

“A HEALTHY THEOLOGY OF HEALING”

Have you ever looked at an old photograph of yourself and been struck by how much younger you look in the photo? Welcome to the club. It's called the ageing process. The apostle Paul talked about it in 2 Corinthians 4:16 when he told his readers that **“We do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”**

Ultimately this **“wasting away”** of our bodies reminds us that they are mortal and will not sustain our souls on this planet beyond a mere fraction of its history. Only God is immortal, or as the writer to the Hebrews puts it, **“Man is destined to die.”** (Heb 9:27)

On the other hand, have you ever stopped to think about the way in which your body constantly replenishes itself, bringing healing and wholeness to itself wherever there is decay?

In the next hour alone your body will shed some 600,000 skin cells, but you won't notice because simultaneously it will also produce 600,000 more.

This may sound like a busy hour's work, but it's nothing compared to what is happening in your blood vessels every second. Every single second of your life 2,000,000 red blood cells return to your bone marrow to die, and they are replaced every second by another 2,000,000 red blood cells which will make a quarter of a million round trips of your body before they also return to the bone marrow to die. No wonder you sometimes feel a bit tired!

We also see our bodies working even harder each time we are ill. Colds get better – with or without Lemsip and Locketts – if we simply give our body enough time to recover. Broken bones mend. Cut fingers heal. Although our bodies cannot deal with every sickness without medical intervention, it is obvious that our bodies have an inbuilt capacity, given them by their Designer, which works tirelessly to heal what is sick and mend what is broken. God has decreed that our bodies are mortal, but He is still very committed to promoting healing and wholeness in them as an expression of His character.

As Christians, we are not confused by this paradox. The atheist learns no spiritual lesson from the opposing principles of both healing and decline in his body. Without firm hope beyond the grave, he either laments or ignores his mortality whilst trying to halt the decline as long as possible before death inevitably comes. We know as Christians, however, that these two opposing forces of physical healing and decline are at the very heart of the Gospel. When God created the world He saw that it was **“very good”** (Gen 1:31), but when Adam disobeyed the Lord's command that **“You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die”** (Gen 2:17) he brought about the Fall and its *very bad* consequences. Paul explains that **“Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin”** (Rom 5:12), and Moses makes it clear that sickness was part of the curse which came through sin (Deut 28:21-22&59-61). This makes sense of Peter's teaching that Jesus was undoing the work of the Fall in his earthly ministry when he came **“healing all who were under the power of the devil”** (Acts 10:38), and explains why Scripture teaches that it is often (but not always) linked to demonic activity (Mt 9:32-33, Lk 13:11&16).¹ Sickness is not just a *biological* and *medical* phenomenon, but also a *spiritual* one related to the devil's work in the world (Acts 10:38). Healing is therefore part of God's work in the world, as personified in Jesus Christ, who became a human being with a mortal body in order to **“destroy the devil's work”** (1Jn 3:8).

Given the clear biblical teaching about the two principles of human mortality and divine healing, no Christian seriously denies either one of them in their entirety. Even the most die-hard cessationist still expects to get better when he catches the 'flu, and if necessary goes to the doctor to help his body in its work of recuperation. Even the most fiery Pentecostal faith-healer does not seriously expect his congregation to experience so much healing from God that they will never actually die.

The question is not whether the Bible and experience teach that there are two principles of *mortality* and *healing* at work in our bodies, but how much we can expect God to heal our mortal bodies right now. Since Jesus taught that healing was a primary sign that His Kingdom had come (Mt 10:7-8, Mk 1:15&27, Lk 9:2,9:11&10:9), the answer to this question is part of the bigger question of **how much has the Kingdom of God already come?** In this much bigger question lies a healthy theology of healing.

Most Christians agree that **the Kingdom of God has come** through the first coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus said “**If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you**” (Mt 12:28). He quietened John the Baptist’s doubts over whether he truly was the promised Messianic King by reminding him that through him “**The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised**” (Mt 11:5).

Most Christians also agree that **the Kingdom of God has not yet fully come** and will not fully come until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (Lk 19:11-12). The apostle John saw that it was only after the Second Coming that the angels would fully proclaim that “**The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ**” (Rev 11:15), and he also saw that it was only after the Second Coming that the old order of things would be ended and sickness would become a distant memory rather than a daily reality. He tells us that “**I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’**” (Rev 21:1-5a). We do not yet possess the resurrection bodies which Jesus has won for us through his work of salvation, but we eagerly await them through the groans and trials of this life (1Cor 15:39-53, Phil 3:21, Rom 8:23, Acts 14:22), knowing that at the Second Coming of Jesus we will be raised to life to enjoy the complete fullness of the Kingdom of God.

Most Christians agree still further that **we have a role to play as Christians in turning the now-but-not-yet Kingdom of God into reality on earth today**. Jesus, after all, told us to ask the Father “**Let your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven**” (Mt 6:10).

Therefore since almost all Christians agree that, in Jesus Christ, the promised Kingdom has come (Gen 49:10, Jer 23:5-6, Eze 21:25-27), a healthy theology of healing answers the question of just how much the Kingdom of God came through his First Coming and how much we should resign ourselves to sickness in the here and now as part of our groaning for his speedy Second Coming. Put simply, we can say that *if the Kingdom of God has come much then I can have much expectation of being healed, but if the Kingdom of God has come little then I can have little expectation of being healed* (Lk 10:9).

