

# Deal Pentecostal Church Training School

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## **Divine Healing**

Petts, D., *You'd Better Believe It*, Mattersey Hall, 1999. (Ch.18 Healing, pp122-128)

One of the most notable features of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that took place in the twentieth century was that, along with the belief in the supernatural baptism and gifts of the Spirit, there came a resurgence of faith in God's power and willingness to heal the sick miraculously.

As a result amazing miracles have taken place and many have been wonderfully healed by the power of God. The subject, however, is not without its problems and, sadly, in some quarters, even abuses. It is therefore very important that we should know what we believe about healing and why we believe it.

### **A right understanding of divine healing**

As evidence for the fact that the healing of our sicknesses is the privilege of the people of God we may point first to God's promise in Exodus 15:26. Israel had been brought out of Egypt by a supernatural act of divine deliverance. The Egyptians had perished beneath the waters of the Red Sea. As a further token of his mighty power the Lord had made sweet the bitter waters of Marah (Exodus 15:23-25). God was showing his people that he was able to meet all their needs. Then came the reassuring promise: *If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in his eyes... I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians; for I am the Lord who heals you.*

The fact that there were those who did not meet the conditions of the promise, and who were therefore unable to avail themselves of God's gracious provision of healing, no way invalidates the promise. It rather confirms it. It was

God's will for his people to be healthy. Sickness was a curse which resulted from disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:59-61). God's willingness to heal is also confirmed by the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ went around doing good and healing all who were under the devil's power (Acts 10:38). The Gospels provide many examples of this (Matthew 4:23-24, 8:16, 9:35, Mark 6:56, Luke 6:17-19, for example).

When Jesus sent his disciples out to preach he commanded them to cure every kind of disease and sickness (Matthew 10:1, 7-8). And this commission to heal was not limited to the time of his earthly ministry. In his final words to his disciples before his ascension Jesus commanded his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel. Those who believed would cast out demons, speak with new tongues and heal the sick in his name (Mark 16:15-20).

The fact that they did so is well illustrated in the book of Acts. In Acts 3:7-9 a lame man was healed in the name of Jesus resulting in the salvation of thousands of people (Acts 4:4). In Acts 4:30 the early church prayed that God would stretch out his hand to heal in the name of Jesus. In Acts 5:14-16 multitudes were healed in the streets of Jerusalem. Miracles were performed in the ministry of Stephen (Acts 6:8) and the sick were healed as Philip preached the gospel to the Samaritans (Acts 8:6-8). Peter was used to heal the sick and to raise the dead in Acts 9:33-42. At Paul's command a cripple leapt to his feet and walked (Acts 14:8-10), diseases departed (Acts 19:12) and the dead were raised (Acts 20:9-12).

And it does not seem that the power to heal was ever withdrawn, for in the very last chapter of Acts the sick are still being healed (Acts 28:8-9), and in James 5:14-16 explicit instructions are given to Christians who need healing.

In both Old and New Testaments, then, we see God's power and willingness to heal his people. As we saw in an earlier chapter, when God made man he made him perfect and put him in a perfect creation. Everything God made was 'very good' (Genesis 1:31). It is clear that man was not only morally, but also physically perfect. There was no sickness in the Garden of Eden. There is to be no sickness in heaven (Revelation 21:4). The existence of sickness is the result of Adam's sin. The whole of creation was affected by the Fall (Romans 8:22).

But just as God has not left us without a ransom for sin, so too he has not left us without a remedy for sickness. By Christ's atoning death on the cross he has reconciled to God all those who believe. By faith in the substitutionary sacrifice offered at Calvary repentant sinners are brought into right relationship with God. Their sins are washed away. The effects of the Fall are counteracted. Sin, the root cause of sickness is atoned for. By restoring us to fellowship with our Maker, Christ has, by his death, made provision for the healing of our bodies.

It is in this sense that healing may be rightly said to be 'in the atonement'. Of course, the word 'atonement' by its very meaning essentially refers to sin (see Chapter Four). Because of the atonement we are redeemed, we are reconciled to God, we are no longer enemies but sons. And the blessings of the New Testament are no less than those of the Old. To those who are by covenant his people, God still says: I am the Lord who heals you.

### **The right use of divine healing**

As we examine the New Testament we discover that there are two main forms of divine healing. They are distinct, both in the purpose for which they are given and in the manner in

which they are received, although there are, by the very nature of the case, many similarities between them. First there is healing for the believer. This is described in James 5:14-16. Then there is healing for the unbeliever. This operates in the context of evangelism and is referred to in Mark 16:16-20 and in the various examples in Acts we mentioned earlier.

Concerning the latter, it is clear that the Lord Jesus promised that miraculous healing would be one of the signs by which he would confirm the word of those who preach the gospel. In this connection it should be noted that healing was to accompany the preaching of the gospel. The apostolic message was Christ died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). That is what they preached. They did not preach healing. They did it! Notice too that in Mark 16 it is the one who is laying hands on the sick who appears to be responsible for exercising faith (vv.17-18), not the sick person who may well still be an unbeliever.

Further, it needs to be pointed out that these verses do not imply that all who have hands laid on them will be miraculously healed. Jesus was not saying that every believer would be used in healing or that every sick person would be healed. What he does promise is that he will confirm his word by working in a variety of ways, including miraculous healing, to authenticate the message of the gospel to the unconverted. Perhaps if this were borne in mind, and if a greater emphasis were placed on the leading of the Spirit in the matter of praying for the sick, there would be less apparent 'failures' in the ministry of modern evangelists.

The problem would also be helped considerably if believers would remember that the form of healing prescribed for them is not that to be found in Mark 16, but rather that of James 5. The believer who is 'in trouble' (literally suffering evil) is to

pray for himself (v.13). If he is sick, he is to call for the elders of the church who should pray in faith in the name of the Lord, anointing the sick person with oil. James encourages Christians to pray for one another that they might be healed, and where applicable, to confess their faults to one another. Healing is promised, though not necessarily instantaneously. We sometimes need to persist in prayer. The conditions which govern all types of prayer are surely applicable in this context too. (The end of James 4 makes it clear that we cannot even be sure that we will be alive tomorrow — unless it is God's will!) Finally, it would seem sensible, and biblical, that when God has provided a simple natural remedy for a sickness, Christians should thankfully avail themselves of it.

### **Some problems of divine healing**

The basic problem that lies at the heart of most questions that arise about the doctrine of healing is the simple fact that not everybody is healed. Pastors who have watched the suffering of some of the greatest saints in their congregation simply cannot believe that the answer is merely a matter of sin or unbelief on the part of the sufferer. The scriptures themselves do not support this suggestion.

We need to remember that even in Bible times there is evidence that there were occasions when not everyone was healed. Of course, there were times when everyone was, especially during the ministry of the Lord Jesus from which we may conclude that we may well expect special periods of divine visitation when the same could happen again, as it did for the early Christians in Acts 5:16. But nowhere else in Acts are we told that such a thing took place. In fact, even in the ministry of the Lord Jesus there was at least one occasion when only one out of a large crowd was healed (John 5:1 -9). And those who remind us of the health and strength of

Moses whose eyesight was still good even at the age of one hundred and twenty usually fail to mention Isaac who died blind!

To attempt to deal with the problems of healing at all is a formidable task. To seek to do so within the scope of so brief a chapter is an impossibility. Perhaps we do well to remember as we consider the problem of those who are not yet healed that the spirit is more important than the body, that God does chastise us that we might be partakers of his holiness, that Paul's thorn — whatever it was — was in his flesh, and that he did leave Trophimus at Miletus sick.

As Christians we are still living in a world that is under the curse. The whole creation is groaning as in the pains of childbirth (Romans 8:22) and we ourselves groan inwardly waiting for the redemption of the body (v.23). But the day is coming when the creation itself will be delivered from its bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of the children of God! There's going to be a resurrection. We shall receive a body 'like his glorious body'. Our mortal bodies will be clothed with immortality! Death itself will be swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15:50ff). Then every promise of healing will be fulfilled, for there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things will have passed away (Revelation 21:4).

## **The Basics of Healing**

Cornwall, J., *Back to Basics*, Brentwood, Sharon Press, 1994. (Ch.8, *Basics of Healing*, pp143-161)

One characteristic of Jesus' ministry when He was here on earth was His compassion for the sick and afflicted. Matthew, who walked with Jesus during His three years of ministry wrote: When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. (Matthew 14:14). He also reports that when two

blind men called out to Jesus for healing, Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him. (Matthew 20:34).

The apostles who were eye witnesses to the ministry of Jesus reported repeatedly that people brought sick, infirmed, and demonized persons to Jesus and He healed all of them. Jesus had pity on the afflicted. He not only had the ability to heal; He had the empathy that moved Him to release divine power to deliver these afflicted ones.

The writer of the book of Hebrews happily reminds us, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Our sicknesses so affected Jesus that He healed all who reached out to Him. Our physical limitations still touch Him. Jesus was touched with feelings of infirmities, and He is still touched with those limitations. He healed those who were oppressed and He still heals the oppressed.

Jesus did not leave His compassion in the tomb when God the Father raised Him from the dead. This same writer assures us, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

The double negative in this sentence assures us that we actually have a high priest (Jesus) who feels our feelings of infirmity. He is still compassionate toward the sick of spirit, soul, and body.

Jesus once lived in a body as we do, and He felt the pressure of pain, anxiety, and suffering. Not all of it was by observation. When He hung on the cross all the sicknesses and diseases of the world were thrust upon Him. The prophet declared, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5). No one dare say that our Lord doesn't understand how he or she feels. He once felt it as you now feel it. It has shown Him to be merciful and compassionate.



Out of this mercy and compassion, Christ Jesus has made multiple and bountiful provision for cleansing our spirits, renewing our souls, and healing our bodies. Sometimes His provisions work cooperatively, and other times they work independently, but all are provisions of our Lord.

Look at them.

## **Natural Healing**

Even the most prestigious automobile manufacturer has never produced an automobile with the ability to fix itself that is equal to our body's ability to heal itself. The law of self-preservation is fundamental in each person born into this world. The life that God gives us at conception has an amazing ability to mend physical wounds and fight off invading germs and viruses.

Some years ago a close associate of mine worked as a medical assistant in a small prison hospital. During the time he was there, he lost count of the gunshot and stabbing victims they treated. My friend told me that he was amazed at how little the doctor did for most of these, and yet how completely these victims recovered from their wounds. When he dared to ask the doctor why he gave such insignificant treatment to these patients, he merely said, "The body, if given half a chance, will heal itself." Fortunately, he was correct. Through the long history of medicine, we have repeatedly discovered that people often got well in spite of the treatment they received rather than because of it. For many generations surgeons did little, if any, sterilization of their instruments or their hands. They often introduced more illness to their patients than the surgery could cure. Still many of these patients recovered.

Similarly, for a long time it was felt that reduction in the blood supply of an ill person would hasten his or her recovery. Even barbers used to slit a vein and catch a flow of blood from their customers to cure a variety of maladies. Interestingly enough, that is the reason for the red strip on a barber pole.

In spite of such malpractice, many of these patients got well. No wonder David said, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). We can all join David in this rejoicing, for God has given us bodies that have amazing abilities to

cure illness. The life force in each of us urgently resists the invasion of anything that threatens the body.

## **Medicinal Healing**

In spite of this amazing capacity, there are times when the invading illness is greater than the body's defences. Modern medical science has gone a long way in producing medicines that can help the body's healing powers. Sometimes the basic problem is a chemical imbalance in the system. Doctors can often give prescriptions that correct this imbalance; enabling the body to function normally.

I have met some Christians who refuse to take any medicine and boldly declare: "The Lord is my healer." I know that He is. I have also learned that He offers different channels for this healing grace. In describing the New Jerusalem where the saints will live after the coming of our Lord, John observed, "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:2). If God provides leaves of medicinal benefit for the people who live after His coming, would we not suspect that He has provided such benefits for those of us who await His coming?

Coupled with medicinal healing, the science of medical surgery has come a long way. A medical practitioner of the 1920's would be astounded at the technology of the modern hospital. The cat-scan, laser-beam technology, and a thousand other machines of medicine that were totally unknown in his day would overwhelm him as much as it would a medicine man from the bush country of Africa.

All branches of medicine have advanced at high speed over the past twenty years. Procedures unheard of a decade ago are common to doctors today. While doctors still admit that they are "practicing medicine", it is amazing how skilful they have become in their practices.

Is this totally the result of keen minds and lucky discoveries? It is more than interesting to realize that the major advances in medicine have come to "Christian" countries. The nations that do not acknowledge the supremacy of God seem to be locked into the dark ages of medical practice unless they learn it from the Christianized

nations. Doesn't this speak of God's intervention even in the field of medicinal healing?

## **Attitudinal Healing**

The cause of the illness usually determines the cure. If it is an invading wound, it is treated differently than indigestion. Infection calls for a different action. If the cause of the sickness is in the soul, it is not likely that it can be cured in the body, even if that soulish problem has produced a physical reaction.

My daughter, who now teaches nursing, used to work for a doctor in Phoenix, Arizona, who had his own laboratory. After repeatedly running a series of diagnostic tests, he would ask my daughter to come into his office while he filled out a prescription for the patient. To the shock of the patient, he handed him or her a prescription with the statement, "This is for your symptoms Take it as directed." Then he would ask, "Now, whom do you hate?"

"I don't hate anyone," the patient usually responded.

"My tests indicate otherwise," the doctor said. "You are tilled with anger, resentment, and hatred."

Picking up his prescription pad again, the doctor wrote down a couple of Scripture references. As he handed it to the patient he said, "Read these passages three times a day. I want to see you again in a week."

This Christian doctor realized that some illnesses have their roots in attitudes. Until there is a change in these attitudes, curing the symptoms will not effect a cure. The symptoms will simply reappear. Perhaps this is what Jesus meant when He spoke to the lame man He had healed at the pool of Bethesda and told him, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14).

Maybe this is why the Bible repeatedly talks about dealing positively with forgiveness, anger, bitterness, and interpersonal relationships. Our Creator knows these negative attitudes put a stress overload on the physical system and the human body breaks down. Sickness that is the result of sin cannot be cured until the problem of sin is solved at Calvary.

Unforgiveness, bitterness, inner strife, and uncontrolled anxiety are all sickness producers. These attitudes of the soul need correcting before healing can come, otherwise we will merely be treating the symptoms rather than cure the sickness. Tremendous pressure is exerted upon the body by what is in the soul or spirit.

