting the battles against sin in their own strength.

The philosophy of life differs greatly with different nations and races. Buddha taught that existence and suffering were one. Hinduism teaches that we are suffering because of sins committed in a former life. The Moslem says that all that happens to us is the will of God and therefore we must bear it and not expect mercy. The Jews believe that God looks with favour upon Israel, but all other nations will eventually be destroyed. Christian Science teaches that the Eternal Mind is the sole reality and that we are part of it, and therefore there can be no evil in us. To say that all sickness, suffering, sin and death is an illusion is an impossible position to hold. If there is no sin and no death, then there can be no Cross of Redemption.

The Christian teaching of God's punishment and our resignation to His will is only half the truth. Disease and suffering are not necessarily sent by God, though He allows them and often turns them into a blessing. It is a pity that there are good people who regard health and material blessings as reward, and all manner of disease

and suffering as punishment.* Our Father in Heaven is the Husbandman, He prunes only the fruitful branches.

The Scriptures definitely teach us that He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. He does not always deal with us according to our sins; nor do we always reap, *in this life*, what we have sown. Where sin abounds, grace does still more abound. Do we not find even in nature (God controls nature) processes of healing and restoration, of which we are often quite ignorant? Doctors tell us that whenever an infection attacks the body, the corpuscles in the body throw themselves like soldiers upon the approaching enemies and many die so that we may live.

The Cross, however, is God's great and final redemptive plan. "If I be lifted up (on the Cross) I will draw all men to Myself." The Cross is not an accident as some would have us believe. Rather does it open the way for our reconciliation and cleansing from both the guilt and power of sin, if we will only repent and accept God's priceless gift of free forgiveness. The Cross is both just and atoning. It is the price of our restoration.

This great Redemption Plan includes also the redemption of our bodies. "By His stripes we are healed." Jesus' great mission was "to preach the Gospel to the poor; to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captive and recover-

* It is not the object of this booklet to deal with the doctrine of future punishment and the fate of those "who neglect so great salvation," nor does the writer feel competent to do so. (Heb. 2:3).

ing of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18). Our Lord looked upon sickness and death as enemies of mankind. He wept at the grave of His friend, Lazarus. The last enemy that will be finally destroyed is death. Paul was waiting for the redemption of the body. After a very eventful life he could joyfully write: "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (II. Tim. 4:6-7).

In the Gospels we find perhaps the nearest solution to the problems of life, suffering and sin. Take the case of the man born blind. Jesus refused to blame the young man or his parents as responsible for the affliction. It was permitted, that the glory of God might be made manifest. Jesus constantly taught that calamity was an opportunity for doing good. He expects us to reach higher than even to bear our sufferings patiently. He desires us rather to transmute them to higher ends and for a nobler purpose. Jesus turned His suffering on the Cross into a prayer of intercession for His murderers.

The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us to turn calamity and inhumanity into humanity and love, irrespective of race or creed, and not to ask why does God allow such cruelty and wrong. When Jesus declared that all those who do His will are His brethren, He taught the great fundamental truth that brotherhood and loyalty are not based on relationship or race—a lesson we have not yet learned. If so, war would soon end.

If all the secrets of life were known, it would be seen that those who have brought the most comfort and blessing to others have been men and women whose sorrow found an outlet in ministries to others. Thereby they are able to glory with the Apostle Paul when he writes: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed. We are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of our Lord Jesus" (II. Cor 4:9).

This can be fully understood only by those who have themselves passed through the fire. Dr. G. Matheson lost his eyesight in early manhood and at the same time suffered other grievous disappointments, but after a time he wrote "O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go," the hymn that has brought comfort to many.

There are complaints and disorders which the ordinary doctor is unable to deal with. They are diseases of the mind. The only remedy in such cases is described in the following simple lines:—

Down in the human heart, crushed by the Tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
Touched by a loving hand, wakened by kindness,
Chords that were broken, will vibrate once more.

Let us see in passing how the early Christian Church interpreted the teaching of Jesus in regard to life and suffering. They used pain and persecution as opportunities for doing good and for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. The death of Stephen was the means of Paul's conversion and Paul himself said years afterwards: "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and

patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; ———”.

The disciples were persecuted, driven from their homes and scattered abroad. They used these very calamities to preach the Word of God everywhere. We find the same spirit in the history of the Christian Church. Paul and Silas were imprisoned and thus became the instrument of the jailer's conversion. The early Church was commissioned to go out to preach and to heal and to proclaim that the Kingdom of God was at hand. “Freely ye have received, freely give.” And they obeyed in the face of the greatest difficulties. Otherwise there would have been no Acts of the Apostles. They had no creed or ritual, but simply love for God and man. Their only goal was the Kingdom of God. When persecuted, they glorified God, “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer” for Christ and the Gospel's sake.