This paper will therefore examine each of the four main Christian answers to the question of how much the Kingdom of God has already come in Jesus Christ, and will conclude by showing how a biblical answer to this question provides us with the framework for a healthy theology of healing. This will then provide us with four crucial areas in which we need to grow in our own personal ministries if we are to bring the healing of God to our own generation as an expression of the Kingdom rule, here and now, of the Great King Jesus Christ.

FOUR VIEWS OF HOW MUCH WE CAN EXPECT GOD TO HEAL

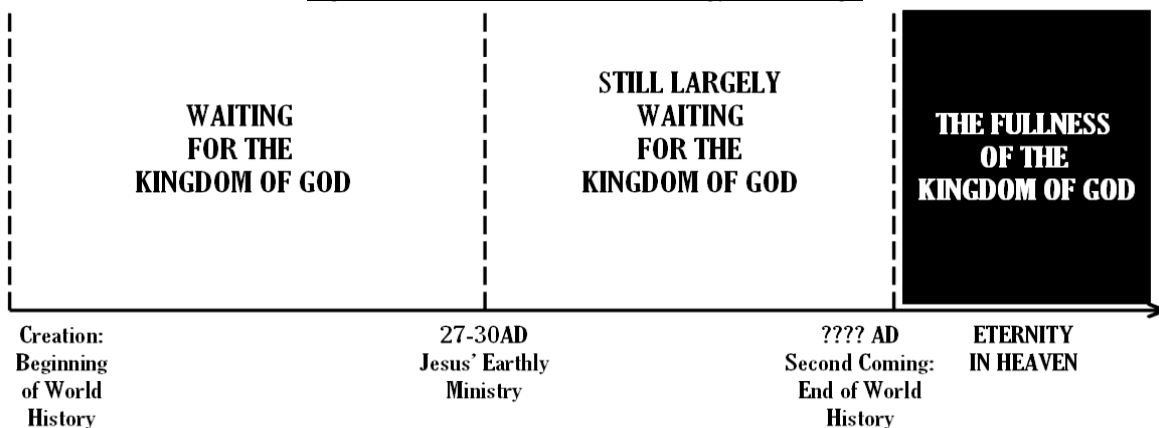
With so many differing Christian viewpoints on healing, it is very difficult to summarise them into four groups without over-simplifying the spectrum of opinions. Even so, if we are aware that the four views actually represent a wider discussion, then it makes the task much more manageable. ²

VIEWPOINT #1: “THE CLASSIC LIBERAL VIEW”

This viewpoint agrees with the other three views that the BC era was a time of waiting for the Kingdom of God, and that the era after the Second Coming will see the Kingdom in all its fullness (see fig.1 below). However, the liberal theologians in the last century and a half have been so affected by the seismic shift in the Western worldview which was ushered in by the ‘Enlightenment’ and by Darwin’s ‘Origin of the Species’ that they struggle to accept the idea of God *ever* intervening in the world to perform a healing miracle – either inside or outside of Scripture – and they therefore question whether He even healed miraculously through Jesus, let alone promises to do so through us.

Their position can be best summarised as **“Although God has the power to heal and this is a sign of His coming Kingdom, He does not heal people miraculously today and has probably never done so because He respects the natural laws of the universe.”** They would see the Kingdom largely as ‘not yet’, and have little expectation of any miraculous healing this side of the Second Coming of Jesus.

Fig.1 – “The Classic Liberal Theology of Healing”



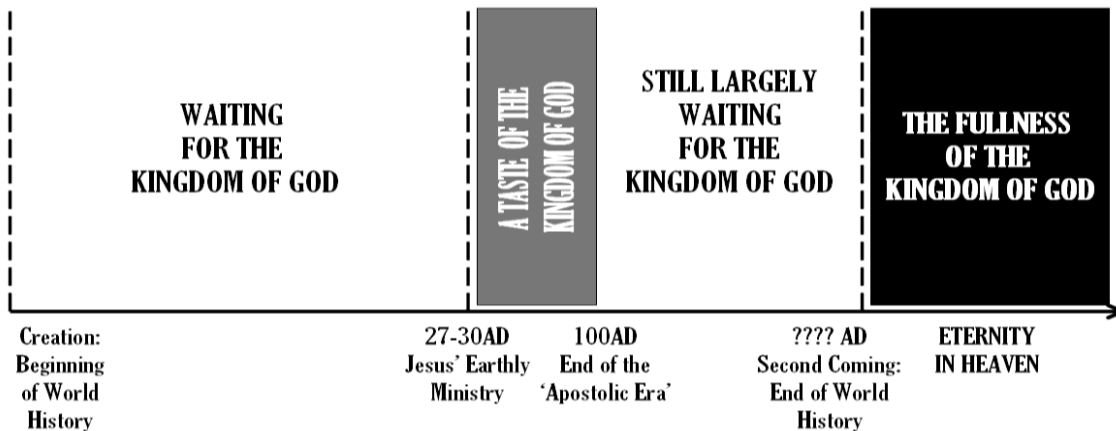
The liberal writer Rudolph Bultmann writes in his book ‘Jesus Christ and Mythology’ that “Modern man acknowledges as reality only such phenomena or events as are comprehensible within the framework of the rational order of the universe. He does not acknowledge miracles because they do not fit into this lawful order.” ³ Langdon B. Gilkey describes the biblical accounts of the miracles in Exodus as “the acts Hebrews believed God might have done and the words he might have said had he done and said them – but of course we recognise that he did not.” ⁴ This tragic viewpoint owes far more to 20th-Century rationalism than it does to any of the contents of the Bible. In fact, it so denies the reliability of the gospel accounts that Bultmann eventually admits that when examining the Easter events he feels that “an historical fact which involves a resurrection from the dead is utterly inconceivable.” ⁵ Such a desire to subject the words of Scripture to the arrogant claims of the modern Western worldview effectively presents Jesus as so bereft of kingly power that we are left wondering how they would even believe that the Second Coming and the full inauguration of the Kingdom of God would truly bring the kind of healing they dismiss as so fanciful.