This is an excellent reason for praying for sick persons, for prayer often makes us conscious of our inner being while we are in the presence of Jesus who forgives sin and cleanses our lives. We do not know how old this proverb is, but we do know that it is as true today as the day it was written: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Proverbs 17:22). We read frequently of the curative powers of laughter, and the value of reaching beyond ourselves in expressing our joy. Actually, we are merely redefining the curative powers of celebration. Persons who have learned to thank and praise God with worshiping spirits have discovered how healthful a positive appreciation of life can be. They generally outlive those who are introspective, critical, and condemnatory.

Still, while both theologians and doctors better understand the healing power of living in right relationship with oneself and with others, neither group would blame all sickness on negative inner attitudes. The medical field declares that much sickness is the result of microbes, viruses, and organic mal-functions.

Because prior to the introduction of sin, there was no sickness and after the eradication of sin, there is no more sickness, we see a cause/effect relationship between the two. Sickness is an irrevocable part of the curse of sin. Sin and sickness are so intertwined that it is difficult to see one without the other. The Bible declares that the foundational root of sickness is sin.

This is not to suggest that all personal illness is a direct result of that individual's sin. When the disciples asked Jesus whether it was personal or parental sin that caused the man to be born blind, Jesus assured them that it was neither, and that God was going to get glory in healing him (see John 9:3).

Much sickness is merely the result of sin working in the human race. The most devout Christians are still members of the human race that

lives under the curse of sin. Even when our faith is strong, we are subject to the workings of decay. Unless the Lord's return is very soon, we will all experience death.

I feel that it is foolish for any Christian to reject all healing that has its source outside of divine healing. We should rejoice in every provision God has made to restore us to healthy living, even when God uses other means in furnishing healing, as He did when He instructed Isaiah to put a lump of figs on King Hezekiah to heal him (see 2 Kings 20:7). It is certain that God did not need the figs, but perhaps Hezekiah's weak faith needed something outward to cause him to believe God's word

## **Divine Healing**

In His mercy, God has provided a repair department for the human body. It is likely that when God expelled Adam from the garden, Adam discovered leaves, roots, berries, and even animals that could alleviate wounds and sickness. He probably learned something of the curative power of the rays of the sun and the cleansing power of running water. Since his teacher was God the Creator, it is likely that Adam was well taught.

Through the centuries these discoveries have increased until today's medical science seems almost god-like. All these properties are God's gifts to suffering men and women. But beyond medicine, surgery, manipulation, and our latest curative machines, God has also provided a realm of healing commonly called divine healing.

Admittedly religious charlatans have exploited people with false claims of possessing healing powers, but so did the medicine shows and so do many advertisements on modern television. Counterfeit never disproves the real.

We do believe, based on Bible passages that seem irrefutable, that God has made provision to heal a human body by direct intervention of His will through His Holy Spirit. The Bible not only promises to heal, but it gives graphic pictures of divine healing at work.

In his poetic and prophetic vision of the crucifixion of Jesus, Isaiah declared: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon

him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Nearly 800 years later James wrote: "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:13,15).

Both the Old and the New Testaments abound in demonstrations of this healing grace God has promised. In both Testaments, God's provision of healing for the entire person can be viewed in three categories:

1. Healing by covenant
2. Healing by the Word
3. Healing by identification

## **Healing by Covenant**

Although Adam made a covenant with death through his disobedience, Jesus made a covenant of life by His complete obedience. The same verses that blame Adam for sickness and death in the human race credit Jesus with the antidote — life: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

This covenant with life was in the original plan of God, and although the price of that covenant was Christ's death on the cross, the product of the covenant became available before God carved the Law with His finger on tables of stone at Mt. Sinai.

God showed the power of this covenant of divine health to the Israelites very soon after their deliverance from Egypt. Standing at the far edge of the Red Sea through which they had just walked, these Hebrews watched in awe as the sea closed so quickly that none of the pursuing army of Egypt escaped drowning.

The whole experience of coming out of Egypt and seeing their enemies forever destroyed was so overwhelming to these Hebrews that they danced, sang, shouted, and played tambourines in wild abandonment. Some commentators say that this continued for three or more days. This expressed exuberance in the desert sands

dehydrated their bodies, but there was no fresh water available to quench their thirst. Moses dispatched scouts to go and search for water, and they returned with the report of a large pool of water at Marah.

Once the people heard this announcement, they departed more like a murmuring mob than a military machine. It was each person for himself or herself. When they arrived at Marah, they found the waters bitter to the taste, but they quickly quenched their thirst and filled their water skins anyway. They soon discovered that the waters of Marah produced severe diarrhoea. Most of the campers expected to die: "And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" (Exodus 15:24).

Moses cried out to God on their behalf. In response, God pointed out a tree growing at the edge of the pond and instructed Moses to cut it down and cast it into the pool of water. Moses obediently threw the felled tree into the water, and it healed and purified the waters. When the people could be convinced to take a second drink, the sweetened water healed them, too. God used this occasion to introduce His covenant of divine health to them. We read: "There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee" (Exodus 15:25-26).

This was a covenant pledge to keep them in good health, and God sealed the covenant with His name — Jehovah-Rapha, here translated as, "I am the LORD that healeth thee". Some scholars of the Hebrew language say that Jehovah-Rapha should be translated, "I am a physician by nature".

God ratified this covenant with His very nature, for all God's covenant names reveal another facet of His very being. The people were to ratify the covenant with obedience to the voice of God. As long as they were obedient, God preserved their health during their wilderness wanderings. When they murmured and disobeyed, God

sent plagues among them. After they repented, He removed those plagues and healed the people.

This pledge of divine health preceded the Old Covenant, so it began before God gave the law to Moses, and it flows into the New Covenant. The tree that Moses cast into the bitter waters of Marah is a beautiful type of the work of Christ at Calvary Paul wrote: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13).

The tree is a type or picture of the cross. God placed the curse of sin on Christ when He was crucified at Calvary. This personal divine involvement with the curse of sickness has purchased and provided a redemption from that curse for us. As we live in obedience to God's will, we can expect the covenant of divine health to apply to our lives. Since God sealed this covenant with His name Jehovah-Rapha, divine healing is more than a gift of health. It is a gift of God's very nature.

## **Healing by the Word**

The beautiful Psalm that begins, "O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever" (Psalm 107:1), goes on to recount four categories of life that have experienced the goodness of God. Each division ends with, "Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psalm 107:8,15,21,31).

In the very centre of this Psalm that extols the provision and protection of God is the statement: "He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions" (Psalm 107:20). God's earliest covenant of healing was based on His name. Here He declares that He has opened an avenue of healing and deliverance based on the divine Word. This is not a lesser provision; it is an enlargement on the first, for we are told: "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name" (Psalm 138:2).

This could cause theological problems unless we remember that since God's name reveals God's nature, no word that God speaks can ever be a violation of that nature. He who is the truth can speak only the truth, and Jehovah-Rapha will speak words of healing.



We understand God through His self-revelation, and He has used His Word to reveal Himself. For our safety, God has chosen to give priority to honouring His Word, for that is our surest and safest revelation of God. Dreams and feelings come and go, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever" (1 Peter 1:25). He has chosen to magnify that Word above His very names, and both His name and His Word promise us healing.

We do well to remind ourselves that God's Word is creative. God simply said "light" and there was light. Creative commands of God brought into existence all that we call nature. Surely, He who created with His Word, can also repair our bodies, restore our souls, and renew our spirits with a word from His mouth.

Matthew and Mark record a touching incident involving a man who had been isolated from society by leprosy. Mark tells the story this way: "There came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean" (Mark 1:40-41).

Leprosy was the incurable disease of that day, very much as AIDS is in our day. One statement from Jesus — "Be thou clean" — was all it took to cure this man. There is creative and curative power in the Word spoken by the triune God. Jesus spoke sight into blinded eyes, strength into lame legs, and life into corpses. A word from Jesus is always a positive answer to sickness, for it can even recreate what disease has destroyed.

The word of God is also directive, for sometimes God chooses to get us involved in an act of obedience before destroying sickness. Naaman discovered this. Captain of the Syrian army, Naaman was a leper. Through the testimony of a captive Hebrew girl, he learned that the God of Israel could cure leprosy. When his king sent him to Israel's king with a demand for a cure, the king of Israel was terrified; thinking it was a provocation for war. The prophet Elisha heard of this dilemma and sent for Naaman to come to him.

Upon his arrival, Elisha merely sent word to him telling Naaman what Jehovah had said. This lack of respect for his rank insulted and

angered Naaman, but his servants finally persuaded him to obey the word that God spoke through Elisha. When he dipped seven times in the Jordan River, as God had directed, God healed him. It was not the muddy water, but the obeyed Word of God that made this Syrian whole.

In the ministry of Jesus, He directed the lame man at the pool of Bethesda to take up his bed and walk. He sent a blind man to the pool of Siloam, directed a dead boy to get out of his casket, and commanded the dead Lazarus to come out of the tomb. None could do what was commanded before the word of direction came, but when they obeyed the direction, Christ gave them life, sight, or healing.

I have observed over the years that when people, for whom prayer had been offered, responded obediently to what they were told to do, the healing they desired was given to them. Often the commands seem impossible to obey, as when a person is commanded to step out of a wheel chair and walk, or a blind person is told to read a sign on the wall. The step of obedience releases inner faith. Some persons have so accommodated their infirmity that they need to take drastic measures to step out of their unbelief.

Sickness in any form can become captivating, but Jesus came to set the captive free. He testified in his home town synagogue, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18, quoted from Isaiah 61:1, emphasis added).

The word of God is equally imperative. When God speaks, there is no room for delay. During the days when God dwelt among us in the person of Jesus, His word was obeyed instantly. Water congealed under His feet. Food multiplied from a boy's lunch to a banquet for thousands. Diseases departed immediately, and infirmities fled at the command of his voice. The deaf heard His voice when He spoke. The dumb could repeat His words after Jesus spoke to them. The lame leaped for joy, and businessmen forsook their businesses to follow Him. He spoke with creative and directive authority, and

those words had an imperative in them that caused immediate response.

When Jesus speaks a word against sickness in human experience, it doesn't take a lengthy convalescent period to be restored to health. When He says, "I will. Be thou clean" (Mark 1:41), the action is instant.

God has so many ways to produce healing in human experience that we cannot categorize His actions. God instructed Moses to raise a bronze serpent when Israel was dying from serpent bites. To look was to live. Elijah stretched his body over the body of the dead son and breathed life into his nostrils. Elisha sent Naaman to the Jordan River, but Isaiah put a plaster of figs on dying Hezekiah's boil. There didn't seem to be a healing ritual in the Old Testament.

Jesus was equally varied in the way He healed people. Once He formed clay balls and put them into the empty eye sockets of a blind man, and then sent him to wash in the pool. Another time He simply spoke the word to heal blind eyes. Although Jesus was the first person in the Bible to heal blindness, and the New Testament records more incidents of Him doing this than any other miracle, He never healed two blind persons the same way.

The New Testament is as void of a healing formula as was the Old Testament. Although James tells us to anoint with oil and pray the prayer of faith, Peter's shadow healed sick persons laid on pallets on the roadside. The ill and infirmed sought access to Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons, for merely touching them released healing power.

Perhaps God wants us to realize that formulas and rituals are always empty without His nature and creative, directive, and imperative word. When He is present, methods are quite unimportant and where He is absent, the methods are useless. He sealed His covenant of health with His name, and He has set His Word higher than His name.

## **Healing by Identification**

When John wrote the prologue to His gospel he said: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and

we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1,14).

Jehovah-Rapha of the Old Testament and Jesus Christ of the New Testament are the same person. In the Old Covenant, He was the spoken and written Word of God, but in the New Testament, He became the Living Word of God. In the book of Revelation, Jesus is pictured as: "Clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13). The Word of God is His eternal name, and "He dwelt among us." He tasted of our lifestyle with all its limitations.

In becoming human flesh and living with us, Christ identified completely with us. The Bible assures us: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). In taking our sins in His own body, Jesus felt what we feel (see 1 Peter 2:24). Jesus saw what sickness does to human bodies. The testimony of the disciples was: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). Through the blood of His cross, Jesus has made a life-giving identification with us. The seven wounds of Calvary (head, hands, back, feet, and side) inflicted by thorns, whip, nails, and spear all brought Him into identification with our sicknesses. Peter assured us: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

At Calvary, we can identify more fully with the finished work of God through Jesus Christ. It is a great mystery that only divine wisdom could solve, but God did solve it and brought to us the sprinkled blood of Calvary which not only cleanses from sin, but offers us physical healing as part of the package.

## **Healing By Grace**

Some groups of Christians have made divine healing a sacrament of the church. Others declare it to be in the atonement the same way salvation is in that atonement. In either of these scenarios, they declare that it will always work. That has not been my personal

experience. I was raised in a family that believed and practiced divine healing. My father prayed for the sick long before I was born. I have prayed for the sick since my boyhood days. I have never seen 100% success no matter who did the praying.

I must admit that what I do not know about divine healing far exceeds what I do know. I have watched saints go to their deaths unhealed in spite of many prayers of righteous persons. Conversely, I have seen sinners healed instantly the first time they were anointed with oil and prayed over. I do not understand this, and it certainly is not the way I would administer healing if the results were within my power. But they aren't. God is the healer; I am not. He is sovereign and His ways are past our discovery.

I can attest that every time I have made a doctrine out of Divine healing, it has hindered the flow of this grace of God. It was when I got the sick individual into the presence of a healing God that marvellous things took place. I have discovered that God refuses to allow us to completely codify divine healing, for He dislikes being placed in a doctrinal box or being asked to conform to our concepts. Jehovah is a God of infinite variety who seems to delight in doing things in different ways.

He can cause three feet of snow to fall on an area of land without duplicating a single snowflake. Similarly, God likes to personalize His intervention in the physical needs of those who love Him.

I have come to accept that every work of divine healing in an active work of God's grace extended to needy persons. We do not deserve this grace, and we certainly cannot command it. We can, however, ask for it, and that is what I do every time a person requests a healing prayer.

"But aren't you holding out false hope to sick persons?" you may ask.

Absolutely not! We offer a provision, but we make no guarantees. We are willing to do what the Bible tells us to do; believing that this opens a channel that allows God to flow His healing grace.

However, if He does not flow healing into the person, he or she is no worse off than before we prayed.

Some persons sidestep praying for the sick and say: "What if God doesn't heal them?" My attitude is, "What if God does heal them?" If we ask God and He says "No", that in itself is an answer. But we'll never know until we ask.

When Jesus was on this earth, He said: "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Our spiritual enemy wants to steal our health, kill our soundness, and destroy our bodies. Jesus came to undo everything the devil tried to do. He came to give us the antidote for all the poison of the enemy. Jesus gives us the gift of Himself and He is life. The prologue of John's gospel says: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).