We have to go back to the method of the Apostles if we hope to overcome the evils that are at present facing us. We must leave our impact on the lives of those with whom we come in contact, not by lording over them, but by serving. This spiritual warfare, even should it involve persecution, is essential to our very life, both spiritual and physical, as it was essential for the Christian Church all through the centuries. Otherwise stagnation will be the result and progress will become increasingly difficult.

We have to fight not only against flesh and blood, but also against evil forces at work in the world called “powers of darkness.” These delight to bring suffering upon mankind. The weapons of our warfare must therefore be spiritual and not carnal. Jesus rebuked the storm and the

demons who caused so much suffering. He would not have rebuked them if His Father had been the Author. Who is sufficient for these things? We have the promise: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Paul teaches us in his immortal letter written when in prison: “Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

The great multitude who stand before the Throne of God in the garments of victory, have all come out of tribulation. Do not talk of being punished, when God in His wisdom allows suffering to come upon you. Rather speak of it as correction and turn it into a blessing. All guilt and punishment were laid on Jesus. The Cross is the proof of it.

We cannot escape suffering in this world, as we cannot escape the heat of the sun, or the rain. But God still keeps discipline and the refining process in His hands. The severity of suffering is measured by the abundance of grace that is offered. Remember that “God is faithful and will not suffer you to be tried above that which you are able.” As we have already seen, His grace is sufficient for you. Ease your burden by helping others. Repeat often the name of Jesus till you are aware of His presence. Trials are sometimes permitted so that we may become more fit to give sympathy and help to others. Learn to say with heartfelt sincerity: “Not my will, but Thine be done,” and thus rising above your present circumstances, accept Christ's invitation and claim His promise—“Come unto Me, all ye

that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

CHAPTER III.

SUFFERING INTERPRETED.

We are finite and the ways of Infinite God are past finding out. The full elucidation of the meaning of suffering, as well as the many other mysteries of life, will be made fully clear to us only when we know as we are known, beholding our Lord face to face in all His power, majesty and glory. The problem of suffering is not so much "whence" as "why."

Our children often fail to comprehend our motives, methods or activities. Their trust in us depends not so much on their understanding of our plans, but rather on their love and affection for us. Such love enables them to say: "Father, Mother, knows best."

I overheard one day two boys disputing a certain question. One of them concluded: "Father said so." That was final as far as he was concerned.

Sick people constantly desire to know what is the purpose of pain and suffering. Why there are so many good and true people, some of the best, passing through mental anguish and physical pain. The answers to these problems we do not know. It is not for us to reason why. But we do know that afflictions are not marks of God's anger; rather are they marks of His favour.

Some Bible students make a distinction between God turning evil into a blessing and His direct chastening of those whom He loves. (Rev. 3:19),

We know also that there are some suffering ones who have a very fine sense of God's nearness and are able to glory even in tribulation as Paul did. They thus become monuments of God's sustaining power, bearing witness to His never-failing love. They have a ministry even in their suffering. It is impossible to measure their influence in the home day by day. The fruits of their pain often remain, a permanent enrichment of the character of those who loved them.

These all have learnt to trust entirely in Christ's finished work for spirit, soul and body. The solution of all our problems is found in Christ alone. "More than all in Thee I find" should be constantly in our minds.

A lay preacher, after many years of faithful service, became blind. When I expressed my sympathy with him in his sore affliction, he replied: "I thank God for trusting me with blindness." This is, of course, an outstanding case. There are diversities of gifts, graces and talents, but the same Spirit; all according to God's infinite wisdom and love.

Dr. Stanley Jones wrote in one of his books, "Suffering is a gift of God. God Himself suffers because He is love." There is a great truth in the statement often heard: "The more we love, the more we suffer."

I knew a patient in one of the hospitals who was anticipating a dangerous operation. He knew that it would mean, at the best, days of weakness and pain, and that he was no longer able to provide for loved ones. He could only cry from the depth of his heart: "Lord, help me." During the days and weeks of convalescence he gradually realised the great truth that "All things work together for good to them that love God."

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee"; and "As thy days so shall thy strength be" are comforting promises which have brought help, comfort and peace to many a sick one throughout past centuries. No, sick-rooms are not prisons. They may become Bethels, where Christ comes to bless the sufferer.