This liberal theology of healing extols western science and dismisses the historical facts of Jesus’ earthly ministry. It is decidedly unhealthy, so let’s try another.

VIEWPOINT #2: “THE CLASSIC CESSATIONIST VIEW”

Unlike liberals, cessationists do not deny that God healed in Bible times or that He can heal today. What they do deny is that it is the *purpose* of God to heal through anointed men and women at this stage in history. Their view is best summarised as **“God can heal today and may occasionally do so, but because we do not live in the ‘apostolic era’ God no longer grants people gifts of healing, and any human claim to possess modern-day gifts of healing are bogus.”** As leading cessationist theologian Richard B Gaffin writes, “I do not deny that God heals today . . . I do question, however, whether the gifts of healing and of working miracles as listed in 1 Corinthians 12:9-10 are given today.”⁶ This view therefore draws an extra line on our timeline in Fig.2 which it calls the end of ‘the apostolic era’ in c.100AD, when after a brief period of supernatural miracles the Lord withdrew these gifts until they return at his Second Coming.⁷

Fig.2 – “The Classic Cessationist Theology of Healing”



It is important that we understand that the cessationist view is not at its root a theology of healing. It is primarily an attempt to protect the bedrock Reformation belief of *sola scriptura* against the perceived rival authority of modern *prophecy* and *apostleship* if any of the charismatic gifts of 1 Cor 12:7-11 and Eph 4:11 are still functioning today. If miraculous healing is available today then logically so must be the other charismatic gifts, including prophecy and apostleship, and cessationists fear that this divine empowerment of modern-day individuals would compromise the supremacy of the 1st-Century apostles and the final authority of the Bible.⁸ Although this viewpoint is held by sincere Christians who love and treasure the Bible as the inerrant word of God, a brief look at their three key arguments show that however *sincere* they are, their theology is not *sound*.

The first key argument is that *healing miracles were given to authenticate the apostles until the New Testament was completed, and therefore ceased once the canon of scripture was complete*. This argument was popularised by BB Warfield as an explanation of why the promised miracles of the New Testament were not common in his own day, but it is seriously flawed.

Firstly, there is no specific verse in Scripture which tells us that the charismatic gifts were in any way a temporary phenomenon – in fact, a straight reading of the New Testament encourages us to expect them to continue! If this were the genuine teaching of the New Testament then we would expect at least one clear verse in the Bible to warn generations of Christians to expect the charismatic promises of Scripture not to apply to them. But there is no such verse.⁹

Secondly, there are several specific verses in Scripture which imply that charismatic gifts will last throughout AD history until Jesus returns. Paul tells the Corinthians that **“You do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed”** (1Cor 1:7), and he tells them that charismatic gifts will continue until **“perfection comes”** and **“we see face to face”** (1Cor 13:9&11).¹⁰

Thirdly, if the cessationist view is correct that gifts of miraculous healing were given to prove that certain men were real apostles and that their writings should therefore be regarded as Holy Scripture, then why is it that many of the key writers of the New Testament were not apostles (Mark, Luke, Jude) or were people who as far as Scripture tells us did not perform any miracles (Mark, Luke, James, Jude)? If the primary purpose of the healing gift was to authenticate the writings of a small group of miracle-working apostles then surely there was a massive misdirection of this gift to the wrong people! The Corinthian and Galatian churches which had stumbled into false doctrine (1Cor 15:12-14, Gal 1:6-7) performed more recorded miracles than the writers of the two of the Gospels (1Cor 1:7&12:9, Gal 3:5)!

Fourthly, Jesus and the New Testament writers exhibited none of the protective restriction on the use of gifts of healing that we would expect if it was as firmly linked to the question of apostolic authority as the cessationists suppose. Jesus was happy for an anonymous follower to perform miracles despite not being one of the Twelve (Mk 9:38-41), and for all the Seventy-Two to perform miracles (Lk 10:1&9). Luke writes about the miracles of the deacons Stephen (Acts 6:8) and Philip (Acts 8:6-7), and of the rank-and-file Christian Ananias (Acts 9:17-18) without hesitating in case he set unfair expectations for his readers.

