

## **Introduction**

Pentecostals who teach a four fold gospel, have Jesus at the centre, and proclaim that he is their Saviour, Baptizer, Healer and Coming King. Although it is an unprecedented emphasis on the Holy Spirit that has primarily set Pentecostals apart from other denominations, one cannot ignore the impact and popularity that has also been associated with their focus on divine healing. Many Christians have testified to being recipients of divine healing since the early days of the Pentecostal movement. Although all Pentecostals do not agree on the theological details of divine healing, it is important for them to understanding how healing theology has developed. Also, because ‘faith healers’ have attracted so much attention in recent years, and because some Pentecostals have been associated with this movement, it is important for Pentecostals to understand what faith healers believe and practice.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the Pentecostal doctrine of healing in the context of its historical roots and the theological understanding that developed from those roots. It is also the intent of this paper to examine the claims of faith healers and come to an understanding of how their theology agrees with, or differs from Pentecostal healing doctrine which aims to be Christocentric in nature. This is a review of the history and theology of the doctrine of divine healing with special attention being given to faith healing.

This task will be accomplished by first examining the historical development of healing theology with a focus on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, and faith healers. Secondly, focus will be shifted to the questions and difficulties which arise from this developed theology, and some general Pentecostal interpretations and conclusions will be presented.

## **Historical Contributions to Healing Theology**

### **Primary Roots**

The primary roots<sup>1</sup> for evangelical thought take us back to the Reformation period of Luther's time. The Reformation led to a rediscovery of biblical truth which led to an evangelical awakening. With emphasis directed toward biblical preaching rather than sacramentalism and church tradition, it became necessary to agree on some basic affirmations. In 1967 the American branch of the Evangelical Alliance published nine affirmations, but it is interesting to note that healing was not among them. Healing practices would not be given due recognition until the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America would adopt a Statement of Truth from the National Association of Evangelicals (formed in 1943) and add the following: "We believe that the full gospel includes holiness of heart and life, healing for the body and baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues as the spirit gives utterance."

There were many ministers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century who contributed to the development of healing theology. Because it would be impossible to discuss all of them, attention will be given primarily to those who made significant contributions to the development of healing theology.

### **Healing Ministries in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

It is important to understand that whatever perspective people took on divine healing in this century was void of the Pentecostal experience of the century that would follow. There were no charismatic signs yet, there was no reference to the gift of healing. What was acknowledged however, was that with a return to biblical truth and practice there was an increase in faith and

---

<sup>1</sup>W.A. Griffin, "Pentecostal Theology: Roots and Offshoots," Lecture Notes May, 2004,

expectancy that God would do the miraculous.

Charles G. Finney (1792-1875) was instrumental in establishing healing theology in that he “...was beginning to advocate ‘prevailing’ or ‘effectual prayer.’ . . .Finney insisted that in order to ‘prevail in prayer,’ one must ‘pray for a definite object,’ ‘pray in faith,’ and ‘expect to obtain the blessing.’ . . .Finney was convinced that such ‘faith *always* obtains the object.’ Failure to get an answer indicated that one was out of the will of God - or not really praying ‘in faith.’ ”<sup>2</sup> Finney taught that healing came through faith, not the atonement, this would prove to be a point of contention later in the century.

John C. Blumhardt (1805-1880) was a Pietist. He was most well known for his teaching of Jesus as ‘Victor.’ In essence this thought embraced the idea that Christ is in an ongoing battle with evil and is consistently victorious over sin and sickness. Of Blumhardt, Donald Dayton has said “This constellation of convictions led Blumhardt to expect healing, or at least improvement of health, in response to the gospel.”<sup>3</sup> As a result of Blumhardt’s expectancy, he established a healing home, he did this in the small Lutheran village of Mottlingen. The concept of establishing healing homes spread as the subject of divine healing gained momentum in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the most popular of these was established by Dorothea Trudel (1813-1862) in the Swiss village of Mannendorf on Lake Zurich.

In the United States there was a man named Dr. Charles Cullis (1833-1892) who had a faith work in Boston. Building on the foundation set by Finney, the stage was set for Charles

---

Tyndale University College and Seminary, summary of pages 42-26.

<sup>2</sup>Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1987) 122.

<sup>3</sup>Dayton, 121.