Healing, then, is an impartation of the very life of God into the sick body of the person God is healing. The method used to achieve this impartation is greatly varied and actually quite unimportant. It is the results that matter

## **Healing in the Gifts of the Spirit**

In listing the nine gifts or charismas of the Spirit, the Apostle Paul included "gifts of healing" (1 Corinthians 12:9). This is one of the three gifts of supernatural power: faith, gifts of healing, and working of miracles. Some persons mistakenly believe that these are resident gifts in special believers, but the Bible declares, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:4). It would seem that the gifts remain resident in the Holy Spirit, and He is resident in believers. The "gifts" remain His as surely as the fruit is always the fruit of the Spirit in the believer, not the fruit of the believer in the world.

While the other gifts of the Spirit are given in the singular, this wonderful flow of power that produces healing in the Human body, soul, and spirit is listed as plural; "gifts". I have heard this interpreted that the Spirit imparts the gift of healing cancer to one, the gift of healing faulty eyesight to another, and so forth. This speculation is usually undergirded with personal examples, but we do not look to experience to illuminate the Word. We go from the word to experience.

There is no Bible basis for believing healing is divided into categories. Jesus, Paul, Peter, and others healed all forms of sickness and disease. They were not specialists in one or two types of human suffering.

It is far more likely that presenting the gifts of healing in plural form indicates that the sick person got the gift, not the person doing the praying. Every healing is a work of Christ's Spirit; it is a special gift of God's grace flowing through the Spirit. Often that flow is through the person praying for the sick, but not always. In healing the sick, God is not limited in His Word to the availability of a human channel.

It is wise to sidestep the title of "healer" when God uses us in alleviating suffering in others. That is a title that belongs exclusively to the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the quickest ways to get into trouble with God is to apply His titles to ourselves.

If He gives us a gift of healing for another, we should pass it on, but never take credit for it. It is His gift, not ours.

## **Divine Healing Requires Faith**

Although divine healing is not "faith healing" (Jesus, not "faith", is the Healer), the operation of faith is essential for divine healing to flow. Matthew said that when Jesus visited His hometown and preached in the synagogue that people would not believe, "And he did not many mighty works then because of their unbelief" (Matthew 13:58). Still, Jesus did not always demand that faith come from the sick person. There were at least five channels of faith that produced healing miracles in the days of Jesus.

1. The faith of Jesus Himself.
2. The faith of the sick person.
3. The faith of the persons who brought the sick.
4. The faith of the disciples who helped minister to the sick.
5. The faith of God — the gift of faith that makes it possible for anyone present to believe.

**God responds to faith.** He isn't too particular whose faith touches Him. All He wants is the channel of faith through which He can flow a measure of His nature to the afflicted person.

Just as the channels for faith were varied, the way faith was released or the point of faith's release, were equally varied. There are five or more ways illustrated in the New Testament.

1. Confession — a declaration to Christ that they did, indeed, believe.
2. Desperation — as illustrated by the woman who rushed up behind Jesus to touch the hem of His garment and received healing.
3. Obedience — as when Jesus told the cripple at the pool to take up his bed and walk. It was when he obeyed that he released his faith.
4. Anticipation — as when the people placed the sick in the streets anticipating the passing of Peter's shadow.
5. Association — as when the sick asked for articles that had been close to Paul's body.

In this thumb nail sketch of divine healing, I have simply stressed that God is the Healer, faith is the channel, and that there are many different ways this healing is effected in sick people. The real diversity is not in the healing, but in the method used for touching the nature of God for that healing. That will be as varied as the nature of the sick person or the manner that is comfortable to the person who ministers God's healing grace. Who cares how it came? We just rejoice that it did.

### **I left Trophimus sick in Miletus**

Gee, Donald, *Trophimus I Left Sick*, London, Elim, 1952.

(Donald Gee was a noted author with over twenty books and numerous articles to his name. He was editor of the magazine *World Pentecost* and Principle of the AoG Bible College at Kenley for 11 years from 1951-1962)

*This Booklet is written by one who believes in Divine healing for others who believe in Divine healing. It is dedicated to that large number of men and women all over the world who have come to the author with their personal problems concerning Divine healing. An increasingly strong desire has been expressed that some of the things said in intimate conversations might be published in printed form.*



*This booklet is the result. It is published with diffidence, but with the earnest hope that it may be of help to good and honest hearts. The glory of God through the truth, as the writer has been given to see the truth, is the only ultimate object. "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." D.G. 1952.*

## **I left Trophimus sick in Miletus**

"I left Trophimus sick in Miletus." (2Tim.4:20.) Trophimus was an Ephesian Christian who became one of the missionary team that accompanied Paul during his last journeys. Most probably he was converted during that notable period when *"so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them."* Acts 19:10-12

When Paul eventually left for Macedonia and Greece, Trophimus and Tychicus, another Asian, accompanied him. They returned with the apostle by way of Troas, where Trophimus must have been present on that memorable Sunday night at the breaking of bread service when Eutychus fell down from the third loft, and was taken up for dead but restored alive by the apostle (Acts 20:4-12). Not many days later, while the ship stopped at Miletus, Paul called the elders of the Church at Ephesus to meet him there, and Trophimus might quite likely have been in his home-town (Acts 20:17). But he journeyed on with the determined apostle all the way to Jerusalem, and it was the presence of Trophimus with Paul in the streets of the city that gave credence to the rumour that Paul had polluted the temple by taking into it his Gentile companion (Acts 21:29). So Trophimus unwittingly became the excuse for the mob that led to Paul's arrest, with such

grave consequences. It seems unlikely that Trophimus accompanied Paul on the voyage to Rome. It must have been on a later and final journey, during Paul's brief period of liberty between writing his first and second letters to Timothy, that he left Trophimus at Miletus sick. These details given in the book of Acts are interesting. For our present purpose they possess significance in connection with Divine healing because they prove that Trophimus had seen quite often an outstanding ministry of the miraculous and been intimately associated with the Christian missionary who exercised it with notable success and pentecostal power.

Notwithstanding all that, Paul had left Trophimus at Miletus sick. Why? He would be bold who would suggest that Paul must have lost his power to heal the sick in the Name of the Lord Jesus: or that Paul had forfeited the gift and calling so long and conspicuously enjoyed: or that Paul was backslidden. We have no evidence at all to that effect, for, to the contrary, while stranded in Malta on the voyage to Rome, Paul had exercised the gifts of healing with great power and freedom (Acts 28:8-9).

Neither can we doubt Paul's personal desire that such a faithful fellow-labourer should be healed, rather than left behind sick. The apostle's concern for Epaphroditus in a similar case, and his deep relief when "God had mercy on him" reveal Paul's love for his helpers if by any chance sickness laid one of them low (Phil.2:25-30). If it could have been possible for Paul's prayers to heal Trophimus we may feel sure he never would have left him sick. To attribute it to lack of personal willingness on Paul's part is monstrous.

An important principle seems to be illustrated here that the gifts of healing and of working of miracles (1Cor.12: 9-10) have their true sphere in evangelism rather than among the

saints. The Church makes a profound mistake when she tries to use such spiritual gifts for herself rather than for others. Miracles of healing are signs to follow them that believe as they preach the gospel to all creation (Mark 16:17-18). Their efficacy to attract and convince the indifferent and the unbelieving appear again and again in the Scriptures. Our faith in Divine healing accompanying evangelism along the line of "sign-gifts" as a gracious possibility for our own day, and until the end of the age, has been remarkably vindicated by bold and faithful preachers whose huge meetings have provided the impressive answer to those who wonder how men can still be attracted to hear the Gospel. Healings do not necessarily convert; they do not necessarily produce repentance unto life; they never take the functions pertaining to the Word, and the Word alone; but they DO attract men to at least hear the life-giving Word.

Evangelism is their true sphere, whether in the first century or the twentieth, and not a general healing ministry within the churches. Many of our problems of Divine healing arise because we do not understand this. Disciples crowd into evangelistic campaigns, and line up with the sinners and the curious and the needy wordlings to seek a share in the Divine mercy to such. None with any sympathy for these sufferers in body will criticize them seeking relief by any means.

Sometimes God does graciously make them a sign to unbelievers by bestowing upon them a miracle of healing that all can see. But we think that all who have had experience with great evangelistic and Divine healing campaigns will have noted that the majority of outstanding miracles of healing occur upon those attracted for the first time and not upon faithful members of churches, and "chronic" cases among Christians.

Moreover, Paul not only left Trophimus sick at Miletus—he did not secure relief from his own physical infirmities by means of his undoubted spiritual gifts. There are poignant references to his own physical weaknesses and infirmities, and to those of Timothy his dear son in the faith (Gal.4:13; 1Tim.5:23). Paul did not relish his weaknesses and infirmities of the flesh; he prayed to be delivered from them, and his ultimate glorying in them was a remarkable spiritual victory that was of a high order of grace (2Cor. 12:9-10). In the case of Timothy he advised special dieting as an alleviation. The significant thing is that there is no record of Paul practising Divine healing through supernatural gifts of the Spirit, either for himself, or for those who were members of his missionary band, though he was richly endowed with the same in his evangelistic ministry.

Closer attention to these suggestive facts might throw light on some of our problems of Divine healing when we see those greatly used in healing others unable to get healing for themselves. There need be nothing inconsistent in that when we see deeply enough. Indeed perhaps there is something profoundly true and necessary. Our Lord wrought no miracles for Himself. And the servant is not above his Master. Trials and afflictions and weaknesses and infirmities in the flesh of His faithful missionaries and evangelists today are not instances of "failure" in Divine healing; rather they are marks of sharing that very travail and heavy price that the work of pioneering in the Gospel usually entails. The sheer physical strain can be immense, and there is plenty of evidence in the New Testament that Paul and his companions found it so. Epaphroditus was not the last messenger of the Gospel who "for the work of Christ was nigh unto death." Broken health is the price many have paid. It is to be avoided as much as

possible by using wisdom, by taking precautions, and above all by keeping in the will of God and not attempting things beyond our personal calling. God had mercy on Epaphroditus, who apparently overworked to make up for the "lack of service" of others (how often this occurs!), and God still has mercy in like circumstances. But the price has to be paid. And sometimes to the "last full measure of devotion." If there has been failure, it has not been failure in Divine healing. Perhaps we shall understand in That Day that there is no failure at all, but only a deeper principle at work than receiving the physical deliverance that our weak hearts always crave and judge to be the will of God.

Was there some failure in Trophimus that necessitated Paul leaving him at Miletus sick? Had Trophimus been guilty of some disobedience to the Divine will? Or did Trophimus simply lack faith?

Those who want, somehow or other, to fit in this verse about the illness of Trophimus with their own doctrines of Divine healing are tempted to assert that he **MUST** have failed somewhere. But that is the worst possible way of interpreting the Scriptures. There is nothing whatever in the statement, or in its context, to suggest anything spiritually or morally wrong about Trophimus. Assumption here is completely gratuitous. Part of the unfortunate manner in which faith in Divine healing sometimes has been sincerely promulgated by strong-minded personalities is this continual suggestion that failure to get healed is rooted in some deep spiritual failure in the one who is sick. This attitude has added mental suffering to physical suffering, and in extreme cases turned belief in Divine healing into a scourge rather than a privilege, and a burden rather than a relief. That it possesses an element of truth need not be denied. Even in natural healing the patient

has responsibilities. But to hold a doctrine of Divine healing that acts like a lash upon the heightened susceptibilities of the weak and sickly, surely comes near being a travesty of the compassion with which our Lord viewed the multitudes of sick folk that crowded around Him on earth.

Let there be confession of all known faults; let there be humble prayer for light on any hindrance to healing that obedience can remove; let faith be strengthened by the promises of the word of God and the testimonies of those Divinely healed; but let all this be done in love. And all the time beware of the wiles of the "accuser of the brethren," (Rev. 12:10) knowing that satan will add affliction to affliction upon a child of God unless he is resisted by the truth as it is in Jesus. If no apparent reasons for failure to receive supernatural healing are made clear to the conscience or mind of the sufferer we have no recourse but to leave the case in the hands of our Heavenly Father—without condemnation of ourselves or others. Let our "Trophimus" be held blameless, though left sick, until we know as we are known.

### **Trophimus was sick.**

Trophimus was sick. That simple fact is stated without comment. The Bible is a salutary remedy for morbid or extreme doctrines that refuse to see life clearly and as a whole. When it records the miraculous there is a restraint and simplicity that constitutes a hallmark of veracity. It is we who in the heat of our controversies, or our mere carelessness in reading, frequently miss the consistent and solid background of the normal in the Bible. And the background of the early Christians was perfectly normal as far as universal human experience is concerned.

Something tremendous had happened in their souls, and they knew it. It had all been made possible for them through the

resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. They were born from above, and their bodies had become the temples of the Spirit of God. Their preaching of Christ was confirmed with signs following, and their meetings were marked by supernatural manifestations of the Holy Ghost. They confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims with a citizenship in heaven. But their teachers exhorted them to be diligent in fulfilling all the regular and normal duties of home and family life, of social and business life, of earthly citizenship and moral obligation (E.g. Col.3:17 – 4:1). They knew our common human laughter and tears, strength and weakness, poverty and plenty, labour and rest, sunshine and shadow. They married and were given in marriage (1Tim.5.14). They bore children, and knew the pang of bereavement when those they loved died—only they were taught to regard that as falling asleep in Jesus, and they were given a blessed Hope (1Thess.4:13-18).

It may seem ridiculous to have to assert the plain fact that sooner or later all those early Christians of whom we read in the New Testament died. The miracle by which Peter restored Dorcas to life (Acts 9:40) was not repeated indiscriminately, if at all. Loved ones were not continually being raised from the dead, however deep the sorrow and great the loss to the local church.

We may, if we choose, imagine that the vast majority who did not become martyrs simply died in their sleep, or faded away through sheer old age, or in some other dreamy way just slipped painlessly out of this life into the life which is to come. Perhaps it was so. The idea is attractive. Only, if it is true, those early Christians had an abnormal experience in dying that they did not have in living. To most ordinary men and women death comes in the end through some physical

failure from which they do not recover - a sickness that proves fatal, because of impaired powers of physical resistance through advanced years. It is a strain upon credulity which the New Testament is not in the habit of imposing upon us to imagine that it was quite otherwise with the early Christians just because they were Christians.

It is perfectly natural in all of us to shun disease and death, and our fears and distaste make us eagerly grasp at a doctrine that offers us immunity. For similar reasons there are many Christians who love the doctrine of what is usually called the "Rapture" far more because it holds out to them the thought of escaping death than for the genuine rapture of seeing His Blessed Face. Doctrines of Divine healing that leave almost no place ideally in the life of the Christian for physical pain and infirmity often are grasped at with avidity, but this is wishful thinking which neither Christian experience, nor the Bible when sanely interpreted, can transmute into sound doctrine that will stand the strain it is inevitably called upon to bear in practical living. No wonder we are surrounded with our "problems of Divine healing." We make them for ourselves by formulating imperfect doctrines.