Fifthly, Scripture actually tells us what the primary purpose of the charismatic gifts is, including gifts of healing. They are not given for the authentication of Scripture. They are given **“for the common good”** (1Cor 12:7) and **“for the strengthening of the church”** (1Cor 14:26), something which is surely just as important today as it was before the canon of Scripture was completed. ¹¹

The second key argument is that *since Jesus and the apostles healed all who came to them, the gulf between the quantity and quality of healings in the so-called ‘apostolic era’ and those claimed by modern charismatics indicates that modern healings are well-intentioned but bogus.*

Although it is an argument from silence, it appears that Jesus did indeed heal all who came to him, ¹² but there is at least some evidence that the apostles were *not* always able to heal all who came to them. Paul appears to have waited for faith to be present before he healed the sick (Acts 14:8-10), and we will need to return later in this paper to the question of why Epaphroditus and Trophimus were not immediately healed through Paul’s prayers (Phil 2:25-27 & 2Ti 4:20). There is at least some evidence that healing was *not* automatic even for the first-century apostles.

Nor is it at all clear that Jesus and the apostles only did what some cessationists call ‘high quality’ miracles and not the ‘low quality’ healings of which they are so dismissive. When Matthew tells us that Jesus **“went through all the towns and villages...preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction”** (Mt 9:35), he is specifically telling us that Jesus performed both ‘high quality’ and ‘low quality’ miracles (the fact that we are using such horrible terms to describe any of the Holy Spirit’s activity should give us a clue that this thinking is misguided!). Similarly, when Luke singles out the ‘high quality’ way in which Peter healed people with just his shadow in Acts 5:15, he does not appear to feel that he has in any way disqualified the ‘low quality’ healings performed only three verses earlier by the other apostles who had to lay their hands on people to see them healed (Acts 5:12 ESV). In fact, he deliberately shatters the myth that there was one single degree of healing gift in the early Church when he tells us that Paul performed **“extraordinary miracles”** in Ephesus (Acts 19:11-12) compared to the **“ordinary miracles”** performed by others. Clearly some received greater gifts of healing then, as now, and this should actually encourage us to fan our emerging healing gifting into flame *more and more* (1Ti 4:14, 2Ti 1:6), so that we might move from seeing one in ten healed to one in three healed, and from seeing minor ailments healed to seeing cancers and HIV healed. The fact that I see fewer than the apostle Peter’s 3000 saved each time that I preach the Gospel (Acts 2:41) is not proof that the gift of evangelism has ceased! It simply shows me that as yet my faith is still immature (Rom 12:6). The same is true of gifts of healing.

The third and final argument is that *miraculous healings have not occurred throughout the whole of Church history, and therefore they cannot be an integral part of Christianity for every generation.*

Although there are periods in Church history where there are few historical accounts of miraculous healing, the historical record is too incomplete to construct this argument from silence. The absence of healing has undoubtedly been exaggerated by cessationists because they have a tendency to dismiss all historical accounts of miracles as spurious - especially if they were performed by anyone who did not hold to the complete body of systematic theology that has been rubber stamped as acceptable to God by modern western reformed theologians! DA Carson observes that **“there is enough evidence that some form of charismatic gifts continued sporadically across the centuries of church history that it is futile to insist on doctrinaire grounds that every report is spurious or the fruit of demonic activity or psychological aberration.”** ¹³ John Calvin, not a man renowned for his wild charismatic claims and practice, did not see his lack of experience of miracles as a reason to doubt that God still wanted to perform them in his own day, and nor should we. He writes in his commentary on 1 Corinthians that **“Today we see our own slender resources, our poverty in fact; but this is undoubtedly the punishment we deserve, as the reward for our ingratitude. For God’s riches are not exhausted, nor has His liberality grown less; but we are not worthy of His largess, or capable of receiving all that He generously gives.”** ¹⁴ Furthermore, we find in the letters of none other than Martin Luther that his advice concerning a particular man’s sickness was that **“I know of no worldly help to give...It must, rather, be an affliction which comes from the devil, and this must be counteracted with the prayer of faith. This is what we do, and what we have been accustomed to do, for a cabinet maker here was similarly afflicted with madness and we cured him by prayer in Christ’s name.”** ¹⁵ John Wimber produces an outstanding overview of miraculous healing throughout Church history in his book ‘Power Evangelism’, and it is pure folly for us to accept the doctrinal teaching of great men like Luther and yet to refuse to believe their testimony about the healing miracles of their day. ¹⁶ It would also be foolish to assume that the cessationists’ unbelief about the reality of modern healing gifts is not actually one of the reasons why they have not experienced the gifts in their own ministry! ¹⁷ Our past experiences and disappointments hold far more sway over our theology than most of us like to admit, and the cessationist theology is based on experience (or rather a lack of it!), which directly contradicts the teaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost when he referred to the whole of AD history from Pentecost to Parousia as one integral period called **“the last days”** – not just a brief so-called ‘apostolic age’ – which would be marked by the widespread miraculous activity of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:14-21).