We have to admit that there are others in our hospitals who have made a shipwreck of their lives and are without hope, persisting in saying: "We are but the plaything of a blind and inexorable necessity; this world is only a drifting derelict; there is no God." Even some of these have learnt in the school of suffering to look to the Cross and live. It is God's will that none should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth.

When Jesus went up to Jerusalem to die and His disciples objected, He said: "I must be perfected." When dying on the Cross, seemingly deserted of God and men, the people standing by said: "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him." God did not deliver Him, but did something better. An angel came and strengthened Him to enable Him to finish the work of salvation. God also gave Him a name above every other name. Jesus was made perfect through suffering. Jesus turned the greatest tragedy of history, the tragedy of the Cross, into the world's supreme victory. The Cross became the Throne. Without the Cross there could be no Crown.

There are times in our lives when Jesus invites us to come apart and rest awhile to keep tryst with Him. Such quiet times, with or without pain, may become a great blessing to us. There God is able to speak to us, to enable us to

rise to higher altitudes and to obtain a clearer vision of the object and meaning of suffering, viz.: not to secure passive resignation, but to enable us to reach out to a higher life.

When in good health we may have a philosophy of our own concerning life and suffering, leaving God out and explaining the mystery of life in a way that will satisfy us for the time being. It is only when we are laid low and have little strength left, that we realise our entire dependence on God. At such quiet times the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, often brings home to us passages of Scripture with a new force and a fuller meaning beyond their mere intellectual interpretation.

Pain has been called the wings on which the spirit may fly toward a clearer understanding of God's love. Sorrow and suffering that do us no good, only harm us, especially when we forget in our grief that there are others who still need us.

"When all our hopes are gone,
'Tis well our hands must still keep toiling on
For others' sake,
For strength to bear is found in duty done,
And he is blest indeed who learns to make
The joys of others cure his own heartache."

During times of suffering we also learn to appreciate more fully the love and friendship of dear ones and friends. Suffering often brings out the very best both in those who suffer and also in those who minister to them. What tenderness; what a drawing together; what fellowship that was never before possible! It illuminates life and sweetens character and gives a new meaning to sacrificial love. The world would be much poorer were it not for this ministry to the

sick and the Christ-like services so willingly and cheerfully rendered.

What wonderful service is given in our hospitals to sick and suffering ones, by all kinds of gifted men and women! Such service is all included in God's redemptive plan and is helping to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. It has its reward.

"If none were sick and none were sad,
What service could we render,
I think if we were always glad,
We scarcely could be tender.

Did our beloved never need
Our patient ministrations,
Earth would grow cold, and miss indeed,
Its sweetest consolation.

If sorrow never claimed our heart,
And every wish were granted,
Patience would die and hope depart,
Life would be disenchanted."

The value of prayer, too, becomes more apparent in the sick-room than the more stereotyped prayers at other times. The upward look, the silent dropping of a tear, are prayers well pleasing in the sight of God. The essence of real prayer is intimate communion with the Infinite.

We must not despair when many of the mysteries of life remain unsolved. There have been times in the life of all of us when there have been no visible results from long waiting upon God, when definite requests have been denied us. "No" is not necessarily the equivalent of "Never." It may mean "Not now," because the appointed time has not yet come. But "though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. 2-3). The

answer sometimes comes suddenly and unexpectedly; at other times gradually, especially in regard to healing.

Even in the realm of nature we find that suffering is a law of life and life attains to its highest end only through suffering. There is, moreover, a silver lining to the darkest cloud which bespeaks its mystic meaning. What would sunset or sunrise be without clouds? We are told that in the Sahara clouds are never seen, and the result is desolation. In nature we find not only mountains, but also deep, dark valleys.

Let us take time to count our blessings and contemplate the lovingkindness of God anew each morning. Our outlook would thereby be enlarged and we would see our trials and fears against the background of eternity. We are too often tempted to look inward and become obsessed by self and self-pity. Such introspection never makes for happiness. It is the outward and upward look that brings peace and contentment to the soul.

So many of us fail to realise the value of some of the greatest blessings of life, partly on account of our discontent and partly because we take them for granted. How often we take our daily bread, our measure of health and even the little services of loved ones, all as a matter of course, and fail to realise how precious these things are until we are deprived of them. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." May we all learn to pray more often:—

"Drop Thy still dews of quietness
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace."