It is helpful to expect health, and always a sufficiency of strength to do the will of God, and live for His glory. The Christians in the Bible were not a crowd of sickly folk, always seeking prayer for bodily healing. Neither were their local assemblies little more than Divine-healing clinics. We have a right in Christ to expect the blessings of a salvation that has a place in its sanctification for the body as well as the spirit and the soul (1Thess.5:23). A healthy body is an immense blessing which we believe Christians may justly claim and cherish for the service of love to God and man.



## **Physical health is frequently a matter of obeying simple and natural laws**

Physical health is frequently a matter of obeying simple and natural laws of health, such as wise eating and drinking; sensible clothing; sufficient fresh-air and exercise; proper hours of sleep; a good balance of work and recreation; freedom from personal worrying; etc. To attend to these matters is our part in true sanctification of the temples of the Holy Spirit. Our Heavenly Father will help us to achieve the abnormal only when we have absolutely no alternative in fulfilling our duty but to temporarily break the laws of health. There come times when risks have to be taken; when sleep has to be denied; when unsuitable food has to be eaten; when we have to temporarily overwork, and when personal anxiety and care can scarcely be avoided without being wrongfully unnatural. To trust in God THEN to be preserved in health is the privilege of His children; but to abuse ordinary rules for a healthy body when there is no need so to do is sheer presumption, and we need have little surprise if we are permitted to suffer accordingly. Divine healing gives us no privilege to presume.

And it is fanatical to rule out all place for possible sickness, and ultimately, if God so permit, a sickness unto death. It is stated with perfectly plain speech that in the end that great prophet of the Old Testament, Elisha, was "fallen sick of the sickness whereof he died," (2Kings 13:14) and the context gives not the slightest indication that he had failed spiritually. The rather he seems full of spiritual and prophetic energy to the end. But in the manner of the end of his earthly life he was, in striking contrast with his predecessor, entirely normal and as all other men. We who live in this dispensation may

wish to have an exodus like Elijah rather than Elisha, but wishes and doctrines are different matters - or ought to be. Did Trophimus call for the Elders of the Church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the Name of the Lord, that he might be raised up from his sickness? (Jas.5:14-16) If Paul could call for the Elders of the Church at Ephesus to come to him at Miletus for a very different purpose (Acts :20 17), there would have been no difficulty in them making the same short journey in answer to an appeal from Trophimus. Perhaps he did call, and the Elders did anoint him. Only we are not told that. And apparently Paul had not heard of his healing when he wrote to Timothy about his sickness. The well-used passage in James's epistle lays down a clear injunction as to what Christians ought to do if they fall sick. (Incidentally it recognises sickness as a possible contingency among believers.) They are to make a spiritual approach to the matter. Their first call should be to their spiritual leaders rather than their medical advisers. There is to be prayer, and a sacramental anointing with oil that has no medical value or purpose. A prayer of faith is called for to "save the sick," and the reference in the context to Elijah's prayer for rain (Jas. 5:17-18) indicates that spiritual intensity may be necessary. Divine healing through anointing and prayer is no light matter to be engaged in casually or perfunctorily. Connected with it is a most searching reference to forgiveness of sins, and a mutual confession of faults accompanied by mutual prayer for healing. The ministry of the Elders does not stand alone; it is only a part of the ordinance. The whole passage in James has been cheapened by being used far too promiscuously. It does not teach an appeal by the Elders to the sick to come and be prayed for; it does teach an appeal by the sick to the Elders. And it means those who are

seriously ill, not those with trivial and minor complaints that have not hindered them attending the meeting of the local church. The word literally means "without strength" or "exhausted." It is used in connection with Lazarus (John 11:2) Dorcas (Acts 9:37), and Epaphroditus (Phil.2:27), all of whom were "deadly sick." Such have to be visited because the sickness is grave.

Anointing with oil is not "extreme unction" for the dying; it is a ministry to preserve and lengthen life through Divine healing. But it ought to be exercised with gravity in cases of serious need, and it would seem more suited for the privacy of the home and sick-chamber than the parading in public of prayer for minor or intimate complaints of the bodies of believers, sometimes to our embarrassment. If reverence is strengthened for this sacred ordinance it will tend to increase faith in its efficacy and respect for the Elders who perform it. A gracious promise crowns the instruction in James - "The Lord shall raise him up." It is unthinkable that such a word could find a place in the New Testament without a blessed fulfilment being a commonplace among Christians. They fell sick like other men—but they were healed by the Lord. Their answers to their many other prayers on other matters found a counterpart in answers to prayer for healing also. We, too, can glory in the many, many Christians today who can testify to similar grace in receiving Divine healing directly from the Lord in answer to prayer, and often after obedience to this scriptural admonition to ask the local Elders to anoint them with oil and pray over them in His Name.

Yet a complete doctrine must take into account the whole counsel of God revealed in His word. It is common weakness to give little or no attention to passages of Scripture that fail to support our favourite doctrines. It is so here. If ultimate

healing from the Lord came to Trophimus as we are told it did come to Epaphroditus then it must have been delayed. Perhaps there WERE some spiritual conditions that Trophimus needed to fulfil, but we ought to tread very carefully in making the slightest insinuation. Paul suggests none, although he did so quite plainly in the case of the many weak and sickly among the Corinthians (1Cor.11:30). Apparently, also, Dorcas had not called for the Elders at Lydda (Acts 9:38) to pray over and anoint her with oil— unless their ministry failed to prove efficacious, or unless we take the extreme view that her death was deliberately ordained by God to allow Peter to perform the miracle. Paul did not seem to seek the assistance of the ministry of any Elders to anoint him for his own infirmities, and in the case of Timothy he advised carefulness of diet rather than prayer (Acts 9:38). If we wish, we can assume that in the healing that came to Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:27) the Elders at Rome had prayed for him, but we are not told anything about it. Finally, we must remind ourselves once more, at the risk of repeating the obvious, that sooner or later those early Christians all died. No observance of James 5.14-17, however scrupulous, ultimately prevented the course of nature. So it is clear that its application must have SOME limitations. If we were more willing to recognise that we might dispose of some of our "problems of Divine healing."

### **Should Trophimus have "claimed" Divine healing?**

Should Trophimus have "claimed" Divine healing? In asking this question we approach what will be the crux of the matter for many devout and sincere believers, and we must seek wisdom to tread carefully lest we injure faith.

Preachers of Divine healing usually stress that healing should be "taken" or "claimed" in the Name of the Lord without any

question as to it being the will of God to heal. That is regarded as settled beyond any shadow of doubt, provided the one who is sick is prepared to conform to certain plainly set forth conditions. Any querying as to the will of God to heal is treated with merciless suspicion as harbouring doubt and unbelief, and the candidate for healing is exhorted to refuse it any place in the heart or mind. Let us admit at once that this attitude has helped many. Faith involves an act of the will, and a trust in the substance of things hoped for, and acceptance of the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). Faith has to "take" healing as a right to be claimed in the Name of the Lord whatever the outward appearances may be. There is something splendid about this, and genuine miracles of Divine healing have rewarded such unwavering faith, even after a protracted battle. But for those weaker in faith and in personality it can prove very difficult and disheartening and baffling. Such an attitude imposes a tremendous burden if there is not a personal faith ready to assume it, come what will. A doctrinal basis for the conception of Divine healing as being unquestionably in the will of God for all has been provided by most Pentecostal denominations in their official statements of faith. It takes the form of the doctrine that Divine healing has been "provided for in the Atonement" (British Assemblies of God). The American Assemblies of God add the helpful words "and is the privilege of all believers." The Elim Churches state it slightly more ambiguously as they say - "We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Healer of the body, and that all who will walk in obedience to His will can claim Divine healing for their bodies." This stresses conditions to be fulfilled ("obedience"), but carries the same thought of a "claim." That an important and powerful truth is embodied in these statements, with their

scriptural reference to Isaiah 53:4-5 (*Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*) interpreted on the authority of Matt.8:16-17 (*When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases."*), few will deny who love the message of full salvation in Jesus' Name. But that it needs the wisdom which only the Spirit of Truth Himself can give in its application seems equally evident. To assert that healing for our bodies rests upon an identical authority with healing for our souls in the atoning work of Christ our Saviour can involve serious problems of personal faith and confidence for those weak in the faith if, and when, they see manifest cases where Divine healing, though "claimed," has not been received. It is idle to blind ourselves to the fact that such cases exist. True faith refuses to blind itself to the truth, and persistent sickness can be a very unwelcome and stubborn truth. The doctrine of Divine healing for the body in the Atonement reaches its maximum value when physical sickness is the result of our personal sin. In such a case it brings unspeakable relief to the sufferer to see that the blood of Christ purchases not only pardon for sin, but deliverance from its evil results in the body - "*the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*" Taken very literally by multitudes this has helped them much, and enabled them to have faith to be healed. God be praised! Fervent preaching of the Atonement occasionally neglects the accompanying truth that sometimes Divine love and wisdom

permit a measure of suffering as a result of sin, in order to teach us to sin no more, and make us love righteousness and hate iniquity. The classic example is David, who, though pardoned for his iniquity, had to suffer for the rest of his life because of it (2Sam.12:13.14; 13:31; 15:14, etc). A doctrine of Divine healing in the work of the Atonement must consistently leave a similar place for permitted sickness as a method of Divine love and wisdom for purposes of chastisement. The regarding of sickness as chastisement (i.e. discipline) from our Heavenly Father has undoubtedly been much overdone, and has been made an excuse for a whole lot of rank unbelief and worse, but it is folly to deny all truth in an attitude towards sickness that Christian experience through the ages has consistently sustained. Nevertheless, whenever discipline has fulfilled its purpose its necessity ceases. Recognition of sickness as a method of Divine chastisement does not destroy a true doctrine of Divine healing, the rather it strengthens it.

In the case of Paul's famous "thorn in the flesh"<sup>1</sup> there was no removal, but only a satisfying explanation (2Cor.12:7-9). It was not chastisement, but rather a stern preventative against spiritual failure that would have ruined his further ministry. It was an entirely extreme and exceptional case, and ought never to be quoted except by those who dare to conceive of themselves as in a like peril of soul through the abundance of their revelations. Where are they?

The doctrine that since sickness is in the human race as a result of the Fall the atoning work of Christ provides full deliverance here and now is attractively logical. The precise

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<sup>1</sup> Note: the only other reference to "thorn in the flesh" is Numbers 33:55 "But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, those you allow to remain will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides. They will give you trouble in the land where you will live." This clearly refers to people not sickness P.S.F.

measure of our present deliverance from all the effects of the Fall, whether in soul or body, is a matter upon which there must be careful discrimination. Some "Holiness" doctrines seem to have gone a little astray here, and a parallel fallacy attacks doctrines of Divine healing. Thank God that for the eternal future there is no question of our perfect redemption; and we have it now potentially in Christ.

It is in the personal application to the individual Christian who happens to fall sick that our doctrine of sickness as the result of sin can be most shockingly misapplied and misinterpreted. To hastily attribute personal sickness to personal sin was the precise folly of Job's three friends that drew upon them the anger of the Almighty (Job 23:7). Many cruel things are still being said on similar lines by hasty and dictatorial exponents of very perfect doctrines of Divine healing. Usually they are those who have suffered little themselves, or else have had just one experience of Divine healing on just one line, upon which they base all their ideas. It is only in broadest sense that we can teach that sickness in the human race stems from sin in the race. In the case of many faithful believers in the Lord Jesus Christ it would seem more correct to regard them as innocent victims of our common human frailties until the atoning work of Christ comes to its glorious consummation in the fullness of the Kingdom of God.

Extravagant claims for immunity from physical weakness and pain here and now are corrected by noting such words as those used by Paul in Romans 8:16-25 and 2Cor.5:1-5.

Although Christians have the "first-fruits of the Spirit" they still groan within themselves "waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of the body." Such passages effectively dispel the airy and fanatical claims of some that they are enjoying



even now their "resurrection bodies." The scriptural truth is that the choicest saints on earth still have times when they "groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." The teaching of these passages is not a claiming of Divine healing from the cause of the groaning or sighing consequent upon infirmities of the flesh, but rather having the comfort of hope that there is a fuller life, and a better body (a "building" rather than a tent") waiting for us in the life to come.

### **The doctrine that deliverance from sickness**

The doctrine that deliverance from sickness, by Divine healing, is provided for in the Atonement is securely based upon a scriptural foundation, but it needs interpreting in the light of the whole of the Word of God. To apply it indiscriminately and blindly is to plunge multitudes of good people into most grievous problems. It is significant that the Epistles do not apparently apply it to the problem of present human sickness and infirmities of the flesh, not even in James 5:14-16, where the work of the Atonement can only be assumed as a basis for the prayer of faith. Our problems of Divine healing impose upon us the responsibility for a courageous and frank examination of the applications we make of our doctrines, even though we need not question the basis facts laid down in our statements of faith. Intellectual dishonesty forfeits the guidance of the Spirit of Truth.

The unexplained sickness of Trophimus, and all unexplained sickness among Christians, brings us at last to the ultimate problem of pain in the Universe. We cannot deny it.. We cannot contract out of the Universe as we find it, even after the supreme historical fact of Calvary. It remains one of the final mysteries of existence as we know it at present that God, who is Love, permits pain.

## **The Bible offers no easy explanation**

The Bible offers no easy explanation. The wiser among our teachers never pretend to offer us more than a partial solution of the problem. It is there, and we cannot escape it. The Bible does teach that our Heavenly Father uses pain for loving purposes of discipline (Job.33:19;Ps.119:67; Prov.3:11. 1Cor. 11:32; Heb. 12:11). The Bible comforts us with the promise that a time is surely coming when there will be "no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Rev. 21:4). Above all things the Bible reveals that God in Christ Himself suffered pain, and in some mystic way still suffers with us. For we are told that "though HE were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered"(Heb. 5:8). It is true that except for weariness caused through journeying (John 4:6) our Lord seems to have enjoyed perfect health when on earth (although Moffatt translates Isa. 53:3 -"A man of pain who knew what sickness was"). But since He suffered pain of a deeper nature we believe that our High Priest knows the feeling of our physical infirmities also (Heb.4:15). Any doctrine of Divine healing that professes to leave no place for pain in the present order of things is palpably too shallow to be true. It may have a passing appeal to the thoughtless. It cannot stand up to the strain of life as it really is in God's Universe. It produces artificial and unnecessary problems by refusing to face the one true problem. For the genuine problem of pain there is at least the genuine comfort of truth. For our false "problems" there can be no true comfort at all.