Even if we were to accept that many have failed to experience the charismatic gift of healing during large portions of Church history, this should not lead us to assume that God has therefore withdrawn His gift from the Church (Rom 11:29). If Luther had applied the same logic during the Reformation then we would all still be saying our ‘Hail Marys’! He rightly saw that centuries of doubt and resistance towards the work of God had grieved the work of the Holy Spirit to the impoverishment of the Church, and he led a wave of repentance which pleaded with Him to return and to restore what had been lost. We need a similar attitude of humility in our own day which accepts that the gulf between our Bibles and our experience is due to some change on *our* part rather than on God’s part. We should rejoice that many have already begun to repent of this sin, and that God is beginning to restore this aspect of the Gospel back into the heart of Church life. We should celebrate and give thanks to God, not marshal together reasons to cast out the gift as an unfamiliar and unwelcome stranger!

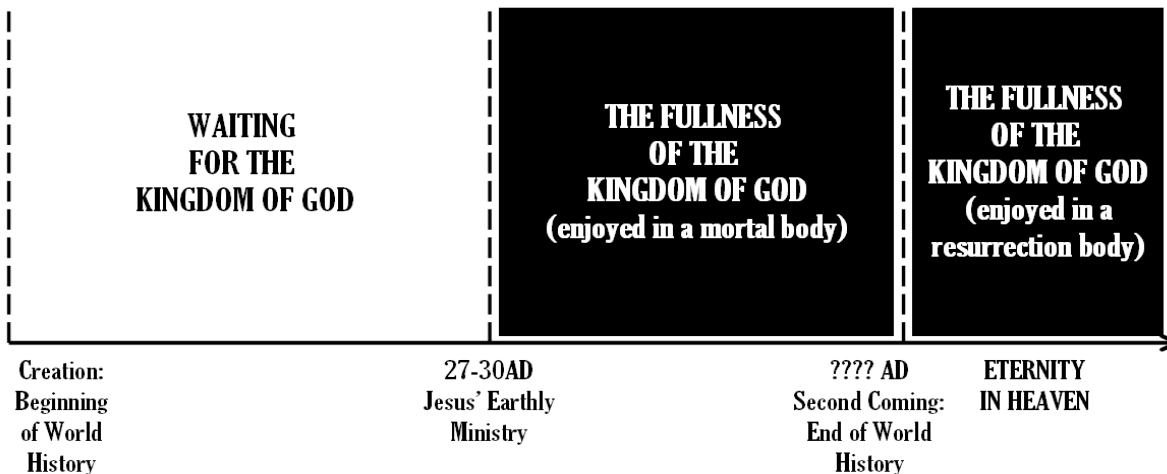
Therefore the cessationist view on healing is very sincere, but it is also very unhealthy and damaging. It performs so many exegetical contortions that it actually devalues the very Scriptures it aims to protect. In addition, since Paul writes that unless **“signs and miracles”** had been part of his preaching around the Roman Empire then he would not have **“fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ”** (Rom 15:18-19), we find that it actually dares to tamper with the Gospel which was given us by Jesus Christ.

We must reject this second unhealthy theology of healing, and press on towards one that is healthy.

VIEWPOINT #3: “THE CLASSIC PENTECOSTAL VIEW”

The Pentecostal view rests at almost the other end of the end of the spectrum to the cessationist position, and reads the same Bible to understand that **“Jesus’ death on the cross was to bring healing and not just forgiveness, and therefore healing has already been bought for everyone through the cross and simply needs to be received through faith that ‘healing is in the blood.’** The Pentecostal view therefore rejects any view that ‘the apostolic age’ has ended, and teaches that the Kingdom of God is so present through the First Coming of Jesus that anyone can and should expect to experience full healing in this life, and not merely after the Second Coming.

Fig.3 – “The Classic Pentecostal Theology of Healing”



This viewpoint is one of the key tenets of faith of the largest Pentecostal denomination, the Assemblies of God. The twelfth section of their ‘Statement of Fundamental Truths’ teaches that **“Divine healing is an integral part of the gospel. Deliverance from sickness is provided for in the atonement, and is the privilege of all believers.”**

Nor can we dismiss this viewpoint lightly. Whether or not this is the theology of our own Christian tradition, we do need to face the fact that *almost every great minister of healing in the 20th Century held something close to this view.*

The great healing evangelist John G. Lake taught in his book ‘Adventures in God’ that **“The Christian, the child of God, the Christ-man who has committed his body as well as his spirit and soul to God, ought not to be a subject for healing. He ought to be a subject of continuous, abiding health, because he is filled with the life of God.”** ¹⁸ Another great healing evangelist, Oral Roberts, took a similar view. **“If Jesus took our sicknesses we need not bear them any longer. Sickness is part of the curse and Jesus came to destroy the curse. He suffered in our stead because he did not want us to suffer disease. He took our specific diseases and infirmities upon his own sinless, perfect body in complete payment for the penalty of sin ... I know it is God’s highest wish for you to be in health ... Sickness is not part of God’s plan and not devised by God’s will ... Some ministers are still praying ‘Father, if it be thy will, heal.’ I wonder if they could be sued for theological malpractice? Well, it’s a thought!”** ¹⁹ Kenneth Hagin, one of the leading ‘word of faith’ teachers, continues this line of reasoning. **“Like salvation, healing is a gift, already paid for at Calvary. All we need to do is accept it. All we need to do is possess the promise that is ours. As children of God, we need to realise that healing belongs to us.”** ²⁰ He adds that **“It is unscriptural to pray, ‘If it is the will of God.’ When you put an ‘if’ in your prayer, you are praying in doubt.”** ²¹

It is difficult to deny that this theology of healing is yielding much fruit in terms of healing. However, before we rush after the pragmatism of success, we do need to note that despite the great strengths in the first two arguments which lie at the root of this theology of healing, there are also significant flaws in the third key argument which dramatically skew the Pentecostal application of those truths.