Cullis to push the doctrine of healing by faith, based on James 5:14-15. It is said that Cullis “did ‘more than any other man to bring healing by faith to the attention of the church in the last century.’”<sup>4</sup>

W.E. Boardman followed Cullis but his emphasis was on Psalm 3:2-3 rather than the faith passage of James. According to Donald Dayton<sup>5</sup>, Boardman felt that the Hebrew parallelism in verse three was especially important, he understood it to bring together forgiveness and healing. This was a step away from the concept that healing came solely by faith as established by his predecessors, and a step toward connecting healing to salvation, both of which were available through the atonement. Both Cullis and Boardman had roots in the holiness movement which was very instrumental in advancing the idea of healing in the atonement.

It is said of Alexander Dowie (1847-1907) that “Dr. Dowie did more to promote the doctrine of divine healing than possibly any other man.”<sup>6</sup> He too was a proponent of faith healing, it was noted that “Dowie insisted that those who sought his prayers relinquish all medicine and, instead, exercise faith.”<sup>7</sup> Despite his strong teaching regarding a Christian’s right to take authority over sickness, Dowie suffered a stroke in 1905, and in 1907 he died. As a result, much controversy surrounded his life and he died “. . .disgraced, and ignored by most of the thousands

---

<sup>4</sup>Dayton, 122.

<sup>5</sup>Dayton, 125.

<sup>6</sup>Hugh Jeter, *By His Stripes: A Biblical Study on Divine Healing* (Springfield, MI: Gospel Publishing House, 1979) 94.

<sup>7</sup>Stanley M. Burgess, ed. *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002) 587.

who had acclaimed him.”<sup>8</sup> However controversial his life, it can be said that he did help promote the Pentecostal theology of healing.

In Pentecostal history there has been an emphasis on the gifts of healing, signs and wonders, etc. It may be noted that John Alexander Dowie, who created the Divine Healing Association in 1890, based his Divine Healing view more on Pentecostal “power” than on the atoning work of Christ. Dowie saw healing as “God also bearing witness with, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers [miracles] and by gifts of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>9</sup>

A.B. Simpson (1843-1919) was another promoter of faith healing who taught that healing was certain because of its connection to the atonement. He suggested that there should be no doubt as to God’s will on this matter. In one of his books he stated, “Has God given you any means by which you may know His will? Most assuredly. If the Lord Jesus has purchased healing for you in His redemption, it must be God’s will for you to have it. . .”<sup>10</sup>

An influential holiness-Pentecostal evangelist named Carrie Judd Montgomery (1858-1946) was very instrumental in connecting healing and holiness. Montgomery’s contribution to Faith Healing was her emphasis on laying hold by faith and claiming answers to prayer. She contributed to healing theology in promoting the concept of positive confession. At one point she wrote an article entitled *Divine Healing In Relation to The Use of Our Lips*. “In 1881 she found Triumphs of Faith, ‘a monthly journal devoted to faith healing and to the promotion of Christian

---

<sup>8</sup>Burgess, 587.

<sup>9</sup>Griffin, 110.

<sup>10</sup> A.B. Simpson, *The Gospel of Healing* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1986) 59.

holiness.’ The magazine bridged the Holiness and Pentecostal movements.”<sup>11</sup> [\[http://www.touchet1611.org/PentecostalWomen.html\]](http://www.touchet1611.org/PentecostalWomen.html)

Charles F. Parham (1873-1929) had some radical beliefs that got him into trouble, one of which was that he did not believe in taking medication. It is said that “Medication was forbidden in his home, however he left others to their own final

decisions.”<sup>12</sup> [\[http://ww.shawcorp.com/kathy/charles\\_f\\_parham.htm\]](http://ww.shawcorp.com/kathy/charles_f_parham.htm) Parham also contributed greatly to the theology of healing in the atonement, and he too opened a refuge home for healing.

By the time R.L. Stanton came along the scene was set for him to take a more dogmatic approach to faith healing. He argued that “the atonement of Christ lays a foundation equally for deliverance from sin and for deliverance from disease; that complete provision has been made for both.”<sup>13</sup> This set the stage for controversy that would later arise regarding the level of expectancy somebody could have regarding healing. If the atonement provides certainty of salvation, does it do the same for healing? This will be discussed later.

One of the first evangelists to hold large campaigns and pray for the sick in the United States was Mary B. Woodworth-Etter, whose public ministry began in 1877. She would set the precedence for massive healing crusades.