It seems in the final analysis that we make our own problems of Divine healing because of our inveterate tendency to push any truth revealed to us to extremes. It has become a truism that almost all error is a truth pushed too far. In Divine

healing we have glimpsed through the grace of God a glowing and saving truth.

The Church owes a debt she never can repay to those brave pioneers who have loved not their lives even to the death that it might become established once again as part of the Gospel. And an equal debt is owing to those denominations that have made bold to include a declaration of their faith in Divine healing in their tenets, and then have gone on to teach and practise the thing among their adherents. Not only have we already gained tremendously in these things, but blessed be God the advance continues.

If it be asked wherein this truth has been pushed to an extreme, it might be suggested that in the first place we have erred by refusing any place in our doctrine, or at least a very insufficient place, for the sovereign will of God. To ask for Divine healing without any accompanying "yet not my will, but yours be done," (Luke 22:42) seems to pose an attitude out of keeping with every other right attitude we take in prayer.

And in the second place we seem to have unreasonably refused any place for physical healing to be ministered to us in the will of God except by entirely supernatural and miraculous means. It is necessary to express ourselves with great carefulness on this point, for it touches the devotion and zeal of many choice fellow-believers. Their accepted corollary for their faith in Divine healing seems to have been a firm repudiation of the use of any natural "means" of healing whatsoever. The help of medicine or surgery, and the assistance of doctors or nurses, has been frowned upon and denounced in the strongest terms. Some of these earnest souls have literally died for their faith because they refused to compromise in the matter. Let us honour their magnificent

consistency, even if we feel compelled to question their sound judgment.

For others of us it seems reasonable to trust God for the healing of our bodies in a way that does not necessarily and arbitrarily rule out any thought of the Divine providence and love being ministered to us through human intermediaries, and by means of naturally-acquired skill in the art of healing. Our faith in God in other matters, such as, for instance, provision for all our need, has not precluded us from seeing the hand of our Heavenly Father in the ministry of human channels—even of the ungodly. To demand an absolute miracle every time we fall sick does seem to many of us to border upon presumption.

We can appreciate that in the establishing of a testimony to God's supernatural healing power for His children, apart from the use of accepted natural means of healing, it has been necessary for some of His children to deliberately refuse all resort to those means. In no other way could such a testimony be demonstrated. But to turn this personal calling into a radical doctrine for the Church is a vastly different and a serious matter. To teach that all Christians who believe that there is a place for Divine healing are backslidden and failing in faith unless they take an extreme attitude against resort to "means" for healing is to place upon the majority of true children of God a yoke they are not able to bear. Multitudes who subscribe to a denominational tenet expressing official belief in Divine healing do, as a matter of fact, have recourse in their times of need for healing and relief from pain to various natural remedies, and to the skill of the medical profession.

To relieve the conscience of a quite uncalled-for-sense of failure and inconsistency would be a profound service to

many sincere Christians who hold mental and spiritual integrity as of highest importance. If a radical doctrinal position is found to be untenable in practice it calls for proper modification or revision. If it is considered necessary to retain it in its verbal form for the sake of a Testimony, then an honourable place must be allowed for those who are prepared to subscribe to it with a reservation of their right of private judgment in its precise application to themselves.

If it be true that trust in God as the Healer of His children automatically shuts them off from all the manifold and merciful means of healing which medical science now makes universally available, then the doctrine of Divine healing embodies a doubtful "privilege." But our Heavenly Father is no such Tyrant when His Own fell sick, and His children know how to gratefully give Him the glory when they are healed in any way that His providence sees fit.

A saner doctrine of Divine healing, or at least a saner application and proclamation of the truth, would go a very long way towards solving most of our problems in the matter. We make our own-problems because the Almighty does not always do what we, in our haste or imperfect ideas, think He ought to do. And only a doctrinal position that experience makes tenable can retain the willing loyalty of those who profess it, and save them from the morally damaging denial in practice of that which they affirm they believe in theory. The practical denial of "Divine healing" in practice by multitudes who still profess to believe it as a tenet of their faith calls for honest examination and a more perfect expression of what we truly believe.

It may well be that in the bald statement that Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus we have one of those intentional assertions of the Bible intended to keep us from extremes.

The apostle who manifested when in company with this friend and co-worker such outstanding miracles of healing also faced the mystery of sickness among his intimate associates. To such mysteries he had only one answer- "*Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known*" (1Cor.13:12).

In those great believing words is the eternal triumph of faith and hope and love. It still at times has told to the Lord "*Lord, the one you love is sick*" (Jn.11:3). The final answer here and hereafter, will be provided by One who is the resurrection and the life. Those who have found the Living Christ to be here and now the Healer Divine have found a pearl of truth which none shall take away from them. But in enshrining their experience into a doctrine they need to be guided by the full revelation in all the Scriptures of truth, lest haply they say, even of God, the thing that is not right.

## **Canty's "I was just thinking"**

### **Jahweh Rophi, the Lord the Healer**

Canty, G., [www.canty.org.uk](http://www.canty.org.uk) (IWT 4, *The Lord the Healer*)

The full Gospel includes Jesus the Healer. Without that proclamation the Gospel trumpet sounds as if it had a sticky valve. Jesus the Healer is a corner stone of Pentecostal revival, though the hardest faith challenge. Healing is where Bible teaching and teachers are put to the test. I'm asked more questions about healing than anything else. This special IWT article was suggested by people in the ministry. It is not a summary of a vast subject, but a look at the roots. Countless books on healing still find people hesitant, Healing is sometimes put aside as problematic, left to those who 'have the gift'. Basic theology is needed and this IWT piece is a contribution towards it

There are varied attitudes about healing. Healing is often taken as subsidiary side issue, or a curious possibility of faith. Some relate

healing to the 'charismata', gifts. Others see it as accessory to the Gospel. More often it is thought of as resting on God's special promises. Many wanting to exercise a healing ministry think of it as a natural endowment, a healing touch or the special favour of a Divine gift. Actually no gift to heal is mentioned in the Scripture.

Healing must be seen as part of the theology of God Himself.

Teaching needs to begin with teaching on God. Truth is always truth about God, never isolated. Faith expectancy must come within the revelation of what and who God is. For instance some suggest God heals or does not heal according to how it strikes Him. With what revelation of God does this accord? He has never shown Himself as temperamental.

The basis for all faith in God is that He is faithful, not volatile, fluctuating in interest. The Bible stresses that all His works are "done in truth". That applies to His work of healing.

### ***Jahweh Rophi***

The Bible's proper name for God is **JAHWEH**, (the LORD). Exodus 6:2 says "I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as God Almighty (El Shaddai) but by my name The LORD (Jahweh) I did not make myself known to them." Abraham also called God El Olam (God Everlasting). So it may be said that Moses introduced the LORD to the world during convulsion of the Exodus. Further knowledge of the Lord presently emerged, One of the first revelations was an addition to His name Jahweh - Jahweh Rophi. the LORD who heals. (Exodus 15:26)

God's name describes His character. We know God by His name, for it describes Him. This is extremely important. His name does not denote some passing action past or future. God does nothing incidental, and nothing out of character. His name is not about what He may do, but what He is, and what He does comes only from what He is, His name, for example, the God of healing is a permanent truth, His character eternally. The Hebrew tense is timeless.

Healing is not secondary to His will. It is His will. It is His nature or instinct to heal. We see that in the first words of Genesis, where God broods over chaos. God reveals Himself by deeds, not words,

and His actions tell us what He is, and what we can expect Him to be and do. Any healing is a window into the heart of God and part of His essential glory.

God has no temporary interests, no phases. God is not a process. Everything about Him subscribes to His eternal state.

God's first healing word in Exodus 15: 26 was not exclusive to Israel. It came before the tribes had any national unity. It was not exclusive to Israel, and is more than a promise. It was a declaration of what kind of God had attached Himself to them. Now obviously God is always God, the same for ever whether He appears to Israel or any other race. You are always you and I am always me wherever we go, and so is God, in all His fullness. The God Moses met and who was made flesh among us - He is not more the Jahweh Rophi for Israel and less for anybody else. What He is remains, unchangeable.

Obviously healing is for a fallen world where sickness prevails.

There's no sickness in heaven to heal. Sin means rebellion "I did it my way!" – instead of God's way. That had to be when He created us in His own image with a free will. That is why Christ told us to pray "Thy will be done", because it is not being done.

However God said "If you listen to the voice of the LORD and do what is right in his eyes I will not bring on you any of the distresses of the Egyptians, for I am Jahweh Rophi."

This obliges us to face that God ties Himself to conditions for healing. His desire is within the framework He set for Himself, certain conditions. This verse, for example makes our attitude to His word a condition. That can have very broad implications indeed. A direct instance is that God laid down rules of good health which would have saved countless lives in the past. Plagues blamed on God were due to ignorance of practices of hygiene stressed in Scripture. God does not usually override in imperious omnipotence the blunders and corruptions of our fallen world. We reap what we sow. The exception was the ministry of Christ. He healed without discrimination, but for a unique purpose, to reveal God's heart to a sinful world in an overture of active forgiveness.



He showed what the reign of God really was. Christ WAS the Kingdom and in His kingdom sickness would be unknown. I cannot heal like Jesus did because my role and mandate are totally different. He was the Son acting in the image of the Father. That is not my position. Jesus' didn't heal by faith in God as we must. He healed by His own Word of authority.

The most frequent question is why are all the sick not healed. It should be seen as part of the larger question of unanswered prayer. Exodus 15:26 is the key to that problem. What God does is according to circumstances and conditions. We don't always know what they are, and sometimes God will override all considerations. One factor hinted at here is our attitude to the Word of God. Today the atmosphere of vast moral pollutions and hostile, aggressive unbelief, nation and world-wide are prejudicial to the miraculous. It creates a dense fog of unbelief as in Nazareth where Jesus could heal only a few sick folk.

To demand that every sick person be healed is to demand prematurely the conditions of the Millennial reign of Christ. It does not accord with a sensible reading of the New Testament. One sees everyone healed in some services, but they are special moments. Healings, in my earlier days were my problem. I knew God healed but my theology was built around what I saw, and I saw no miracles. A healing rattled the framework of my logic theory, and upset my world of precise calculation. So, I am nervous about any kind of speculative thought that limits God. His heart of love is bigger than our tape measure.

I've known for years the common doubts and hesitations but in Pentecostal circles I have never heard anyone justify their doubts from the Word of God, Usually doubt arises from a weak grip on the theology of God. Some are openly discouraging. But to weaken faith in healing is to weaken faith in all God says He will do. We have enough discouragements without anyone raising impossible questions.

I understand healing only as much as I understand God,  
I understand God only from my daily focus upon the Word of God.  
We know nothing about Him and His ways except in His Word.

Experience is not a valid Bible. The Bible explains and judges experience. Jesus saves because He is the Saviour. Jesus heals because He is Jahweh Rophi.

## "Does prayer work?"

Canty, G., [www.canty.org.uk](http://www.canty.org.uk) (*IWT 9, Does Prayer Work?*)

"Does Prayer Work?" the Daily Mail asked. But whose prayer? The newspaper and television people seem to think that prayer generates some kind of power that might cure the sick, a measurable but mystical energy. The more the prayer, the higher the calibration?

**The only way prayer works is if God answers it**, but He doesn't care for newspaper people testing Him to see if He does.

Last year they tried prayer as an experiment. The hyped television and press experiment produced exactly the same as if nothing had been done. Did they really think God would cooperate (that is if it entered their minds that God had anything to do with it). Actually some healings were recorded, but they appear to have been when believers laid hands on the sick. Otherwise, nothing, but then would God show what He could really do just to conveniently fill newspaper space?

It prompts me to remark that newspaper and television people are not notably pious. At least, TV programmes give me that impression and newspaper editors (the Mail or Telegraph anyway) appear never to have heard of God. Considering their poor acquaintance with the Almighty, were they not a trifle too sanguine that he might go along with their scheme to provide data? I didn't think the Creator of infinity would be all that enthusiastic about a journalistic stunt.

Whoever had the idea, didn't know the Bible. The infamous King Herod tried something similar. He had always had a fancy to see a miracle, like going to the circus. He had heard wonders were taking place and superstitiously feared the prophet Elijah had come back from heaven. Then he learned that Jesus was performing the healing miracles and he believed Jesus did perform wonders, which is more than some liberals and Bible critics do now. When Jesus was arrested they sent Him to Herod and the King was delighted, hoping to see a miracle as a royal command performance? Jesus ignored this pompous royal nobody.

God isn't waiting to find out if He exists till somebody proves it. His reputation has not been handed to the BBC and ITV. He is not seeking their attention. I think perhaps THEY might seek His attention and find out what God thinks of them and their programmes. A vast quantity of modern stories, thrillers and dramas are empty of any moral point, and of all godliness. The formula used is one of violence, revenge, unforgiveness, worship of money, hatred and greed.

It is with a shock that one realises the devil tried it out even on Christ to tempt God. The devil took Jesus to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. *'If you are the son of God'* he said, *'throw yourself down. For it is written 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'* Christ answered: *It is also written: 'Do not put your God to the test'.*

God never tries to prove to us He is God. Does He need to? In Canada I was astonished that I had to have I.D. when I wanted to put my money into my bank account! But God is independent. It doesn't matter to Him what we think about Him. You either believe or you don't. One time when God is put to the test is in healing meetings and in prayer. When people lose faith because God didn't do for them what seemed reasonable, they were testing God.

In healing meetings, many come to try it out. If it doesn't happen, they either profess disappointment or are happy to 'prove' it doesn't work. The allegation is that the evangelist built up their hopes and then failed them. I don't believe this ever really happens. They had been testing God and God had not obliged. True faith is never disappointed, healing or no healing.

I recall a very correct church member trying to force God into a corner and do what was demanded of Him. This man was always super-correct. He sat in my congregation with an almost visible aura of critical rightness around him. After a while he no longer appeared. I hunted him down. He explained he had prayed for God to do a particular thing which God could do and God didn't do it. He decided there was therefore no God!

Testing God is a subtle sin. Students of church history will find the word 'simony' occurring too often. Churchmen sought to acquire church office by money, like Simon Magus who sought to buy the power of the Holy Spirit. The essence of simony is the same as putting God to the test, that is to try dealing with God in a materialistic frame. The doubters, demanding hard evidence and scientific proof. But God is love, and nothing in the world is so hard to pin down in concrete form. You can only trust.

God never will oblige. He is known only by faith. He performs miracles but never to convince critics. You can't push God. If anyone wants to be an unbeliever He will let them be. He is just not a suitable subject for the analytical processes of the scientific age. Miracles are for believers. By the way, they do happen.

