

Book Reviews

W. J. SHEILS (editor), *The Church and healing*, (*Studies in Church History*, No. 19), Oxford, Basil Blackwell for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1982, 8vo, pp. xxiv, 440, £19.50.

This collection of essays represents a thoughtful, stimulating, and generally successful co-operative attempt by medical and ecclesiastical historians to study an important topic, the relationship between the Christian church and healing. As the preface and the last article make clear, religious healing within Christianity is not confined to the past, but has in the last twenty years come to the forefront, even in Anglicanism. A bishop resigning his see to take on a ministry of healing is an event of 1983, not 983. The contributors tackle many aspects of this broad subject – miracles, healing shrines, medical missions, religious and medical attitudes towards various diseases, even a Georgian Archbishop who had trained in medicine, Thomas Secker (who almost had a medieval predecessor in Faritius of Abingdon).

Perhaps the most interesting group of articles examines the relationship between religious healing and unorthodox, dissenting or Catholic religious traditions, both in England and abroad. The parallels over the centuries, from Byzantium to modern Ceylon, are close and suggestive, yet the genesis of this collection, papers given at two conferences, does not readily allow for interaction between the speakers. It also points to two major deficiencies, at opposite ends of the historical spectrum. Almost a century ago, the church historian Adolf von Harnack, in a celebrated article on medicine and early Christianity, emphasized that Christianity, from its inception, owed much of its success to its claims to healing. Many contributors fail to notice that this tension between secular and religious healing goes back to the gospel narratives themselves. A survey of this evidence, from both the New Testament and the early Church Fathers would have set this whole volume in a better perspective.

At the other extreme, although there are a few polite appeals to the evidence of anthropology, there is at times an underlying assumption that it is only Christian religious healing that is worth considering. Yet classical healing cults interacted with early Christianity, and, as Logie Barrow shows, spiritualism in the nineteenth century at times repudiated Christianity, while paralleling some of its techniques and results. The Sri Lankan healing shrines are not confined to Christianity, and their aims and methods are suggestively similar. Perhaps significantly, Mary Baker Eddy and her followers appear only very rarely in these pages. Whatever one's views on the central validity of Christian healing, the case is weakened by the failure to use modern medical and anthropological evidence for religious healing.

Finally, at a more local level, no study of the role of the Benedictines in the furthering of medicine in England can neglect Wellcome MS. 801A, described at length in the Supplement to Volume II of Moorat's 1973 catalogue, pp. 1464–1467. This MS, which contains the earliest known *Articella*, was written in S. Italy before 1200 and brought within a century to Bury St. Edmunds. Its importance for Salernitan medicine has been recently stressed by P. O. Kristeller, *La scuola medica di Salerno*, Salerno, 1980, but a review of its place in the history of English medieval medicine still remains to be done.

These critical comments should not be allowed to obscure the fact that this excellent collection of essays opens up a new and exciting vein of material for medical historians of any period. The editor and the Ecclesiastical History Society deserve our gratitude.

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AGNELLOUS OF RAVENNA, *Lectures on Galen's De sectis*, (Arethusa Monographs, VIII), Department of Classics, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1981, 8vo, pp. xviii, 181, [no price stated], (paperback).

C. D. PRITCHET (editor), *Iohannis Alexandrini Commentaria in librum De sectis Galeni*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1982, 8vo, pp. xi, 108, Dfl.36.00.

The medicine of late antiquity is only now being studied in its own right, rather than for what it can tell us about Galen or Hippocrates. These two editions go far towards making this medicine available to scholars, and complement each other in a fascinating way.

Some time in the late sixth or early seventh century, at Ravenna in N. Italy, a doctor called Simplicius heard and took down the lectures of a medical sophist, Agnellus, on Galen's book