The impact of 19<sup>th</sup> century evangelists had on 20<sup>th</sup> century Pentecostalism cannot be underestimated. Because of their willingness to explore, teach and preach that God does heal, others would be able to build on that truth and bring another dimension into it following the

---

<sup>11</sup><http://www.touchet1611.org/PentecostalWomen.html>

<sup>12</sup>[http://ww.shawcorp.com/kathy/charles\\_f\\_parham.htm](http://ww.shawcorp.com/kathy/charles_f_parham.htm)

<sup>13</sup>Dayton, 126.

events of Azusa Street, the dimension of the work of the Holy Spirit. “The emphasis on healing among 19<sup>th</sup> century evangelicals opened the door for divine intervention. . . .the Christological focus on Christ the Healer made divine healing an integral part of early Pentecostalism.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Healing Ministries in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

The model of healing that arose in the United States in the 20<sup>th</sup> century “. . .was what we would call a basically evangelical theological perspective. This perspective insisted that people can be miraculously cured through the same means by which they become Christians, that is, through the atoning work of Christ. Their key idea was ‘healing is in the atonement.’ ”<sup>15</sup> The basis for this theology was set in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but by the 20<sup>th</sup> century there appeared to be less extremism and more of a balance between having an assurance that healing is possible and trusting in the sovereignty of God to answer prayer according to his will. That balance did not exist among the Word Faith Movement which will be discussed later.

R. Kelso Carter (1849-1928) was a colleague of A.B. Simpson. He originally held a view that the atonement provided for the body all that it provided for the soul. After many years in ministry, he wrote a book entitled *Faith Healing Reviewed After Twenty Years* which presented a different perspective than his earlier writings. He then wrote,

. . .the Atonement of Christ covers sickness and disease as well as sin, is but to say that the effects are necessarily embraced in the root cause. There was and could be no error there. But to claim that ALL the results of the Atonement are NOW open to the present living Christian is a grave mistake. . . .We may err, and have erred, in endeavouring to appropriate at the present time some of the final fruits of that sacrifice.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Griffin, 42.

<sup>15</sup>Burgess, 710.

<sup>16</sup>Griffin, 110.

Regarding the topic of healing and miracles, Smith Wigglesworth (1859-1947) was one of the main proponents of connecting sickness with sin. By doing so he promoted the idea that when praying for sickness to be removed one must take authority over Satan who had gained control of the sick person because of their sin. He wrote

“ . . .you are not dealing with a person, you are dealing with the Satanic forces that are binding the person. . . .Cast him out! You are dealing not with the person, you are dealing with the devil. Demon power must be dislodged in the name of the Lord. You are always right when you dare to deal with sickness as with the devil. Much sickness is caused by some misconduct; there is something wrong; there is some neglect somewhere, and Satan has had a chance to get in. It is necessary to repent and confess where you have given place to the devil, and then he can be dealt with.”<sup>17</sup>

Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944), founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel was also known for her emphasis on healing. She also linked healing with the atonement, but like many others she coupled that doctrine with the idea that if healing did not come, it indicated that there was a lack of faith.

Probably one of the most notable of all healing evangelists was Kathryn Kuhlman (1907-1976) who was known as the handmaiden of the Lord. “The most outstanding feature of Kuhlman’s ministry was her insistence on absolute dependence on the Holy Spirit. . . .No one before Kuhlman had highlighted the importance of the role the Holy Spirit played in healing to the degree to which she did.”<sup>18</sup> Kuhlman taught that faith was essential to healing, but ultimately it was the sovereignty of God that determined the outcome.

William Branham (1909-1965) launched a healing ministry in the United States in 1946. There were some unusual teachings and actions that accompanied his ministry, not the least of

---

<sup>17</sup>Smith Wigglesworth, *Ever Increasing Faith* (Springfield, MI: Gospel Publishing House, 1971) 149.

<sup>18</sup>Burgess, 709.

which was his dependence on an angel. Branham died in a car accident at the age of 56. Though his ministry was very controversial, it must be acknowledged that he did make a significant contribution to the healing movement as “He did much to foster a widespread expectation that God could be counted on to heal miraculously.”<sup>19</sup>

There were many other significant names of healing evangelists, especially those who ministered during the late 1950's which appears to be the prominent period of such activity. “During the peak years from 1950 to 1956 over a hundred evangelists were associated with the Voice of Healing.”<sup>20</sup> Among which were such prominent evangelists as A.A. Allen, Jack Coe, T.L. Osborn, William Freeman, O.L. Jagers and many others.