When at last the sufferer is called upon to pass through the valley of the shadow there is still God's guiding hand. We have His promise to guide us through life and "even unto death." Sometimes we wonder what is involved in this great solemn mystery which we call Death, but which is known to the angels as Birth. What comfort we find in Paul's reassuring words: "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle (our body) were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Or again, "To depart and be with Christ; which is far better."

Death is a passage through a thin veil which hangs between two worlds. Dr. Meyer says: "Death may cut off the interchange of words and acts, but cannot touch the eternal; the departed loved ones hover over us as ministering angels."

"How bright these glorious spirits shine.
Whence all their white array?
How came they to the blissful seats
Of everlasting day?

Lo, these are they, from suffering great
Who came to realms of light,
And in the blood of Christ have washed
Those robes which shine so bright.

Who knows to what high purpose Thou
Dost yet employ their ripened powers,
Nor how at Thy behest they touch
This life of ours."

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (I. Cor 2:9).

In conclusion, I would venture a word of counsel to those who visit and minister to the sick and shut-in ones.

To the sick and suffering, there is nothing more painful and offensive than the optimism of the prosperous self-satisfied man or woman, who with the best intention, blandly assures them that "God's in His Heaven; all's right with the world," or other expressions of this cheap kind, when it is so apparent that all's not right by a long way.

May those who read this take heed lest they make the burden heavier for those who are bowed down with heaviness of soul and bitterness of heart. One ounce of practical sympathy is in many cases of more value than all the cold platitudes of the world. Let those who enjoy health and the many things of life, help to bear the burden of others; and let us not only rejoice with them that do rejoice, but also weep with them that weep, remembering Christ's assurance: "Ye did it unto Me."

PRAYER.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING.

Eternal and most gracious God, our loving Father Who hast made of one blood all nations, accept our thanks and praise for all Thy manifold blessings; they are more than we can number. We thank Thee for the measure of health we enjoy, for home, for friends and loved ones, for daily bread. Especially do we thank Thee for the greatest of all gifts, the unspeakable gift of Jesus Christ, Thy Son our Lord, Who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Thou Fountain of all mercies, the Source of all goodness, the Spring of all joy, we thank Thee for the assurance that in Thee we live and move and have our being, to Whose tender compassion we owe all we have and all our hopes in this life and for the life to come.

No morning-stars that sing together have deeper call for praise and adoration than we have. Thou hast strewn our path with love, and even the clouds of sorrow that have cast their shadow have touches of Heavenly light, and glimpses of joy and beauty. In all our afflictions Thine ear is always open to our cry. Grant us grace to live in close communion with Thee, our Lord, and in peace and love with our fellow-beings, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION.

Almighty and ever merciful Father, in deep humility and with contrite hearts we approach Thy Throne of Grace for forgiveness and cleansing, because of our many failures and imperfections. We have sinned and done evil in Thy sight and are undeserving of Thy patience and compassion, yet we have Thy sure promise that Thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let the light of Thy purity purge from our hearts all evil, and as we turn our eyes to the Cross of Christ, may we gain a vision of His forgiving love, which casts our sins into the ocean of His forgetfulness, and of His grace which enables us to bring forth worthy fruits of repentance and righteousness. Give unto us strength to run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYER FOR RENEWAL.

Bestow unto us, our God, Heavenly wisdom to follow the guidance of Thy Holy Spirit, and let His dew descend and abide upon us, refreshing our drooping spirits, and grant us Divine strength to bear willingly whatsoever Thou dost send or permit, nothing doubting Thy wisdom and love. Give to us grace to put away all bitterness and evil-speaking, and strengthen us to bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYER OF SUPPLICATION.

Almighty and most merciful Father, remember in mercy our gracious King and Queen and all in authority, grant that under them we may live a quiet and peaceful life in all goodness and honesty. Bless, we beseech Thee, all Thy ministering servants, at home and in distant lands, proclaiming the word of Life, and when discouraged by the hardness of their task, grant to them faith to see the far-off whitening harvest. Inspire them with Thy gracious promise that, though the sowers may go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, that they will come again with joy, bringing their sheaves with them.

We pray Thee, our God, to look in mercy and compassion upon all the sick, aged and suffering ones in mind or body, may they ever be conscious of Thy nearness and presence. Be with those who mourn, lead them through the dark waters of sorrow, doubts and fears into the fuller light, and grant unto them the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION.

Thou, our God and Father, knowest the frailty of our nature, may we learn to trust Thee fully for every need, and grant that the day-spring from on high may give sure guidance to those who have lost their way in the battle of life. May they be touched by human kindness, so "that the chords that have been broken will vibrate once more."