The first key argument is that *healing must be in the atonement (ie definitively secured through Jesus' death and resurrection) because sickness is part of the curse which came through Adam, and must therefore have been undone through the finished work of Jesus, the Last Adam (1Cor 15:45).* This is, frankly, an extremely strong argument. Since both Moses and Paul tell us that sickness is part the curse of Adam's Fall (Deut 28:21-22&59-61, Rom 5:12), it must surely be the case that Jesus dealt completely and finally with the human problem of sickness when he **"became a curse for us"** on the cross (Gal 3:13) and declared from the cross **"It is finished!"** (Jn 19:30). If Jesus' death on the cross did not remove the curse of sickness, then Paul tells us in Rom 3:26 that God would actually be unjust to lift a curse which deservedly rests upon us. Similarly, when Peter tells us that sickness is part of the arsenal of weapons which Satan secured through the Fall (Acts 10:38), it must surely follow that when Jesus **"disarmed the rulers and authorities"** on the cross (Col 2:15) that he removed this weapon from Satan's arsenal along with all the rest. Perhaps the main reason that many struggle to accept this is that many Pentecostals apply this to mean that we can be as certain that God will heal us through faith in the blood of Jesus as we can that God will save us through faith in the blood of Jesus. We are right to be suspicious of this application because this is not how Scripture models the healing ministry – we do not, for example, find Paul urging Timothy that his stomach complaint would be healed if only he spent more time meditating with faith over the finished work of Jesus for him on the cross (1Ti 5:23)! – but our suspicion over the Pentecostal application of these verses should not prevent us from grasping what is taught in the verses themselves.

The second key argument is that *healing must be in the atonement (ie definitively secured through Jesus' death and resurrection), because Matthew tells us that this is a correct understanding of the teaching of Isaiah 53.* This is also a very compelling argument, and one which is stronger than most of us realise simply because our English translations do not fully convey the flow of Isaiah's argument in the original Hebrew. In fact, Isaiah prophesies about the death of Jesus in his 53rd chapter and tells us that

"He was despised and rejected by men; a man of מַכְאוֹב/mak'ob/pains/sorrows, and acquainted with חֲלוּי/holi/sickness;
he was despised like one from whom men hide their faces, and we esteemed him not.
Surely he has נָשָׂא/nasa'/carried our חֲלוּי/holi/sicknesses and סָבַל/sabal/borne our מַכְאוֹב/mak'ob/pains/sorrows...
and with his stripes we are רָפָא/rapha'/healed. He סָבַל/sabal/will bear their iniquities...He נָשָׂא/nasa'/carried the sin of many."
Isaiah 53:3-5&11-12

Note that when we look at the Hebrew words which Isaiah used as he wrote down his prophecy, we can see two clear themes which the Holy Spirit wants us to understand about the death of Jesus on the cross, but which are lost in most English translations of these verses. Firstly, *he bore our sickness when he died on the cross* – physical pain and sickness is the primary meaning of the Hebrew words *mak'ob* and *holi*. We are not at liberty to spiritualise these words because these Hebrew words deliberately prevent us from doing so. Secondly, *Jesus bore our sickness on the cross in the same way in which he bore our sin* – the same two Hebrew verbs *nasa'* and *sabal* are deliberately used to describe both how Jesus bore our *sin* in v11-12 and how he bore our *sickness* in v4.

This in turn makes sense of Matthew's commentary on Isaiah 53 in chapter 8 of his gospel, and the fact that he deliberately chooses not to quote from the Septuagint which slightly spiritualises Jesus' bearing of our sickness (rather like our English translations), and opts instead for an unknown translation which emphasises the physical nature of the sickness which Jesus bore. He writes in Mt 8:16-17 that **"When evening came, many who were demonised were brought to Jesus, 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.'"** Note that if he were wanting to spiritualise Jesus' work on the cross then he could easily have quoted from the Septuagint which reads οὗτος τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν φερεῖ καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν ὀδυναταί/**he bears our sins and is pained for us**, but he chose instead to emphasise the physical healing won by Jesus at the cross by saying that αὐτός τας ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν ἔλαβεν καὶ τας νοσοὺς ἐβαστάσεν/**he himself took our sicknesses and carried our diseases.**

So far so good, and if the phrase 'healing in the atonement' referred only to these two statements then there would be little need to bring correction. DA Carson writes that in his view Mt 8:16-17 does indeed "teach that there is healing in the atonement; but similarly there is the promise of a resurrection body in the atonement, even if believers do not inherit it until the Parousia. From the perspectives of the New Testament writers, the cross is the basis of all the benefits that accrue to believers, but this does not mean that all such benefits can be secured at this present time on demand." ²² Wayne Grudem also adds helpfully (although perhaps a little optimistically given the scale of the disagreement on this issue!) in his 'Systematic Theology' that "All Christians would probably agree that in the atonement Christ has purchased for us not only complete freedom from sin but also complete freedom from physical weakness and infirmity in his work of redemption. And all Christians would also no doubt agree that our full and complete possession of all the benefits that Christ earned for us will not come until Christ returns ... When people say that complete healing is 'in the atonement', the statement is true in an ultimate sense, but it really does not tell us anything about when we will receive 'complete healing'." ²³ And it is the Pentecostal answer to when we receive this healing that is problematic.