The focus of this section has been on a few healing evangelists whose practice helped develop the theology of divine healing. At the same time as Pentecostals (and those independent evangelists who remained close to Pentecostals in practice) were developing their theology, there was also a rise in what is known as the Word Faith Movement. Faith healers, as proponents of this doctrine are known, have been the source of much controversy, and so it is important to examine their roots as well.

### **Word Faith Movement**

As noted previously, Charles Finney played a role in the rise of ‘Faith’ theology. The other significant contributor that ministered prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century is Essek Wiliam Kenyon (1867-1948). Some of his theological

---

<sup>19</sup>Burgess, 709.

<sup>20</sup>David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *All Things Are Possible: The Healing and Charismatic Revivals in Modern America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975) 83.

thoughts[<http://www.peterwade.com/articles/kenyon/kenyon03.shtml>]<sup>21</sup> inferred such things as the assurance of healing for those who have enough faith, the power of confession (speak healing and it will come), one can be equally certain of salvation and healing in the atonement, believers have the authority to ask Satan to leave their body (in order that sickness might go as well), his was a 'name it and claim' it theology.

His insistence that there is power in the spoken word of faith stemmed from his interpretation of Mark 11:23, which he believed meant that we should have the faith of God rather than faith in God.

Kenyon's thought seems to be that as new creatures in Christ we have been made partakers of God's faith nature. Just as God created *ex-nihilo* by means of faith-filled words, Kenyon assumes that Adam, the first human being, 'ruled creation by his word. His voice was like the voice of the Creator in its dominion over creation.'<sup>22</sup>

Following in Kenyon's footsteps was Kenneth E. Hagin's (1917- ) whose greatest contribution to the healing movement was that he founded the Rhema Bible Training Center in 1974 and trained thousands of students. Hagin has been accused of plagiarizing E.W. Kenyon, and like Kenyon, Hagin's theology is dogmatically rooted in the presupposition that every Christian should experience prosperity in health and wealth. He wrote "I am fully convinced - I would die saying it is so - that it is the plan of Our Father God, in His great love and in His great mercy, that no believer should ever be sick; that every believer should live his full life span down

---

<sup>21</sup><http://www.peterwade.com/articles/kenyon/kenyon03.shtml>

<sup>22</sup> Geir Lie, "The Theology of E.W. Kenyon: Plain Heresy or Within Boundaries of Pentecostal Charismatic "orthodoxy"?" *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, Volume 22, No. 1 (Spring 2000): 106.

here on this earth; and that every believer should finally just fall asleep in Jesus.”<sup>23</sup>

One of the most confusing things about this theology is that it does not require substantial physical proof. Those praying for healing are told to ignore the physical manifestations of pain and sickness, but rather to accept the testimony of God’s word. So if the sickness and accompanying symptoms persist, they are to deny that reality. “This is a definite link to the teachings held by certain mind-healing cults”<sup>24</sup> says Neuman. Kenyon taught that sickness was a spiritual issue, and physical signs are to be ignored.

Oral Roberts (1918- ) was another initiator of the faith healing doctrine. In the 60's he wrote “If God has ever healed one person, He will heal two; if He heals two, He will heal four; if four, then eight; and if eight, He will heal all who will believe. Else you would make Him have healing compassion for one and not another. Should that be true, He would not be God, but a man.”<sup>25</sup> Apparently Roberts reevaluated this ‘faith’ theology later in his ministry and came to different conclusions, “From the very beginning of my ministry of healing in 1947, there have been times I have prayed for persons I felt would recover; some did and some did not. But I know that I am not God, only His instrument. My part is to pray, His is to make the final judgement.”<sup>26</sup> Here it appears that Roberts was willing to consider the role of God’s sovereign will in the matter.

Another prominent name in the faith healing movement is that of Kenneth Copeland

---

<sup>23</sup> H. Terris Neuman, “Cultic Origins of Word-Faith Theology Within the Charismatic Movement,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring 1990): 33.

<sup>24</sup>Neuman, 35.

<sup>25</sup>Oral Roberts, *If You Need Healing Do These Things* (USA: Oral Roberts, 1969) 4.

<sup>26</sup>Oral Roberts, *3 Most Important Steps To Your Better Health and Miracle Living* (Tulsa, OK: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Assn., Inc., 1977) 262.

