

Wilkinson, John. *Health and Healing: Studies in New Testament Principles and Practice*. Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1980. ix + 195 pp. £5.75. (Also, New York: Columbia University Press; price—\$15.00.)

The author of this volume is fully qualified in theology and in medicine (B.D., M.D., F.R.C.P.) and brings his expertise in both fields to bear on the topic of health and healing in the NT. In fact, his competence not only in modern medicine but also in the history of ancient medicine (as well as in the history of the early church) and his frequent and perceptive references to the Greek words used for describing different physical conditions mentioned in the NT, give an unusual degree of authoritativeness to the volume.

Part I of this book, entitled "The Biblical Understanding of Health," contains three rather brief chapters that deal, appropriately enough, with background concepts and principles. The first of these chapters treats the concept of health in the OT, the second surveys the vocabulary used for health in the NT, and the third provides a definition of health in the NT.

In his brief treatment of the OT, the author sets forth clearly the biblical usage, which is holistic in nature, so that "health" is "basically a state of wholeness and fulfillment of man's being considered as an undivided entity" (p. 4). It consists of "complete obedience to God's law," "righteousness," "strength and long life" (*ibid*)—in short, "wholeness and holiness" that derive from and are reflective of God's wholeness and holiness (pp. 7-8).

The second chapter conveniently lists seven Greek words used for "health" (and/or "healing") in the NT, and suggests nuances which the words imply (within the same broad, holistic framework expressed in the OT). Wilkinson's treatment in chap. 3 of the NT definition of "health" is set forth in four sections, whose titles bespeak, once again, the comprehensive scope of the term: "Health as life," "Health as blessedness," "Health as holiness," and "Health as maturity" (pp. 13-16).

Part II of the volume consists of five chapters (4-8) dealing with "Healing in the Gospels." The chapter titles indicate the coverage: "The Records of Healing," "The Approach to Healing," "The Methods of Healing," "The Case of the Epileptic Boy," and "The Case of the Bent Woman." The comprehensiveness, as well as organizational clarity, that is accomplished in the relatively short presentations (the five chapters occupy but some sixty pages) is almost beyond belief and can only be appreciated by seeing the book first-hand.

Tabulations in list form are most helpful. In chap. 4 (pp. 19-35), e.g., the discussion is divided into four sections, each with appropriate summary tables. (1) "The Space Devoted to Healing" includes three listings that indicate in different ways the number of verses and percentage of space

devoted in the four gospels to healing incidents. (2) "The Narratives of Healing" provides comprehensive lists of the references in the four gospels for accounts of the healing of individuals and for the accounts of the healing of groups. (3) "The Diseases Healed" furnishes a list of healings of individuals wherein the incidents, together with their Scripture references, are subdivided into "acute" and "chronic" physical diseases and into occurrences of demon possession "with specific physical manifestations described" and "with no specific physical manifestations described." Then a subsection of the same division in the chapter provides a tabulation of group healings recorded in the four gospels, giving four basic pieces of information for each: the incident, the Scripture reference, the English word(s) used to describe the malady, and the Greek original from which the English in each instance has been translated. Also, a further outline classifies the sick in the group contexts as those with "specific diseases" (*poikilais nosois*) and those with "tormenting diseases" (*basanois*), the latter including (a) "demon possession," (b) "epilepsy," and (c) "paralysis." (4) Finally, "The Words for Healing" analyzes the usage, meaning, and distribution of five main Greek verbs occurring in the four gospels to signify healing, with a quick overview again given in tabular form (near the beginning of the discussion).

The foregoing description of the contents of chap. 4, with particular emphasis on lists and tables, has been somewhat detailed so as to serve as an illustration or sample of the author's approach and comprehensiveness throughout the volume. In addition to the very helpful summaries afforded by the lists and tables, there is, of course, a good deal of illuminating discussion that also is most valuable. Those lists and tables, however, make this otherwise informative volume into a useful reference tool, as well.

Moving on to the further main divisions of the book, we may note that Part III deals with "Healing in the Apostolic Church" (there are four chapters: "Healing in the Acts of the Apostles," "Healing in the Epistles," "Paul's Thorn in the Flesh," and "Healing in the Epistle of James"), and then that Part IV is devoted to application for the church today (entitled "Healing in the Church Today" and including two relatively short chapters: "The Healing Commission to the Disciples" and "The Healing Ministry of the Church Today").