Their third key argument is that *every person has already been healed at the cross of Jesus, and needs simply to receive this heavenly reality by faith in order to experience it as an earthly reality*. This treats healing in much the same way as sanctification, where the Bible tells us that we *have already died* positionally with Christ and therefore need to *put to death* evil deeds in order to walk free from sin (Col 3:3&5). It puts together the promise of Is 53:5 that "by his stripes we are healed" and the promise of Jesus in Mk 11:24 that "whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours," and it tells sick people on the basis of both verses they should receive prayer for healing and then 'deny their symptoms' and start thanking God for their (as yet unseen) healing. ²⁴ The problem with this teaching should be obvious. Any sensible eye can see that many of these people have patently *not* been healed, and that their 'denial of their symptoms' is actually naïve unreality rather than genuine faith. Not only can this discredit the Gospel in the eyes of unbelievers, but it can also rob people of the genuine healing which could actually be theirs. Lex Loizides, one of the elders of Jubilee Church in Cape Town, tells of a time when he prayed for a prisoner in St Louis, Missouri, and the prisoner started rejoicing 'in faith' that his hand had been healed despite the fact that he was still in acute pain and barely able to hold a cup! It was only when Lex told him to face the fact that he had not yet been healed that he was willing to place his faith in God's grace rather than in his own faith ...with the result that he was miraculously healed! ²⁵ At its worst, this teaching can encourage something which is more akin to secular 'positive thinking' than biblical faith, so that faith becomes a form of magic through which we hope to manipulate the spiritual world based on 'spiritual laws'. Without intending to do so, many Pentecostals have found that their teaching causes sick people to place their faith in faith itself rather than in God the Healer. ²⁶

Many who have seen this kind of healing ministry have been so offended by its pastoral insensitivity that they completely reject the idea that healing might be 'in the atonement'. Some argue that since the events of Mt 8 took place before Jesus died on the cross, Matthew is actually talking about how Jesus' exertions on behalf of the sick during his ministry channelled God's healing towards them. Since Jesus also forgave a man for his sins only 24 verses later in Mt 9:2 – and very few of us would be foolish enough to try to argue that Jesus was able to forgive this man on the basis of the exertions of his busy ministry schedule rather than of his later work on the cross! – this is rather hard to swallow. Others argue more hopefully that Matthew's quotation from Is 53 intends to link healing to the Messiah in general rather than to his cross in particular, but they offer no convincing explanation as to why Matthew chose the one chapter in the Old Testament which talks most clearly about the atoning death of the Messiah unless he actually wanted us to link healing not just to the Messiah but to his atoning death as well. Still others argue that Peter understands Isaiah to mean *spiritual salvation* when he quotes Is 53:5 in 1Pe 2:24 to teach that "by his wounds you have been ἰαομαι/healed/cured," but it is not at all clear from that passage that Peter is teaching us that the healing of Calvary is exclusively spiritual – in fact his own bold confidence that healing is "that which I have" to give away (Acts 3:6) is our biggest clue about what Peter understood from that verse, and it was certainly not a spiritualisation of the promises.

Others do not feel the need to reject entirely the link between divine healing and the cross of Jesus. John Wimber, one of the great fathers of the non-Pentecostal healing movement within the western Church in the 20th century, stated that he believed that healing was not ‘*in the atonement*’ but ‘*through the atonement*’. ²⁷ Wimber’s concern was that if we teach that healing comes through the cross of Jesus in a similar fashion to salvation then, given that healing does not always happen as consistently as we hope, this will inevitably decrease people’s faith in the Gospel for their salvation. His writings have been enormously helpful in unpacking what ‘healing in the atonement’ *should* mean as opposed to what it has unfortunately *come to* mean, but we need to be very careful that our rejection the unhelpful Pentecostal interpretation of Is 53:5 and Mk 11:24 does not also lead us to downgrade the overall teaching of Isaiah 53 and Matthew 8 to something less than it actually is.

There is enough evidence in the New Testament that some Christians did not receive immediate healing and that the early Church did not preach a ‘deny your symptoms’ methodology of healing for us to reject the Pentecostal interpretation of Is 53:5 & Mk 11:24. However, there are very poor grounds for arguing that the death of Jesus on the cross brought about anything less than a *decisive change* in the place of sickness in the world. Arguments that the Lord only heals because of His compassionate character as revealed by His Name *Jehovah Rophek/The-Lord-Who-Heals-You* (Ex 15:26) are scuppered by the fact that the specific example of healing which accompanies it in the previous verse was administered through a *piece of wood which the Lord provided*, something that Christian theologians across the centuries have often seen as a type of the cross of Jesus. ²⁸