(1937- ). He is a leader in the “Word of Faith” message, and is still very active in ministry. He attended Oral Roberts University and He was heavily influenced by E.W. Kenyon. Copeland, as other faith healers before him, has been accused of deifying man and humanizing God. Copeland was quoted as saying, “Now Peter said by exceeding great and precious promises you become partakers of the divine nature. All right, are we gods? We are a class of gods!”<sup>27</sup> Of God, Copeland says “God is a being who stands about 6'2", weighing somewhere in the neighborhood of a couple of hundred pounds, and has a hand span of 9" across.”<sup>28</sup>

Other faith healers and modern preachers such as Fred Price, Creflo Dollar, Paul Yonggi Cho and Benny Hinn have all been connected with the faith healing movement, and have expressed thoughts that coincide with the theology of Kenyon and Copeland. It is noteworthy that “Kenyon’s views are sometimes traced back to Phineas P. Kimby (1802-1866), who is credited with having healed Mary Baker Eddy (founded Christian Science in 1862). . .”<sup>29</sup> It is in one author’s opinion that “The Positive Confession movement is nothing but a charismatic form of Christian Science.”<sup>30</sup>

### **Difficulties With Healing Theology and a Pentecostal Interpretation**

#### **Healing in the Atonement**

Pentecostalism. . .put healing back into the spiritual agenda, and located it firmly in the atonement . . . where it rightly belongs - indeed what benefit of salvation does not derive from the

---

<sup>27</sup><http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/char/more/w-f.htm>

<sup>28</sup><http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/char/more/w-f.htm>

<sup>29</sup>Griffin, 160.

<sup>30</sup><http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/posit.htm>

atonement?”<sup>31</sup> The scriptures that are used to connect healing and the atonement are Isaiah 53:4-5 and Matthew 8:14-17. Menzies says that Matthew understood Isaiah in light of the cross, he had fresh insight and probably did not understand it even as Isaiah did. “It is more than simply a description of Jesus’ earthly ministry in terms of healing; rather, it is Matthew’s summary of the significance of Jesus’ messianic mission, which culminates on the cross.”<sup>32</sup>

The difficulty one encounters when associating healing with the atonement is that if the atonement grants certainty for one’s salvation, why are so many who trust in the atonement for healing, not healed? If Christ died for both, why is healing not always realized as salvation is for those who ask?

Menzies suggests that the difficulties regarding this dilemma cannot be satisfied without answering the question “What is the full significance of Christ’s death on the cross?”<sup>33</sup> In response to this question, Menzies discusses three propositions.<sup>34</sup> The first is in relation to the dilemma regarding whether Jesus heals according to his sovereign choice or because of his work on the cross. Menzies argues that these two are linked because the work on the cross was the means by which Jesus assumed his place as sovereign Lord. With this in mind, there is no contradiction in saying that both play a part. Secondly, Menzies argues that though healing is in the atonement, this does not guarantee instant healing. He suggests that both salvation and

---

<sup>31</sup>Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 340.

<sup>32</sup>William W. & Robert P. Menzies, *Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000) 162.

<sup>33</sup>Menzies, 162.

<sup>34</sup>Menzies, 162-166.

healing are progressive. He says that we look forward to the day when we are made completely whole both spiritually and physically. If a person who has received the gift of salvation because of the atoning work of Christ does not reach perfection and freedom from sin until Christ comes, it cannot be expected that they be totally free of sickness either. Finally, Menzies says that through salvation Jesus is restoring all things. He says that we ought to rejoice in the fact that God is restoring all of creation, and live in anticipation of the day when there will be no more sickness. Menzies perspective on healing in the atonement are refreshing, and they do help alleviate the discrepancies some suggest accompany the theology that roots healing in the atonement.

Craig Blomberg, commenting on Matthew 8:17 wrote “There is physical healing in the atonement for this age, but it is up to God in Christ to choose when and how to dispense it.”<sup>35</sup> This brings us to the next issue of controversy, the sovereignty of God and the role it plays in divine healing.

### **Sovereignty of God**

The issue one confronts in dealing with the sovereignty of God is whether or not a Christian has the right to expect healing to come, or should they pray ‘thy will be done.’ It is important to note that when people pray and demand that God heal, they remove the power and authority from God and place it upon themselves. Pentecostals avoid the attitude of faith healers who share in the theology expressed by Fred Price who says “Yes! You are in control! So, if man has control, who no longer has it? God.”<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup>Stanley M. Horton, *Systematic Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield MI: Logion Press, 1994) 507.