### **Does God hurt to heal?**

Canty, G., [www.canty.org.uk](http://www.canty.org.uk) (*IWT 6, Does God Hurt to Heal?*)

Only one place in the New Testament reads as if God brought hurt just to heal, John 9. Meeting a blind man the disciples asked Jesus about him, and Jesus' reply in the AV reads "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him, I must work the works of him that sent me!" Jesus then healed the man. In fact one can read it differently with different punctuation. However it creates a problem as if God made the man blind so Jesus could heal it. That is morally repugnant, never a Bible idea.

Now this verse hinges on the Greek word, "hina". It occurs several times in John's Gospel. Bible translations usually render it "but that" or "in order that" like the AV. The NIV emphasises it "This has happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life". The words "This has happened" are not in the Greek text at all. This implies that God destined the man to be blind just so Jesus could heal him. Does God cause misfortune so He can step in and rectify it, for His glory? The New Testament has no such teaching. Anyway, there were enough blind people in Israel without God making one more just so He can heal him.

Now the question rests on the Greek word "hina", rendered "so that" or "in order that". But this meaning is not fixed. It also means

"Let it be". That is the meaning in John 9:2 and can be in other places in John. It is not a conjunction but an imperative. "let it be". What Jesus actually said was "Neither has this man sinned nor his parents, but LET the works of God be done", He then healed the man.

The disciples were uselessly speculating about the man's blindness and its cause. Jesus never did and He wasn't interested in the disciples' question, only in healing the man. It is as if He said "Never mind who or what is to blame, let the works of God be manifested". My early ministry consisted largely of the whys and wherefores of suffering. Library shelves are full of volumes philosophising on the subject. With a shock, long ago, I saw my intellectualised concerns about the sick had little relevance and anyway the problem was beyond my poor brains. Jesus said "heal the sick!" It never entered my head to ask "Why?" - not even in the recent inconsolable loss of my wife. Debating evil has little to do with faith, except knock it flat. We are ministers, not philosophers. Our calling is compassion, prayer, faith and the Word. Our terms, full Gospel or 'Foursquare' meant the proclamation of Jesus as Saviour, Baptiser, King and Healer. He is being 'proclaimed', but is Christ as Healer being toned down to general and less specific terms? Is our theology wobbling under the test of objective faith? The term "Foursquare" was coined by healing pioneers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for "Christ the Saviour, Healer, Coming King and Sanctifier". If Healer is no longer written in capitals, is it the Foursquare Gospel?

We must obey Jesus. "Let the works of God be manifest!" It is a command. So is "Heal the sick!" Is church practice in line with Christ's will? His compassions express His will, but does our will express His compassions?

### **Reading just a chapter**

Canty, G., [www.canty.org.uk](http://www.canty.org.uk) (*IWT 11, Just read a chapter*)

The first name on the Magna Charta was Cardinal Archbishop of Canterbury Stephen Langton, English theologian. Some 800 years ago he divided the Bible into chapters, which was useful but difficult. People often read just

a chapter, but it contains only half the story. It is like answering the phone when you're enjoying dinner.

John 8 and 9 is the break I have in mind. The thought is broken off at the end of chapter 8, and continues in chapter 9. Take closer look. In chapter 8 Jesus deals with critics in the Jerusalem Temple. They were infuriated contending with Him in words. So, they turned to violence. "They picked up stones to stone him". Jesus wasn't ready to die then and as on other occasions eluded his enemies. "Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds... " John 8:58. Then what? Chapter 9:1 continues the story, "as he went along he saw a man blind from birth". Hurrying from murderous enemies Jesus stopped for a nameless blind beggar. There were plenty more around Jerusalem, but He could not pass this one, despite the danger.

What a revealing episode! It speaks volumes about Jesus and His healing ministry. It shows how He felt, that He healed as He felt. That was Him, wanting to heal, whatever the risk. It is still Him if there is any meaning in Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever." If He didn't still heal, like He did, how could that verse be true? The Gospels are full of healings to reveal what God was like, and what God was like, He IS, for ever. Interpretations of Scripture that make God one thing today and something different tomorrow, break down on the rock of God's faithful character and changelessness disposition. He would never let himself down. The French version of Psalm 111:3 says "He is forever faithful to himself ". Nowhere in Scripture is there a single hint that the time would come when God would alter His attitude and stop healing. Theories are being imported into the Word of God that it never was meant to accommodate. The test is, do they match God, what He is?

He is changeless, faithful to Himself, never failing. His works spring from His spontaneous, compassionate nature.

Some teach that Jesus worked miracles but only while here, as if He was merely carrying out a set programme limited to His earthly ministry. This is dangerous theology. Was Jesus like He was only for a specific purpose and time but now is a different Jesus? Are we believing in the wrong Jesus? And isn't God now like Jesus' miracles once revealed Him? God save us!

It is being taught that His miracle ministry was only to prove His identity as the Son of God or as the Messiah, or to confirm His teaching, or to establish the church, or to introduce a new era. Then He withdrew and no more miracles were needed to confirm the faith. So? Have we misunderstood? We naturally call Him the Great Physician and believe He still is. But are the scholars right that it only temporary, and the Gospels build up false hopes of His mercy?

Well, have I been ministering under an illusion? I think not. I read about Jesus as the great Healer, believed it, prayed and saw the sick healed. It was not because I had seen it first, for I had not, nor that I wanted to do it, for I feared failure, but the Word compelled me. I believed before anything happened, and the first miracle was in my own church after I had dared to proclaim Jesus as the Healer. Some declare they preach Christ but they strip Him of His compassion for the sick. Which Christ do they preach? The Gospel Jesus, or a non-miraculous Jesus, distorting His Bible portrait as millions see it?

Jesus did create an impression of His profound concern for the afflicted. But teachers have suggested that His true aims were theological, and relief of sufferers only a means to that

end, secondary to proving something or other. To think of Jesus making sick people well but with some other primary interest, that horrifies me.

Jesus always acted out what He was. He healed because He pitied the weak and sickly. That is how I think of Him. Is there a Bible text to say I should not? Where are we told He would change? He loved them, then. Why not us, now? He loved people, always did. He always will.

### **The fifth sparrow**

First, I've looked again at the story of the born-blind man. Why really was he blind? It is important to ask as several Bible versions indicate the man was born blind to be healed.

The disciples asked if the man had been born blind because of sin. Jesus said not and the NIV reads but "SO that the work of God might be displayed", and the AV reads "that the works of God should be made manifest in him". Translated like that it means God made him blind to heal him, setting up a staged demonstration of His power to bring Him glory. Somehow this doesn't sound a bit like God to deprive a man of sight for 40 years just to give him eyes later? The plan would not capture my admiration. There were plenty of sightless folk without making another man blind for forty years just as a convenient example.

Now the test of all theology is whether it reflects what God really is. Scripture itself has its own integral control of interpretation, namely its revealed character of God, what God says about Himself. So, would the Bible God blind somebody just to show He could heal them? Well, not the God whose face I see in the Word, and certainly not the Jesus of the Gospels.

So, what does John 9 really say? The operative word in many translations is 'so that' - the man was born blind "so that the



works of God could be manifest". The original Bible word for 'so that', or 'in order that' is the Greek 'hina'. It usually does mean 'so that' and translators have more or less used it in this fixed form. However, in fact 'hina' also carries a different sense and has been used in another way even in Scriptures. It can be translated as an imperative, 'let it be'. The word 'hina' is used in John several times and can be written as 'let it be' in some places.

So now, how does the verse sound with the meaning 'Let it be'? Here's the translation of what Jesus really said "Neither has this man sinned nor his parents but let the works of God be manifested in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day." Then Jesus healed him. He was blind, had a human right to see and God restored his sight.

The disciples had asked Jesus why the man was born blind, but He did not say why. The disciples saw Jesus notice this blind man, and they just have to say something, if only to ask a silly question whether the man sinned before he was born. Jesus gave no explanation. The Lord did not come to discuss suffering and solve philosophical conundrums. He came to suffer for us, redemptively.

I once prayed for a group of six sick Sikhs. Well, let's be honest about why the sick are sick? Most reasons are too obvious - often sickness is self-inflicted. The Government at present is warning people that they are eating themselves into an early death, obese, meaning too fat. Lack of hygiene, drugs, alcohol, nicotine, overeating, idleness, poisoning the system with bitterness and hatred are all killers as well as injuries, circumstances or assaults. Why does God allow sickness? Why do WE? Not everyone wants to get better - it doesn't suit their circumstances. One woman healed of osteoarthritis

told me she wished she had never met me, it so unsettled her settled future programme.

Sickness was all once a mystery credited to the will of God. Science has shown it never was. God doesn't make people ill. If He did, nobody could cure them, but they are now being cured. Eventually most physical disorders will be treatable. I pray God much to show medical science the cure for cancers. Suffering is never God's designed will, though He may give us grace and not healing sometimes as with Paul's thorn in the flesh, an affliction that did not come from God but was "a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him" – perhaps recurrent malaria. The Lord often wraps evils, anything the devil himself can do, and hides it in the bosom of His purposes. He makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and "ALL THINGS work together for good to them who love the Lord and are call according to His purpose."

At present there is a hard core of suffering that I can't explain and only God understands, despite our pleadings in prayer. What then? The works of God still remain what Jesus showed them to be. The Father has everything in hand.

Jesus in Matthew 10:29 said two sparrows are sold for one penny, then in Luke 12:6, five sparrows for two pennies, an extra one thrown in, the poorest and most worthless little bird. But that poor one is the very one Jesus spoke about falling from the housetop (Matthew 10:29) saying our Father is 'in it', and that we are worth more than many sparrows.

I've seen a woman nurse such a tiny bird scrap that had fallen prematurely from the nest and shed a tear when it died. From where does such an instinct of gentleness come, if not from the God who created women, and birds? Well, if He sets a woman caring for a tiny fledging, how does He feel about us?

## Why?

Canty, G., [www.canty.org.uk](http://www.canty.org.uk) (*IWT 4, Why?*)

As a lad I never knew why the pastor was always preaching about trials and troubles. I didn't seem to need ointments and plasters for wounds. Desperately poor as we were, and always hungry, I accepted it as normal in this world.

Eventually came the responsibility of a congregation. Trouble still did not trouble me. Life's stress and discomfort seemed normal to me. I had learned the right words to say to my congregation, mostly much older than myself, that God was testing us. He stood heavily on our foot and told us to praise Him.

Then, one wintry morning a woman asked me to go with her. We went into the hills which were pockmarked with inky black pools polluted by industrial effluent. By the edge of one such foul place she told me of her desperation and declared her wish to end her life in it.

At that moment my blithe spirit faded like a switched off TV screen. The problem of suffering danced constantly in my brain, taunting and haunting. It became the main subject of my ministry and drove me to seek the answer. First I pored over the sermons of great preachers, culling for words, for balm. I found C. S. Lewis who called suffering 'God's intolerable compliment'. That seemed wise and I could not un-think it. But it brought no cheer to church members in hospital.

It was not only the sickness and tragedy that puzzled me, but what Scripture said about it, particularly statements in the New Testament. What I read there was unparalleled anywhere else. But they were hard sayings. I believed them, preached them, but couldn't see them. Jesus Himself said "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted". But why I

wondered should it be like that? Why did God make a world in which comfort was needed? I remember being alone in my single lodgings with raging toothache for a week. I found true what Shakespeare said. "There was never yet a philosopher that could endure the toothache patiently". It needs a cure not a caress. I couldn't forget that desolate soul by the ugly marl hole. She needed a stronger arm than mine round her shoulders. No words, no amount of money, no music could do anything for her, and she represented the whole inconsolable world.

For me then came the joy of marriage to a wonderful girl, and no better way to start a family! But her family tree included Bishop Hooper. Queen Mary had him burned alive for his faith. He died in unspeakable agony. Dead - how could he be comforted?

I puzzled over 2 Corinthians 4:17: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." If there as an answer it had to be there, in the hereafter.

It was clear enough from the Word that this was no world of bliss. Eliphaz tried to comfort Job saying "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." Jesus also said "In the world you will have tribulation" and after a good few decades on earth I've proved how right He was. Nothing different seemed ever to be intended. God does not send affliction but leaves us here exposed to it. Our lot is not to be snatched away to be like the angels.

The mists began to clear and I saw that the Word of God said nothing about a world without trouble being better. We must pass through this 'vale of tears' to get and be where and what God wanted us to be. He knew what it would be when He permitted our birth. Jesus pushed His disciples off in a boat

knowing full well that Galilee would soon be a boiling cauldron, but He always did what He saw the Father do. He could have stilled that storm, but instead He saw them through it. Paul went to three cities "confirming the souls of the disciples exhorting them that we MUST through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God." This Greek indicative is 'dei', it is right and proper, it behoves us, it is the thing to do. It is the word of Jesus saying He MUST do His Father's will.

I began to see it as if from a lookout across an eternal landscape. I am still scanning it. I observe that the road is left rough with full justification, not mere compensation. It had to stay that way underfoot because something great was afoot. Jesus said "O slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken, ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" Christ OUGHT to have suffered! Peter says the same thing about us. "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though something strange were happening to you, but rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed."

If we would read the facts we might understand better. God has revealed to us nothing merely to gratify our own curiosity. He gives us secrets only for the fulfilment of His purposes. Jesus told His disciples "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you ... that you should go and bring forth fruit." So putting together what we know we shall learn more. Begin with the angels, so important in the Divine economy. Some angels sinned and were reduced to planetary level. It was a minor rebellion leaving the masses of heaven unaffected, they could be foolish for "God charges his

angels with folly" but they are innocent like children, with no experience of temptation or trial.

Outside the human race nobody knows suffering or stress – except God. Angels and cherubim don't have worries or nights when the darkness seems endless, the future peopled with stalking evils. No devil is there to push the Zoa or angels to the brink. The Divine glories they enjoy beyond our thought leaves them without allure for the tawdry tinsel of our material world.

So why aren't we favoured like angels? What is God up to, pushing us off to struggle across life's raging seas? We are like mariners the Psalm talks about going down into the depths and then tossed high on hills of heaving water, like a mouse in the paws of a cat.

God has plans and purposes that angels cannot fulfil. They require humans, a special species, that God put here to be shaped by the wild weather, and be identified by a patina of triumph over adversity. He wanted people who had proved His grace and had overcome, victorious people, feeble flesh but more than conquerors over the greatest evil forces and triumphant in stressful conditions. Nobody is exempt from such moulding and making. Elijah wanted to die, John the Baptist was jailed, apostles were hunted like vermin and "it was fitting for him, for whom all things exist, to make the author of our salvation himself perfect through sufferings", Heb.2:10. It needs us, people who have gone to hell and back, to be God's vanguard marching into the eternal future, pillars of the new heaven and new earth in which righteousness dwells. Chiselled and battered into shape, the only creatures overcoming the world, the flesh and the devil, and now to the praise of God and His great salvation becoming the foundation stones of the eternal city.

