

some rare tree, of whose virtues Moses himself was ignorant, since it needed God to find it for him.

But the point of the incident is that, though the sweetening of the water was accomplished by the inherent virtue of the tree itself, it was God that gave the virtue originally to it, and in this case connected together cause and effect. Without the Divine guidance and blessing the beneficent result would not have been produced. The capacity of discovering and using healing medicines in nature is thus ascribed directly to God ; and the incident is made a sacramental occasion for the illustration of the great truth that while in ordinary life we use the means of healing, it is the Lord Himself that healeth ; and without His power and blessing no second causes can avail.

One of the most comforting aspects in which God could reveal Himself to us is that of a healer. It is an aspect in which we have frequent need to regard Him in this world full of diseases and sufferings. Deep in the nature of God lies this healing purpose ; deep in His plan of creation has it been imbedded. It is no design or intention of yesterday, called forth by the emergency. It existed before there was any disease in the universe, or any sin to cause sickness or pain. God foresaw the possibility of the creature whom He had made in His own image, and endowed with the marvellous gift of personal freedom, transgressing in the exercise of that liberty the commandment of God, and incurring the penalties of disobedience ; and in His mercy He provided for this possibility. When He laid the foundations of the world He created materials admirably adapted to restore the human system when disordered, in anticipation of and readiness for the use that should be made of them long afterward. Just as He stored up in the bowels of the earth those vast masses of coal, metals, and minerals which were to be utilized when the curse of toil in the sweat of his face was to be pronounced upon man, so He stored up magnesia and iron and sulphur in the rocks, and medicinal salts in volcanic springs, to await the time when man should require them to cure the diseases which the curse of sin should bring upon him.

When God directed Moses to put a particular tree, growing in the Sinaitic desert, into the bitter well of Marah to sweeten it, we must believe that it was God who gave the healing properties to that tree, and that these properties existed long before this use was made of them, and were designed for it. When the Jesuit priest in South America, in the dreadful thirst of fever, drank from a pond into which a Peruvian bark tree had fallen, impregnating its waters with its peculiar properties, and was cured, we must believe that God intended this discovery to be made, formed the tree originally for the cure of human fever, and brought man, who needed it, in contact with the remedy in His own good time and way. The healing properties of rhubarb and willow bark and gentian and numberless other vegetable substances that might be named were imparted to them long before they were actually required by the disorders that were brought