<sup>36</sup>Fred Price, *Prayer: Do You Know What Prayer Is . . . and How to Pray?* (The Word Study Bible, 1990) 1178.

It is an error in theology to take God out of the picture and assume that in light of one's salvation a person has the power and authority to claim healing as Jesus did, and thereby ignore his input. "We are dependent upon Him, as our mediator with God. . . . What He willed He did. *We can only do what He wills.*"<sup>37</sup>

To claim and demand healing is to falsely assume that scripture indicates a believer's life is to be free from suffering. This was never suggested by Christ, and actually the opposite is more accurate. "Affliction is part of the Christian's life just as much as the nonbeliever's (sometimes more so). The proper response of Christians to affliction is not to demand healing but rather to witness to the world that through the grace of God a Christian is able to accept affliction, trusting in the sovereignty of God."<sup>38</sup>

The other concern that arises when somebody considers God's sovereign will in divine healing is that God shows favouritism or has more compassion on one person than another when he doesn't heal everybody. Those who raise this concern suggest that if God loves us he would not permit anybody to suffer. The problem with this argument is that it ignores God's ability to see the bigger picture as opposed to the here and now. Someone once said 'God is more concerned about our eternal destiny than our earthly comfort.' There is a lot to be said about the increase in faith and development of character that can result from a period of sickness. Paul is a good example of this, Dailey says of Paul's thorn in the flesh "Though certainly painful to endure,

---

<sup>37</sup>George Canty, *The Hallmarks of Pentecost: Discerning the True Spiritual Gifts* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1989) 118.

<sup>38</sup>Michael Horton, ed, *The Agony of Deceit: What Some TV Preachers are Really Teaching*, "Faith-Healing & The Sovereignty of God" by C. Everett Koop (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 174.

Paul's physical suffering gave him a spiritual strength that he otherwise would not have had."<sup>39</sup>

Through sickness God chose to build trust and character in both Job and Paul, does that mean God lacks in compassion? Not if one believes that our spiritual well-being is God's primary concern.

### **The Faith Issue**

The teaching that healing comes only when somebody has enough faith, has derived from focussing solely on James 5:14-15 when dealing with healing theology, rather than looking at healing as a benefit of the atonement. The ultimate danger related to such theology is that it lacks a Christocentric focus. Rather than viewing healing as a benefit of the atoning work of Christ, it suggests that healing is attained as a result of somebody's faith. It is faith in faith, not faith in Christ. "A person is led to believe that if he can just manage to work up enough faith he will receive his healing. The healing will be something like a prize for having so much faith. This would place healing on the basis of merit. We would obligate God by our strong faith!"<sup>40</sup>

The problem with attributing sickness to a lack of faith is that ". . . there ensues a painful conflict, in which the person begins to feel guilty; the more he examines his doubt, the bigger it grows. . . . This anxious approach can do great harm. Persons who are not healed go away with the impression that they lack the faith they should have, or that God doesn't love them as he so obviously loves those who have been healed."<sup>41</sup>

### **Experience and Practicality**

---

<sup>39</sup>Timothy J. Dailey, *Divine Healing: The Power of Faith* (Lincolnwood, IL: Publications International Ltd., 2000)183.

<sup>40</sup>Jeter, 94.

<sup>41</sup>Francis MacNutt, *Healing* (Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1974) 121-123.

Practicality speaking, it is difficult to explain to some people why their sickness does not go away, or why their loved one was not spared death when they have bought into faith healing theology. Not only does it cause a lot of inner conflict for the person whose faith was not rewarded, it also leads to a lot of disillusionment and bad publicity toward the gospel.

Some very dangerous practices have surfaced over the years as a result of believing that healing was a certainty for those who had enough faith. The demands of some faith healers that the sick person relinquish all medicine sometimes led to a worsening of conditions and even death. Unfortunately, even some Pentecostals bought into this theology over the years. “For most early Pentecostals the belief that healing was provided for in the atonement, gave rise to the notion that any other means of healing, for example through the use of medicine, should be avoided at all cost.”<sup>42</sup>

The second major misconception was that people should ignore pain and symptoms in favour of positive confession, this too can be detrimental to their health and devastating to their faith. “. . .denial of obvious realities under the guise of exercising one’s faith . . .has more in common with Christian Science than with biblical faith. Nowhere in Scripture are we encouraged to deny symptoms. This view is bolstered by a New Thought Philosophy that denies the reality of the physical world.”<sup>43</sup>

Some developed theology is not substantiated by experience, and when this is the case, that theology needs to be reexamined. Theology that is biblically based is practical in that it can be applied by all believers and experiential in that claims do not ignore reality.