When Christ shall gather us in the fair land where God is, nobody there will be like us. Only one order will have come through great tribulation redeemed and washed in Christ's blood. No angel, no Zoa, can glorify God like those once dead in iniquity but who overcame the world, the flesh and the devil. The matchless redeemed will take over heaven. Angels will abandon the streets of the city of God to give place to the pilgrims of the night, their new song of the Lamb vibrating against the crystal walls. There will be praise and glory to God in the Church for ever.

## **A Christian introduction to Alternative Medicine**

Evangelical Alliance 1999

### **Introduction**

The Evangelical Alliance has produced *Handle with Care: A Christian Introduction to Alternative Medicine* in response to many questions we have received about non-orthodox medicine.

This resource does not provide black-and-white answers. Informed evangelicals can be found passionately for and vehemently against some alternative therapies. Instead, we aim simply to set out the facts from a Christian viewpoint about alternative medicine in general, to outline some popular therapies, and to point the interested reader towards further sources of research.

Alternative or complementary medicine continues to grow apace. The Institute for Complementary Medicine lists nearly 80 of the main disciplines. But however many column inches are devoted to alternative therapies, many trained therapists and medically qualified practitioners - including Britain's first professor of complementary medicine - would disown many

claims made for alternative therapies, and are calling for rigorous research in their own fields.

It must be said that there are alternative therapies which are incompatible with Christianity. Indiscriminate use of some therapies may leave a person vulnerable to spiritual, emotional or physical harm. I suggest you use this resource prayerfully as a launching point, and follow it up with your own research.

*Rev Paul Harris, Evangelical Alliance UK*

## **Getting to Grips with Alternative Medicine**

This section explains some of the terms and principles of alternative medicine. This section is probably the most important, as it puts specific therapies in context, and gives some guiding points for further research.

### ***Definitions***

Alternative is used to mean when a therapy is used as a strict alternative to orthodox medicine, and complementary may be used to describe a therapy used in conjunction with orthodox medicine. Both terms, plus holistic (which describes an approach taking the whole person - body, mind and spirit - into account) are frequently used interchangeably. Most therapies fall into one of three categories:

- **External:** includes massage and manipulation (e.g. acupuncture, aromatherapy, reflexology, osteopathy).
- **Internal:** involves ingesting medicines (e.g. herbalism, homoeopathy).
- **Psychic:** either psychological in origin, or using the paranormal (e.g. hypnotherapy, astral projection, transcendental meditation).

The Institute for Complementary Medicine distinguishes between practitioners and therapists for the purpose of inclusion on its register of practitioners.



The Institute defines practitioners as those able to make holistic diagnoses (not the same as a GP's symptom-based diagnosis) leading to a course of treatment. (NB: In the case of a serious or life-threatening illness, the practitioner should present the patient with the choices available, including orthodox medical treatment.) A therapist works under the direction of a practitioner. However, these terms are often used interchangeably throughout complementary medicine and in the media.

Most alternative therapies see health and emotional problems as a result primarily of an imbalance or depletion of the body's energy (be that physical, emotional or spiritual). The aim of the therapy is to restore that energy balance. Because alternative medicine adherents take a holistic approach, the expectation is often that as well as relief of symptoms, clients can hope for a healthier and happier lifestyle.

### ***Ask the right questions***

Dr Robina Coker (Alternative Medicine, Monarch) suggests the following questions as a starting point for investigating a therapy:

- Do the claims for this therapy fit the facts?
- Is there a rational scientific basis for the therapy?
- Is the methodology or the principle the effective element?
- Does the therapy involve the occult?
- What is the therapist's world view?

The last two questions must be asked of individual practitioners, as the way many therapies are used is often determined by the individual. As well as asking therapists about their qualifications, no reputable practitioners should mind you taking a holistic approach by asking them if they

have any spiritual objectives or practices in their work, and what their spiritual outlook is.

Perhaps it would also be useful to consider why we rarely apply the same scrutiny to orthodox medicine and its practitioners, despite its origins in ancient Greek pantheism.

### ***Testing, testing!***

For all the claims made about the effectiveness of complementary therapies, few rest on independent and consistent clinical trials.

'If we are to progress in this area, we must not allow any bypassing of rigorous research,' writes Edzard Ernst, professor of complementary medicine at Exeter University, in *The Independent* (2 June 1998). 'We need to fill in the substantial gaps in our present knowledge. The very minimum would be to make sure that the benefits of a given complementary treatment outweigh the risks.'

Ernst follows up this article with a short list of complementary therapies effective for certain conditions, as proven by clinical trials. He then gives a list, four times longer, of therapies shown by the same trials to be ineffective or unproven for certain conditions, for which they are often believed effective.

### ***The placebo effect***

Around 30 to 40 per cent of all patients respond to placebos ('dummy' medication of an inert substance) very well, while another third do not experience any improvement at all. It is more than coincidence that about the same percentage of patients - one third - show excellent results with the application of acupuncture, homoeopathy, herbal remedies and other unconventional treatments.

### ***Bedside manner***

Many complementary therapists will take at least an hour for a client's initial visit, and will take a full holistic case history (i.e. considering the client as a whole person - body, mind and spirit). This allows time for the client to talk about anything that is troubling them. In comparison, GPs have an average of six minutes with each patient. Being given time is frequently mentioned as important by those who have found complementary therapies helpful.

### ***Don't rely on hearsay***

Peter may have found aromatherapy helpful, but Paul may not. Try to find out objective facts. 'Testimonials or anecdotes, as produced so often by those who promote complementary medicine, are a significant step backwards in our endeavour to approach the truth,' writes Edzard Ernst, professor of complementary medicine at Exeter University.

### ***You need to be satisfied on two points:***

- Does it work?
- Is it safe?

### ***Qualifications***

It is illegal to practise in the UK as a chiropractor or osteopath without fulfilling statutory obligations (by early 2000 for osteopaths). Apart from that, anyone can practise complementary therapies if he or she wishes, without any qualifications. If you want to consult a complementary practitioner or therapist, check his or her qualifications first.

### ***New Age***

Christians' concern about complementary therapies is frequently rooted in a perceived association with New Age belief and practice. Some therapies are clearly rooted in the paranormal, occult, or religion other than Christianity (e.g. crystal therapy, transcendental meditation) and would therefore

seem an obvious no-go area for Christians. However, other therapies are strongly advocated by evangelical Christian practitioners, who believe the therapy is God-given and should not be dismissed because it is also of interest to New Age adherents.

### ***The bottom line***

Fees vary widely according to practitioner and region. Some therapies are available on the NHS, notably homoeopathy. But the rules on this are changing, so ask your GP.

### **Acupuncture**

Related therapies: other branches of traditional Chinese medicine, including acupressure, herbalism, moxabustion, t'ai chi, buqi, feng shui.

**Origins** Acupuncture was used to prevent and treat disease in ancient China, where it was believed that two opposing life forces - yin and yang - circulated round the body in 12 special channels (meridians). Practitioners believed that an imbalance in these energies caused illness.

**The therapy** Acupuncture can be used in three main ways:

- as a preventative
- to relieve symptoms
- as an anaesthetic

Acupuncture involves stimulating 365 principal points around the body with needles or sometimes with a laser, heat or electricity. Usually the patient lies or sits down. The needles may be inserted and removed instantly or left in for up to 30 minutes under supervision. Two schools of acupuncture exist: traditional Chinese and Western.

Traditional Chinese acupuncturists do not use conventional diagnostic techniques but a four-fold Chinese system of asking, looking, smelling and touching, as well as testing up to

28 pulses in the body. Typically this kind of acupuncture will be practised by non-medical but qualified practitioners. Most medical acupuncturists practise Western or 'scientific' acupuncture using conventional diagnoses, often with electro-acupuncture (ie with electricity). They would largely reject the yin/yang concept but focus on acupuncture's pain-inhibiting properties. In China, surgery is frequently performed using acupuncture instead of anaesthetic: around 20 per cent of surgery can be performed like this, and four out of five such operations need no extra pain relief from drugs.

**World view** Originates from a Taoist view of the world. Meridian system may originally have an occult basis. World view varies with individual practitioner.

### **Critics say...**

- Claims that traditional acupuncture can help a huge range of conditions, including weight loss and giving up smoking, are at best unsubstantiated and at worst false. Reliable trials have shown acupuncture has little or no benefit when used to help weight loss or to give up smoking.
- Occasional serious side-effects can be experienced, including puncturing of a lung or vital organ, or infection transmitted through non-sterile equipment (NB: many practitioners use disposable needles).

### **Supporters say...**

Trials show acupuncture can be effective for low back pain (when not caused by a specific disease), dental pain, and nausea/vomiting.

Acupuncture is routinely used as dental pain relief in the East, and this is acceptable to many Eastern Christians

## **Aromatherapy**

**Origins** First used in ancient civilisations, including Egypt, Greece and possibly China. Revived in the 1930s when a

French chemist stuck his badly burned hand into a container of pure lavender oil, and was amazed at how fast the wound healed. The current practice of aromatherapy has grown in popularity in the UK since the early 1980s.

**The therapy** An aromatherapist uses essential oils from aromatic plants in a number of ways, to treat a variety of complaints. The oils are always diluted and will be blended according to the patient's problem. As well as using massage, the therapist may recommend inhalation (via steam), compresses, baths and vaporisation. Aromatherapists are divided over using essential oils as internal medication.

The patient is believed to benefit both from the aroma of the oils, which is claimed to stimulate the brain, glands and the lungs, and from absorption through the skin. Specific properties are assigned to each essence.

Length of treatment varies, but about an hour is usual. The therapist takes a wide-ranging case history, which covers medical history, sleep patterns, diet, emotional well-being and any specific conditions. The fee usually includes oils to use at home and the therapist may recommend subsequent visits. Some therapists may include elements from other alternative therapies. These could involve spiritual elements which are not Christian in origin, e.g. dowsing (use of a pendulum over the oils), the chakras (which originates from tantric yoga), and the laying on of hands for spiritual healing. Find out exactly what techniques the therapist uses if you are considering aromatherapy (and any other therapy).

Aromatherapy is largely used as a preventative and restorative treatment:

*'Aromatherapy is a valuable preventative therapy which, by keeping a client well balanced emotionally and physically, reduces the chances of serious illness occurring,'* according to qualified aromatherapist

Gill Martin in her book *Aromatherapy* (part of the Optima Alternative Health series).

Putting aromatherapy on a product's label does not mean the product must contain any essential oils. Likewise, a beauty therapist at a salon is entitled to offer aromatherapy, but does not have to be a qualified aromatherapist to do so. If you are concerned, ask about the therapist's qualifications.

Qualified aromatherapists warn the public about using essential oils, which can be bought over the counter in the UK, without understanding the potential dangers.

However, essential oils, if used properly, are suitable for use at home for bathing, inhaling with steam, and massage.

**World view** Varies with individual practitioner.

**Critics say...**

- At best it is just an aid to relaxation.
- Very little rigorous research has been carried out to substantiate claims.
- Essential oils can be dangerous if used wrongly.

**Supporters say...**

- Aromatherapy is using the healing powers of God-given natural oils.
- By using natural substances, the body is not subjected to the toxins and resulting side effects that can result from using synthetic drugs.

## **Homoeopathy**

**Origins** Classical homoeopathy was founded in the 18th century by a German physician, Samuel Hahnemann. He tried out different substances on families and volunteers known as 'provers', and compiled his research as the *Organon of Medicine*, still used by homoeopaths today.

**The therapy**

The key principles of classical homoeopathy are:

- like cures like.
- the more diluted a homoeopathic remedy, the more effective it is.
- detailed consultation is vital to gain a holistic picture of the patient.

A homoeopath treats the patient's symptoms with a substance which homoeopaths believe produces similar symptoms to those experienced by the patient.

A concentrated 'mother tincture' of the essential ingredient is systematically diluted with water, and subjected to 'succussion' (shaking) which 'potentises' the substance. A '6c' potency is commonly used for first aid, and accounts for most over-the-counter sales. This strength is equivalent to filling Wembley Stadium to the roof with water and adding one drop of tincture (Source: AD Bambridge, *Homoeopathy: Results Beyond Reason* 1992).

Homoeopathy is not the same as herbalism or herbal medicine. Many homoeopathic treatments do not have a botanical origin.

**World view** Dr Andrew Fergusson, former head of the Christian Medical Fellowship, writes: 'It is said that there is [no world view behind the therapy]. But the mystical "energy" and "vital- force" concepts smack of Hinduism. Hahnemann was a freemason, a mesmeriser and a deist rather than a Christian. Christian homoeopaths admit these facts about their founder but are not concerned... It must be remembered that by the medical standards of his day, he was an enlightened and humane practitioner, in the physical sense. Whether his own religious beliefs should concern present-day practitioners is a matter for individual decision' (Source: *Pacemaker*, October 1987).



### **Critics say...**

- There is insufficient scientific evidence to back up the claims of homoeopathy and its remedies.
- Hahnemann, homoeopathy's founder, was at best an unconventional physician, and at worst guilty at times of fraudulent practice. In his book *Homoeopathy: What Are We Swallowing*, Steven Ransom convincingly argues that much of Hahnemann's work - including experiments that are foundational to modern homoeopathy - was seriously flawed.
- Some homoeopathic practice which involves using a pendulum (in preparing homoeopathic substances) may have occult links.
- The patient responds positively to the in-depth homoeopathic consultation, and this accounts for an increased sense of well-being.

### **Supporters say...**

- 'Clinical trials are crucial to the future of homoeopathy to ensure its acceptance by the health professions but also by the commissioning authorities, the people who purchase NHS health care' (Source: Dr Peter Fisher, consultant physician, Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital, in *The Times*, 5 July 1995).
- Homoeopathy has been part of the NHS since 1948, with five specialist NHS hospitals around the UK. Members of the Faculty of Homoeopathy are also fully trained medical doctors.
- If Christians dismiss homoeopathy on grounds of its murky origins, they should at least be as rigorous in their evaluation of orthodox medicine and its origins in ancient Greek religion.

- Homoeopathic medicine has been taught at Medical Service Ministries (formerly the London Missionary School of Medicine) for nearly a century, training hundreds of missionaries going overseas. Famous Christian practitioners included Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones.
- According to the British Homoeopathic Association, use of pendulums is not part of Hahnemannian homoeopathy but are used by practitioners of radionics and radiesthesia, which are listed in The Alternative Health Guide under 'paranormal therapies'. These practitioners may prescribe homoeopathic medicines but this does not make them homoeopaths.

