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## Book Reviews

Andrew Daunton-Fear, *Healing in the Early Church: The Church's Ministry of Healing and Exorcism from the First to the Fifth Century*, Studies in Christian History and Thought, (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), xxii + 187 pp., \$ 33.99 / £ 19.99 (ISBN 9781842276235).

This monograph presents a comprehensive investigation of the healing activity in the Early Church. In contrast to early sceptics like B.B. Warfield (19th century), the author is convinced there was a vigorous healing ministry in the centuries that followed the apostles. The pre-Nicene Fathers recognized its great apologetic value as a dramatic demonstration of the superiority of Jesus Christ over pagan gods.

Andrew Daunton-Fear lectures on church history and pastoral subjects at St. Andrew's Theological Seminary, Manila, Philippines. In 2000, he defended a Ph.D. at King's College, London, and reworked that project into the present comprehensive publication, making its content accessible to the non-specialist. Besides dealing with the patristic writings, he also treats the Odes of Solomon, the five main Apocryphal Acts, the Pseudo-Clementines, and rabbinic evidence.

The study is sympathetic, in that it is written by someone having a first-hand involvement with healing ministries in the contemporary church, as well as being scholarly. These twin qualities of combining the insight of an insider with the reliability of an expert in Patristics make this book valuable for a treatment of the subject.

In recent decades, the place of healing within the Christian church has undergone something of a resurgence. This study offers Christians, who are embarrassed by extremes or pressurized by secularist mentalities, an exposure to a scholarly account of the dimension of healing in the first ages of Christianity.

The studies on this subject commenced with Evelyn Frost, her *Christian Healing* being published in 1940. Other scholars on this subject are R.J.S. Barrett-Lennard, R.M. Woolley, Graham H. Twelftree, and R.A.N. Kydd. However, Daunton-Fear wants to make several corrections on their views and the purpose of his work is to provide a much more comprehensive survey of healing in the Early Church than is to be found elsewhere.

The first two chapters survey the miracles in the NT and some early apocryphal works, concluding that Jesus' healings were in a class different than that of physicians and magicians in that he "offered no questionable course of treatment, and provided almost invariably instant cures free of charge." The apostles' method was the same as used by Jesus, merely substituting his name for his visible presence.

In chapter 3, Warfield is quoted saying that there is little or no evidence of miracle-working in the first fifty years of the Post-Apostolic Church. However, the Odes of Solomon (found in 1907, unknown to Warfield) and the rabbinical material make clear that in the first

half of the second century Christians were known in Palestine as healers. In contrast, according to Origen, due to their rejection of Jesus Christ, the Jews no longer had any vestige of divine power among them.

Several early apologists, such as Tertullian, provide no support for Twelftree's view that exorcism (and presumably healing as well) had tailed off as the first century had drawn to a close and had only revived, first in Rome, in the mid-second century. Tertullian clearly believed in the presence of the devil, who with his supporting angels are renounced at baptism by Christians. For the demons were held to inhabit the air, and to attach themselves to pagan children right from birth. They are the powers behind idolatry, their special enterprise, feeding on the odours and blood of its sacrifices and reveling in the savagery of the amphitheatre.

Irenaeus refers to the Spirit's gifts to the Church, not as luxuries, but as a range of arms for Christians in the tough combat of life. Some authors think Irenaeus speaks about past miracles, but it is more likely that he is actually referring to contemporary events.

Chapters 4 and 5 span the third and fourth centuries. In the first half of the third century, a minor clerical office of exorcist was instituted. Cornelius, elected bishop of Rome in 251, describes the hierarchy in his church, consisting in "forty-six presbyters," several deacons, and "fifty two exorcists, readers and doorkeepers," (89). The Council of Antioch (330) permitted rural bishops to appoint exorcists. Both Martin of Tours and Felix of Nola temporarily occupied the office. However, the more formalized and pre-baptismal exorcisms were done by the bishops.

Chapter 6 covers the Post-Nicene Church and goes into the fifth century. It breaks away from the author/locale format of the previous chapters, opting rather to proceed thematically. Throughout all of these periods, exorcism was prevalent in the Church. Views on demons varied to some degree but there is widespread attestation to demonic possession (even of Christians). The highly educated were not as confident in healing and miracles as the common churchgoers. The author says: "It is chiefly the uneducated people, it seems, who are interested in healing and perform exorcisms. For the educated Fathers, interest lies rather in other spiritual gifts and in rationalizing sickness" (110). This description applies to our present situation as well!

Healings, while continuing throughout these periods, decreased over time. Healing was mainly relegated to the clergy, bishops and deacons, while exorcisms were a stepping-stone to becoming ordained. In the late fourth and fifth centuries, the relics of martyrs became popular for their healing effects. Daunton-Fears comments that Church members of this period "were crossing the boundary between acceptable Christian practice and illegitimate magical means in their quest for good luck, health and safety" (144).

At the end of the book, in an appendix, nine pointers for today's church are given, based on the study of the Early Church, and from the author's own experience from involvement in personal and parish healing ministry during the last twenty years.

This book deserves a wide readership in circles far beyond the reach of patristic studies, especially in reflection on the Church's ministry to the sick and the relation with the Kingdom of God.

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