---

<sup>42</sup>Jaques P.J. , “Towards a Practical Theological Theory for the Healing Ministry in Pentecostal Churches,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14 (1999): 54.

<sup>43</sup>Stanley Horton, 516.

## **Name It And Claim It**

It is suggested by faith healers that God intends all believers to prosper in health. With this in mind, it is the believer's responsibility to speak healing into existence. This doctrine, however deals with more than the 'faith' issue. In order to buy into this practice one must accept the dangerous teaching of those who say that when we accept Christ, we become like him and are given the same authority that he had. ". . .It is being said that we are gods doing what Jesus did. It is a frightening heresy. . . .New Age teaching is that man is part of God and must realize his godhead is his higher conscienceness and mind-power."<sup>44</sup> If one believes they are 'like God' then it would be understandable that they would have the authority to speak healing into existence, but this approach never considers God's sovereignty. Michael Horton bravely isolates another problem in the name it and claim it practice when he said "When a faith healer commands God to perform a miracle, in the absence of a prayer that says, 'Thy will be done,' it is, as far as I am concerned, the most rank form of arrogance."<sup>45</sup> It is indeed arrogant to assume that someone has authority to claim healing void of Christ's choice on the matter, but more than that, it is false theology.

## **Is Sin the Cause of Sickness?**

Other than a lack of faith, there is another explanation faith healers use when healing is not attained. They say that there must be sin in a person's life which hinders the healing from being attained. Those who buy into the theology that sin and sickness are connected suggest that Christians are expected to live in perfect health, and would do so if only they would confess all

---

<sup>44</sup>Canty, 118.

<sup>45</sup>Michael Horton, 176.

their sin. This contradicts the teaching of Christ who responded to the disciples when they asked whose sin had caused a man to be sick, by saying that it was not the result of anybody's sin.

The primary question that must be considered is this, 'Can we be expected to be totally eradicated from sickness while living on earth? Some people say that the atonement should guarantee victory over sickness just as it guarantees victory over sin, but to what extent is this realized? Though our sins are forgiven, we still live in a sinful world and are often guilty of failure. We are merely on a journey toward a perfect state of being. The concept of Christians living in perfect health and prospering in all things is derived from 'Kingdom Now' theology which insists that all things are being restored and things are expected to improve for Christians as they get worse for the world. This contradicts Pentecostal pre-millennial theology which holds the view that things will get continuously worse on earth until the millennial period comes.

### **Already But Not-Yet Perspective**

"In his ministry of healing, Jesus provides concrete evidence for the presence of the in-breaking kingdom of God. . . .Jesus understood his healing and exorcisms . . .as inaugurating the long-awaited epoch of salvation." <sup>46</sup> When Christ heals it is an already sign that the kingdom has come, but one must keep that in perspective of the not-yet fulfilment of some kingdom promises.

The community of believers all experience both sides of the 'paradox', in different measures, in different individuals, and at different times. Their eschatological hope should always vitally inform their present expectation, and stretch their faith towards 'saving' interventions in the community, but (at least theoretically) they should not be confounded by various forms of sufferings (including illness), which is part of their sharing in the

---

<sup>46</sup> Joel B. Green, *New Testament Theology: The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*

suffering of Christ.<sup>47</sup>

Healing is a blessing of the atonement, not a certainty, and even when others get healed and we don't we cannot allow this to discourage us. "Even when we are not healed ourselves in the present, the healing of another need not serve as an irresolvable quandary but rather as a divine testimony that we too-if not now, then - shall be made whole."<sup>48</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Traditionally, Pentecostal theology recognizes that faith plays an important part in healing, but it is not the only element that determines the outcome of a prayer of faith. By rooting healing in the atonement, Pentecostals accept that Christ is the centre of all acts of mercy, and by his sovereign will all things are accomplished. With an eschatological emphasis on Christ's redeeming work, the already but not-yet view of things helps bring clarification to some of the difficulties which arise when discussing healing.