## **Pressure Therapies**

Chiropractic, Osteopathy, Reflexology, Massage  
 Related therapies: rolfing, shiatsu, pulsing, manual lymph drainage (MLD), Hellerwork, applied kinesiology

### ***Chiropractic***

**Origins** Developed in the 19th century in Iowa, USA, by Daniel Palmer, a self-taught 'magnetic healer'. He believed that an 'Innate Intelligence' flows through the nervous system, which can be obstructed by a misalignment of the vertebral column. Disease throughout the body could be linked with such obstructions, he claimed. Since then, chiropractic has developed along many branches, although spinal adjustment remains the primary approach for most practitioners.

**The therapy** Joint manipulation, usually concentrating on the spine, although the manipulations can be applied to any muscle or joint. Popular for lower back pain, slipped discs and sports injuries. As well as asking questions about the patient's health and conducting a physical examination, the chiropractor may take X-rays.

With osteopathy, chiropractic is recognised as a major form of manipulative therapy. The two therapies use different techniques to achieve a similar result, and their differences are largely historical.

**World view** Varies with practitioner.

### ***Osteopathy***

**Origins** Founded by an American doctor at the end of the 19th century. He based his ideas on the body's self-healing mechanisms, which he believed were released when the body's structure was properly aligned.

**The therapy** Manipulative techniques on the whole body, including gentle repeated movements and sharp thrusts, are used to realign the skeletal structure. Massage may also be part of the therapy. A detailed case history will be taken along with a physical examination. Cranial osteopathy is becoming increasingly popular, particularly for children. This involves gentle manipulation of the skull and other parts of the body, alleged to help the flow of the fluid around the brain and spinal cord.

**World view** Varies with practitioner.

### ***Reflexology***

**Origins** Reflexology can be traced back to the native tribes of North America and other ancient cultures. Current system developed in the 20th century by an American doctor. Now one of the most popular therapies in the UK, with over 6,000 practitioners.

**The therapy** Ten 'energy lines' are believed to run longitudinally through the body, five to each foot, linking all body organs along these lines. Controlled pressure is applied with the thumbs or fingers to 'reflex points' on the feet (occasionally the hands). Put simply, practitioners believe this

stimulates the body to achieve its own equilibrium and good health.

**World view** Varies with practitioner.

**Critics say...**

'A scientific rationale for reflexology simply does not exist. Reflexology is popular, usually perceived as relaxing and, as a therapy, carries few risks... there is as yet no truly convincing evidence that it is specifically effective for any medical conditions' (Source: Edzard Ernst, professor of complementary medicine at the University of Exeter, as reported in 'The Independent', 1 December 1998).

**Supporters say...**

Perceived as relaxing. No adverse effects are on record. Recommended as an adjunct to conventional therapy.

**Massage**

**Origins** Used by ancient civilisations. Considered important by Hippocrates, father of orthodox medicine. Swedish massage principles formulated in the late 19th century by a Swedish gymnast.

**The therapy** There are many specialised massage techniques available. The most common is based on the five basic strokes of Swedish massage. Physical manipulation, using a variety of types of touch (eg kneading, drumming). All parts of the body can be massaged. Included in Royal College of Nursing training courses.

**World view** Varies with practitioner.

**Meditation Exercises**

Yoga; Alexander Technique

**Yoga**

**Origins** Yoga is an ancient spiritual discipline, springing from Indian philosophy and religion, including Hinduism. Its goal is to free the practitioner from distractions and achieve a

perfect oneness with the 'Universal Spirit'. There are eight stages of classical yoga, which use different bodily expressions to reach a spiritual goal. Modern yoga systems have been developed which blend some of the classical elements, and may have a greater 'body' emphasis. Western devotees may take on additional philosophical elements such as diet, moral and mental training.

**The therapy** Concentrates on three main areas to achieve control over body and mind. These are:

- using physical postures to master the body.
- breathing techniques to control respiration.
- improving concentration through mental techniques.

Frequently used in the West as a relaxation and exercise technique, with meditation. The exercises may be taught in a class and practised at home.

**World view** Hindu, although often secularised by Western practitioners.

### ***Alexander Technique***

**Origins** The system was devised by Frederick Alexander, an Australian actor, who struggled with voice problems. He found these were caused by tension affecting his posture, and 'considering before performing an action' is a way to health, rather than being part of a vicious circle of performance-achievement-performance.

**The therapy** The technique teaches how to relieve built-up muscle tension by adjusting balance and posture. Breathing and co-ordination are part of the technique. The pupil learns how to make everyday movements in a way that puts least stress and strain on the body. This can then go on to positively affect the person's emotional and mental well-being, practitioners claim. A lesson may last between 30 minutes and an hour, and the teacher will move the client's head, limbs

and body into various positions to detect unnecessary muscular tension. The client will then learn how to release this tension and will be encouraged to use the technique any time tension arises.

Alexander Technique is very popular with performing artists, and is included in the curriculum of many music and drama schools.

**World view** Varies with practitioner.

## **Healing - Hit and Myth**

*Rob Warner - www.christianitymagazine.co.uk accessed 14/07/09*

Some claim healing is available to anyone if you have enough faith. Others suggest healing claims are all hype and no substance. Rob Warner calls us to place our hope in Christ – the charismatic healer who suffered and who calls us to take up our cross and become a disciple

When we had an extension built, first the builders had to knock down a rickety garage and construct solid foundations. If we want to be part of a church that has a healthy healing ministry, several myths about healing need to be demolished so that we can build on solid, biblical foundations.

## **Myths about healing**

### ***Myth 1 - Be healed by faith, don't take your medicine.***

If someone is taking medicine under proper medical supervision, they should never be told to ditch their tablets. It may be entirely different if you are dealing with a hypochondriac who swallows handfuls of self-subscribed pills every hour. A prejudice against medicine is as unhealthy as a prejudice against prayer. It's part of the false antithesis that suggests you have to make a choice between God and Science. Some anti-scientific Christians like that choice. So do

some anti-Christian scientists. But it's a false choice. It's far better to receive prayer for healing and keep taking the tablets.

***Myth 2 - The right method guarantees success.***

It's human nature to turn a personal preference into a compulsory practice. In one church, healing prayer is incomplete without candles and incense. In another, healing prayer requires the laying on of hands in a particular way. In still another, healing prayer is incomplete without a lot of shouting. The liberty of Jesus comes as an almost shocking contrast. He seems to have taken delight in surprising those who like a fixed formula in prayer: he prays in public and in private, with and without touch, at a distance and even with mud. The Christian who craves a formula inhabits a world of the quick fix, the instant answer, the obsession with finding a foolproof technique. Jesus invites us to embrace naked faith, formula free. We need to trust the One to whom we pray and not get fooled into thinking that 'the right' methods of prayer can ever guarantee results.

***Myth 3 - If it doesn't work, blame someone.***

When Christians pray for healing unwisely, it makes their churches sick. They start pinning the blame on someone. Maybe it's the people praying, or maybe it's the person who is sick. Many pastors have met Christians whose spirits need to be rebuilt, because prayer that was meant to heal has turned into a curse. Whether or not someone is healed, our first desire should always be to bless with grace and never to curse with blame. Some note a higher 'success rate' for healing in the developing world and then blame the Western church. Maybe their faith is greater. Maybe God is merciful upon their lack of medical provision. Nonetheless, I don't see too many Western enthusiasts for third world miracles choosing to move to the developing world and renounce first world

medicine. Although God's works of supernatural healing are wonderful, God's gift of medical science often produces more reliable results.

***Myth 4 - I have the power.***

In the book of Acts, Luke records the exceptional healing ministries of Peter and Paul. He doesn't suggest that others have somehow failed because they are not as much used in healing ministry. He merely records that God used Peter and Paul in these particular ways. Paul demonstrates the right way to handle misplaced adulation when he rejects any attempt to offer him worship (Acts 14:15). He refuses to be attention-seeking, rejects any possibility of a cult of personality, and is concerned only to bring glory to Jesus Christ. We need to focus not upon the ones doing the praying, but upon the One in whose name our prayers for healing are made.

***Myth 5 - Intense spirituality is always best.***

One of the accusations against the first Christians was that they were atheists. They just weren't troubled by the many superstitions and minor deities of the Roman Empire. There are two risks for Christians today. On the one hand, we can become over-secularized, leaving God out of our lives altogether, except on Sundays. The opposite danger is that we become super-spiritual, seeing demons behind every sneeze, profound signs from God behind the minor events of daily living. In some circles, whenever a Christian dies young, Satan gets the blame: "God had work for them to do on earth, but Satan stole them early." Trying to make sense of the mystery of a premature death, such Christians ascribe too much power to Satan. There is even a theory that Jesus' death was a tragic accident, resulting from satanic intervention, but that's a 20th Century heresy with no basis in orthodox Christianity. Such



super-spiritual dualism cannot be justified from the New Testament.

### **Healing and suffering**

Paul's ambition was to know the power of Christ's resurrection and to share in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings (Philippians 3:10). Such a combination is both disturbing and profound. It speaks of a paradox at the heart of Christian living, in which God's strength is made perfect in our weakness and Christ's crucifixion becomes the perfect revelation of divine glory. Healing and suffering make an uncomfortable combination, and yet together they represent the full message of the first Easter, in the cross and the resurrection.

### ***Healing is known alongside suffering.***

Those who claim that healing always does away with suffering want a Christ of the resurrection without a Christ of the cross. An emphasis upon triumph alone is likely to lead to four results among those who are not healed: They may live in denial, pretending to be healed and hiding their symptoms or the drugs on which they continue to depend; They may live in guilt, assuming they have somehow failed God, so that their continued sickness is some kind of punishment or rebuke; They may sink from disappointment into cynicism, no longer believing in their church's rhetoric or even in God's power to heal anyone at all; Or they may embark on an endless quest to find Rev. Right whose anointed prayers will deliver the guaranteed healing into their life.

Healing can make suffering harder. Suffering is a terrible mystery. We don't know and can't understand why some suffer greatly, some die prematurely and others live with great disappointments or under the shadow of long-term depression. If no-one suffered, there'd be no problem of

suffering. If everyone was healed, there'd still be a problem of suffering, but at least there would be a guaranteed escape. But when some are healed while others continue to suffer, the problem and mystery of suffering become even greater. We rejoice with the couple who have been able to conceive at last. But we weep with the couple, longing just as much for children, who must endure lifelong infertility.

***Healing speaks of mystery and hiddenness.***

If we could guarantee 100% success, if our prayer techniques unfailingly delivered the goods, we would inhabit a very different kind of world, in which healings would flow from prayer as certainly as water when we turn on a tap. Faith in the real world has to face up to the mystery of God. Because Jesus is Lord, sovereign and free, he cannot be a divine butler to our prayers. The first Christians rapidly discovered that faith was not about the trappings of a prosperous life, totally immune to every sickness and adversity. We have to face the hiddenness of God: we believe in his love but we cannot be sure how our prayers will be answered. Faith means holding onto the unseen God, not only when someone is wonderfully healed, but especially when we face Good Friday experiences of persecution, vulnerability, seeming abandonment by God, and imminent death.

***Healing speaks of dying well, not of never dying.***

To hear some Christians speak, you would think no one was ever healed. To hear other Christians speak, you would think no true believer has ever faced prolonged suffering. When I pray with someone who is near to death, I may pray the ancient prayer of God's presence: "God be in my head and in my understanding...God be at my end, and at my departing." Or maybe the prayer of Simeon: "Lord now let your servant depart in peace." Here the healing is not from death, but from

the fear of death. I remember Liesl, stricken with a cancer that ravaged her with devastating speed. She didn't want to die, even though she knew she was dying. In her fear of death, she wanted to deny the inescapable reality. As we prayed, she was released from fear, trusting anew in her Saviour's tender care, even in the shadow of death. I suspect those caring for the dying in a hospice often know far more of God's healing presence than those filled with boasting rhetoric that one day they'll raise the dead.

### ***The crucified healer***

For as long as the church exists, there'll be extremism. But here are three extremes for the church to avoid when it comes to healing.

#### **1. A one dimensional rationalism**

In this kind of church, the Word is preached faithfully, the mind is used actively, but no one ever prays for healing. We swap the wholeness of Christ for the narrowness of a religion in which there is little hope for the sick this side of the grave.

#### **2. Hype and unreality**

In this kind of church, healing is forever being trumpeted. The arrival of total healing is promised just around the next corner. But the glorious church of 100% success is a tomorrow that will never come. Hype is a religious tranquilizer, numbing us to the harsh realities of the real world in which Jesus called us to live and serve.

#### **3. A therapy-centred church**

We all have unmet needs, pressures and uncertainties in our lives, and it's good to pray about them. But we also need a sense of perspective. Many of the needs prayed about in Western churches are very low priorities for people in the developing world where survival is a pressing daily issue. We can become self-indulgent, self-obsessed, so pre-occupied

with our own needs that we forget the principle of Jesus: with the measure we give, we receive. The gift of wholeness and fulfilment is sometimes found not in receiving more prayer, but in learning to serve others more willingly.

Naive idealism can push the Christian towards unreality, looking for too much, too soon, of the things of heaven we only have a foretaste here on earth. World-weary cynicism can box the Christian too narrowly, pigeon-holed by unbelief and failing to enter into the fullness of all that is ours in Christ. What we need is biblical realism. Biblical because we want to embrace the full biblical inheritance, in all its richness and complexity, desiring neither more nor less than all the Bible offers us in Christ. Realism because we need to purge ourselves of all unbiblical fantasies and inflated rhetoric, growing in authentic faith in the real world.

Mark wrote a Gospel of two halves. In the first we see Jesus the Wonder Worker, astonishing both his followers and the crowds with his demonstrations of divine might. Sickness, demons, even the wind and waves, all bow before his authority. Here is the “charismatic Jesus”, full of wonders and power. In the second half we see Jesus journeying to the cross. Here is the “suffering Jesus”, still teaching and healing, but resolutely walking with God towards certain execution in Jerusalem. So why didn't Jesus wield divine power to crush the forces of the Roman Empire and respectable religion? That's what Peter wanted of him, and the crowds we remember on Palm Sunday expected much the same. But Jesus was demonstrating a more profound truth. The way of the Anointed King is the way of the Suffering Servant. The way of God's glory is the way of the cross. The triumph of love is found not in military might, nor in supernatural power, but in self-emptying service. If we really want to be disciples,

Mark insists, we must join Jesus on the Great Journey of discipleship. We may be fortunate to delight in great privileges of healing, but sooner or later we are sure to face our share of suffering. Yes, Jesus is the mighty healer. But the centre of gravity, the pivot of discipleship, the defining point of divine revelation, this is not found in Jesus' overcoming leprosy and blindness, paralysis and dumbness. If we want to know the heart of God, we must discover the journey of discipleship in the way of the cross. Healing is a glorious, mysterious, sometimes perplexing, gift of God. We would not be without it. But centre stage in Christian faith should always be Christ's cross.

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