The chapter on Paul's thorn in the flesh (pp. 112-142) deserves at least a brief further word here because of the interest this subject has engendered over the centuries and in our own day. Wilkinson deals first with the meaning of the phrase in the Greek. Then he treats the features of the thorn—its onset, its occurrence, its character, and its effect—as deduced from the description of it in 2 Cor 12:7-9. Here his training as a medical practitioner becomes evident. For the sake of completeness, he then goes

on to consider a number of other texts which commentators have felt might refer to Paul's thorn in the flesh, but for the most part rejects the possibility of their being applicable in this way (just one example: "We are weak, but you are strong" [1 Cor 4:10]). In dealing with five references often cited to indicate that Paul had an eye affliction (Acts 9:9; 23:1,5; Gal 4:14-15; 6:11), he concludes that it is "doubtful whether any of these verses taken individually would suggest that Paul had an affliction or infection of the eyes, and even their cumulative information and force is no more suggestive" (p. 117). He also considers some seven references that are at times taken to suggest that Paul suffered from a fatal disease, and concludes that they "do not refer to a fatal disease, and neither do they lend any support to the notion that Paul regarded himself as suffering from one. They clearly refer to the constant exposure to violence which Paul faced in the course of his travels and preaching" (p. 118). The reference in 1 Thess 2:18 to hindrance by Satan is likewise not to be identified with Paul's thorn in the flesh, for it "is too indefinite to provide any real clue to the nature of the hindrance which Satan continually placed in the way of Paul and his companions to prevent their going to Thessalonica" (pp. 118-119).

In the next section of the chapter, Wilkinson proceeds to try to identify the thorn. Here he gives a virtually exhaustive compilation of theories which identify the thorn in both non-physical and physical categories. It is obvious that he has thoroughly canvassed the literature from the early-church period onward, so as to be able to present the views held from ancient times to the present. It is also obvious from his discussion that most presenters have failed to take the careful note of symptoms and characteristics of the thorn that a medical practitioner would. Indeed, it would seem that a number of the identifications are read into the text instead of being read out of it.

Wilkinson's own conclusion as to the nature of the disease is that the symptoms revealed in 2 Cor 12 and in Gal 4:13-15 best fit malaria, which Paul could readily have contracted in the Pamphylian plain, with recurrences several times during his life. The theory of an epileptic fit that is set forth by some interpreters Wilkinson debunks, since according to Acts 22:9 the bright light could not have been a premonitory aura inasmuch as his companions also saw the light; moreover, they fell to the ground along with Paul, and also heard the voice even though not distinguishing the words (p. 128). (He adds a number of further indications in that text which would preclude epilepsy.) Several other common "diagnoses" (including eye disease) are rejected, but he marshals nine features from 2 Corinthians and seven from Galatians that accord perfectly with his own "diagnosis" of malaria (pp. 133-135). He does, however, wisely state that in the circumstances "no conclusions can be final" (p. 135).

The two chapters in Part IV raise the questions, respectively, of the validity today of Christ's healing commission to the twelve and the seventy and of the approach to be taken towards healing as a ministry of the modern church. As to Christ's healing commission, there are certain restrictive aspects in the way in which the mission charge (of which the healing commission was a part) was set forth to the twelve and to the seventy, and this fact leads Wilkinson to consider that the commission was "local and temporary" (p. 166). Although his line of argument on this point merits serious attention, one might query whether his own view of the matter might not possibly be a bit too restrictive. However, his final chapter makes clear that he places a certain (and valid, I believe) emphasis on modern medical missionary activity, and also sets forth the efficacy of prayer, the Word, and touch in the church's present-day healing ministry (pp. 176-179). In that final chapter he provides, as well, an informative succinct historical survey of healing and medical practice. His emphasis on the church's *community* aspect with respect to modern healing is noteworthy, too.

Although one would naturally disagree from time to time with some of Wilkinson's conclusions, the volume as a whole shows remarkable insightfulness and balance. It provides fascinating reading that is medically and theologically competent, organized in such a way as to be easy to follow, analytical in a manner that keeps up the reader's suspense and interest, and written in lucid style and clear language.

The chapters contain useful endnotes. There is also a select bibliography (pp. 181-185); and there are indexes of subjects, authors, words (Hebrew and Greek), and main NT references (pp. 187-195).

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Young, G. Douglas, ed. *Ugarit in Retrospect*. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1981. xv + 238 pp. \$12.50.

This book is the result of a rather remarkably ambitious undertaking. Ancient Ugarit, located at Ras Shamra on the coast of Syria, and the cuneiform alphabetic tablets that were found there first came to the attention of the archaeological world with the discovery of that site in 1929. To commemorate the half century that has passed since that discovery, and the contribution that Ugarit and its tablets have made to our understanding of the ancient world in which the people of the Bible lived, the Mid-West Region of the Society of Biblical Literature and the Middle West Branch of the American Oriental Society jointly organized a symposium on this subject, held at the University of Wisconsin in Madison on February 26, 1979. The present volume represents papers published from that sym-