Much controversy has surrounded the practice of faith healers as their claims are difficult to support with scripture, and seldom realized in practice. With such negativity looming over their theology, it becomes the responsibility of Pentecostals to do a good job of verifying their claims of miraculous intervention upon the sick in order to maintain integrity in their theology. "We must recognize that when we claim miracles occur, we are putting God's reputation on the line. 'Integrity can get lost in the middle of excitement.'"<sup>49</sup> When faith healers claim healing with no

---

(Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 95-96.

<sup>47</sup>Turner, 345.

<sup>48</sup>Stanley Horton, 508

<sup>49</sup>Colin Brown, "The Other Half of the Gospel?" *Christianity Today* (April 21, 1989): 29.

sign of physical change and an obvious denial of reality, it casts doubt on all miracles, and ultimately causes many to question God's ability to heal.

Stanley Burgess suggests that one can draw five observations from studying the history of divine healing, "(1) divine healing has continued throughout the history of the church; (2) the claims of healers and their supports are often overstated; (3) the stereotypical healer does not exist; (4) healing flows out of mystery; (5) healing can never be a proof of doctrinal correctness."<sup>50</sup> While these observations have a somewhat negative overtone, it needs to be said that many lessons have been learned from the historical accounts and claims of healing, and the church would be wise to consider a more realistic and less overstated approach to this doctrine. While healing is available to believers through the atoning work of Christ, he never promised that his followers would live without sickness and suffering. This does not negate our responsibility to pray for the sick, or to believe that God can and does heal, but it does require us to be satisfied to wait until eternity before expecting total deliverance from this world of sin and sickness.

## **Bibliography**

### **Books**

Burgess, Stanley M., ed. *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.

Canty, George. *The Hallmarks of Pentecost: Discerning the True Spiritual Gifts*. London: Marshall Pickering, 1989.

---

<sup>50</sup>Burgess, 699.

- Dailey, Timothy J. *Divine Healing: The Power of Faith*. Lincolnwood, IL: Publications International Ltd., 2000.
- Dayton, Donald W. *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press. Inc., 1987.
- Green, Joel B. *New Testament Theology: The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Harrell, David Edwin, Jr. *All Things Are Possible: The Healing and Charismatic Revivals in Modern America*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975.
- Horton, Michael, ed. *The Agony of Deceit: What Some TV Preachers are Really Teaching*, "Faith-Healing & The Sovereignty of God" by C. Everett Koop. Chicago: Moody Press, 1990.
- Horton, Stanley M. *Systematic Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective*. Springfield MI: Logion Press, 1994.
- Jeter, Hugh. *By His Stripes: A Biblical Study on Divine Healing*. Springfield, MI: Gospel Publishing House, 1979.
- MacNutt, Francis. *Healing*. Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1974.
- Menzies, William W. & Robert P. *Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000.
- Price, Fred. *Prayer: Do You Know What Prayer Is . . . and How to Pray?* The Word Study Bible, 1990.
- Roberts, Oral. *If You Need Healing Do These Things*. USA: Oral Roberts, 1969.
- Roberts, Oral. *3 Most Important Steps To Your Better Health and Miracle Living*. Tulsa, OK: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Assn., Inc., 1977.
- Simpson, A.B. *The Gospel of Healing*. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1986.
- Turner, Max. *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998.
- Wigglesworth, Smith. *Ever Increasing Faith*. Springfield, MI: Gospel Publishing House, 1971.

### Miscellaneous

Griffin, W.A. "Pentecostal Theology: Roots and Offshoots," Lecture Notes May, 2004, Tyndale University College and Seminary.

### **Periodicals**

Brown, Colin. "The Other Half of the Gospel?" *Christianity Today*. April 21, 1989.

### **Journals**

Lie, Geir. "The Theology of E.W. Kenyon: Plain Heresy or Within Boundaries of Pentecostal Charismatic "orthodoxy"?" *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*. Volume 22, No. 1 (Spring 2000).

Neuman, H. Terris. "Cultic Origins of Word-Faith Theology Within the Charismatic Movement." *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*. Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring 1990).

Theron, Jaques P.J. "Towards a Practical Theological Theory for the Healing Ministry in Pentecostal Churches." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14 (1999).

### **Websites**

<http://www.peterwade.com/articles/kenyon/kenyon03.shtml>

<http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/char/more/w-f.htm>

<http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/posit.htm>

[http://www.shawcorp.com/kathy/charles\\_f\\_parham.htm](http://www.shawcorp.com/kathy/charles_f_parham.htm)

<http://www.touchet1611.org/PentecostalWomen.html>