Our Heavenly Father, Thou knowest all the cruelty, injustice and destruction which still hold sway in the

world to-day. Have pity, we implore Thee, and remember in mercy all those in want, in affliction, agony or distress. Be the Helper of the helpless, the Hope of the hopeless, the Saviour of the lost, and hasten the coming of Christ's Kingdom upon earth. Then, under the rule of the Prince of Peace, war and sorrow and sighing will have ended, and our prayers and intercession transmuted into praise and adoration. Then will all the redeemed join in the Heavenly chorus throughout all ages.

Now unto Him Who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all we can ask or think, to Him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus our Lord, world without end. Amen.

—J.N.H.

By the Same Author:—

- I "A Visit to Mapoon."
 - II "The Moravian Church."
 - III "History of the Presbyterian Mission Enterprise Among the Aborigines."
 - IV "Representative Missionaries of India."
 - V "Death and Life Beyond."
 - VI "Suffering Transmuted."
-

"THE MYSTERY AND MINISTRY OF HUMAN SUFFERING."

By Rev. J. N. Hey.

An Appreciation.

This beautiful little booklet should find many friends among the lonely, the sick and the suffering. Its wise, gracious, simple, yet strong Christian teaching will be a rich benefit to every-

one who opens the book. It is the teaching of one whose eyes are wide open to life and life's mysteries, and whose heart is tender towards those who are in weakness and weariness of body and mind.

This little book might have as its sub-title "Workers Together With Him." It is a book of courage and comfort for those who have to carry a burden of ill-health. It is a call to those who are strong to bear the infirmities of the weak and to bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ. May its ministry be blessed.

JAMES McLEOD.

St. Stephen's Church,
Macquarie Street,
Sydney.

REVIEW BY REV. DR. REID.

The Mystery and Ministry of Human Suffering.

By J. N. Hey, late Missionary to the Aborigines.

This is a most useful booklet, written with understanding and insight, intended for distribution among the sick and lonely. The author can speak from long Christian experience in pastoral work, and recognises alike the evident and mysterious elements in suffering. It constitutes a grave problem in some aspects, but it is shown, when rightly interpreted and endured, it may be transfigured and blessed for growth in character influence.

There is undoubtedly a divine purpose in human suffering. "What wonderful service is given, *e.g.*, in our hospitals by all kinds of gifted men and women! Such service is surely all included in God's redemptive plan and is helping to establish the Kingdom of God on earth." It would be a more heartless and godless world without it. As Thackeray once put it, "If there were less suffering, there would be less kindness." It makes room both for divine healing and human helpfulness. "I operated, but God healed," said one great surgeon. There are instances given by this author in which doctors could do little or nothing, but some inner renewal took place. Some cases, pronounced incurable, have received healing through faith and prayer. Ministers and medical men ought to co-operate more than they usually do. "Suffering often brings out the very best, both in those who suffer and also in those who minister to them." Sometimes it may have the effect of hardening and embittering its victim, but it was meant to humble and purify, to call

out tenderness and sympathy and to bring us to Christ. In many families a crisis has bound all its members more closely together and driven them to their knees. When the loved one lies desperately ill, all move with softer step and speak with subdued voices. It serves the highest end when it is accepted as God's chastening and enables us to say "It is good for me to have been afflicted."

Suffering achieves its highest purpose, when, like Paul, we learn something of the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and remember He shares all for our sakes. Again, like the Apostle, even if prayer does not bring physical relief, it comforts and strengthens when we find God's grace sufficient. . . .

Jesus was a realist and not a sentimentalist or superficial optimist. His teaching is not that of the Stoic, with his attitude of mingled heroism and defiance—"with bloody head unbowed," apparently in hopeless despair. God in Christ takes our burden of human sin and suffering upon Himself and bears us up in His strong arms. "In that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." We learn thus at last to glory in our infirmities and to use them for our good and God's glory. From many notable passages we take one as a sample of the helpful things in this book—"God has a plan for every life and that plan is noble and beautiful. There is no blind fate which predestines us to failure and perdition. No one need fail in spite of sin and folly. Those who do fail are leaving God out of their lives, fighting the battles against sin in their own strength." This little book is heartily to be commended.

G.R.S.R.

SYDNEY.
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66-68 Bathurst Street,

1945.

"Oh that my people had hearkened unto me and Israel had walked in my ways. I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries."—Psalm 81:13.

Thus said the Lord:—

"If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."—R.V. II. Chronicles 7:13-14.

"Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles."
—II. Chronicles 32:7-8.