If God’s commitment to heal is only revealed in His character, then we have reason to try to *rebuke* sickness and even reason to *hope for* healing, but no sure ground for *confidence* that sickness and demons will fly before our God-given authority or for genuine *faith* that healing will come in this situation, right here right now. This is tragic because the link between the work of Jesus on the cross and healing brings great confidence over *Jesus’ authority* and his victorious *redemption* of a broken universe. Isaiah 53 and Matthew 8 tell us that a decisive judicial act took place at Calvary which lifted the curse of sin from mankind (Rom 3:26) and emptied the devil’s arsenal of its every weapon (Col 2:15). Our authority to minister gifts of healing comes from the victorious King Jesus Christ, and he obtained this just authority by “**binding the strongman**” (Mt 12:29, Lk 11:21-22) and giving charismatic gifts to His People as He led the devil and his demons “**captive in his train**” (Eph 4:8). For too long has the disarmed devil been able to act like a general without any artillery who frightens the enemy into calling off their attack by the clever use of mock gun emplacements. In the area of sickness and healing, Scripture genuinely *does* teach us that through the cross he has become a toothless foe relying on guile alone to hold onto his crumbling kingdom. This, then, is the true meaning of Peter’s past tense that “**by his stripes you have been healed**” (1Pe 2:24), and we must not let this vital truth be lost because others misuse it. It is only when we settle in our minds and our hearts that healing *has been won decisively through the cross* and that *sickness now has no authority* before the name of Jesus Christ that we will begin to push forward in the spiritual battle to plunder Satan’s usurped territory.

The Pentecostal viewpoint misunderstands how the cross of Jesus has dealt a decisive death blow to sickness here and now, and we must make sure that we do not share in its failings. However, we must note with humility that for all of these failings, *the Lord is choosing to heal many more people through flawed Pentecostal faith than He is through many well-reasoned but hesitant charismatic evangelicals*. It seems that James really meant what he said when he wrote in the context of receiving charismatic gifts that we should “**ask in faith, without doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. That person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord**” (Jas 1:6-7).

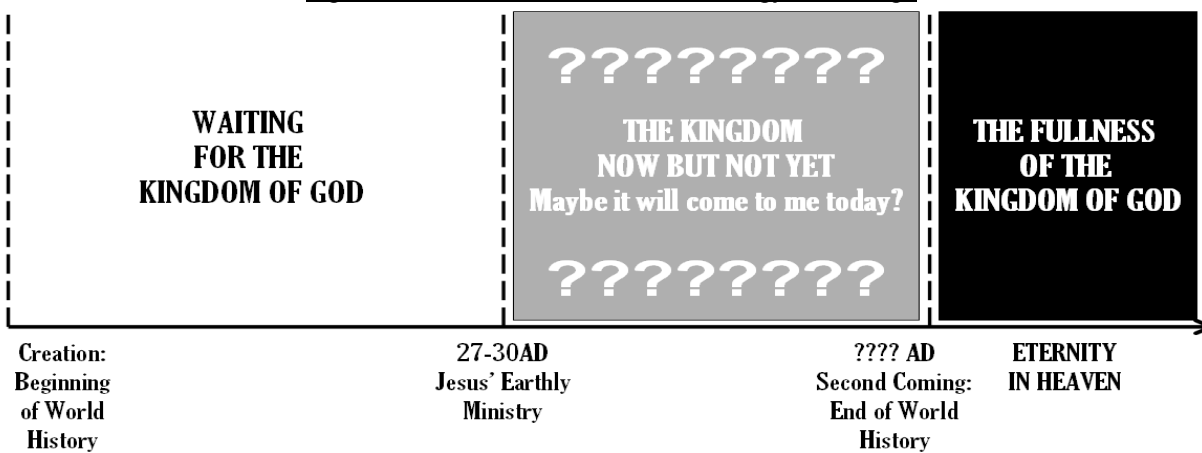
We cannot fully embrace the Pentecostal viewpoint on healing, but as we move to examine our own, fourth viewpoint on healing, we must make sure that we mix it with the same kind of faith (Heb 4:2).

VIEWPOINT #4: “THE CLASSIC CHARISMATIC VIEW”

This is probably the viewpoint that we personally need to be the most cautious about evaluating. As a group of charismatics, there is a danger that we could cling to our own historical viewpoint on healing and defend it simply because it is the one which we have held for so long – rather like the fact that you will never convince me that anyone cooks better than my Mum, simply because I grew up and had my palate shaped by the tastes and preferences of her kitchen!

The charismatic view is similar to the Pentecostal view, but it is considerably less triumphalist than its Pentecostal counterpart. Although it agrees that the Kingdom of God has most definitely come with the First Coming of Jesus (Mt 12:28, Dan 2:34-35), and that it certainly did not diminish with the deaths of the first-century apostles, it would generally not be so bullish as to argue that ‘healing is in the atonement’, either in the sense of people *already being healed* and needing to bring this into reality through their faith, or even in the sense of healing having been won decisively as a covenant blessing through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Instead – depending on the particular writer or teacher – it would generally tend to place the emphasis more on the fact that the Kingdom is now-but-not-yet, and sometimes the fullness of the Kingdom spills out from the future into the present through the mystery of the compassionate and gracious character of God.

Fig.4 – “The Classic Charismatic Theology of Healing”



One great strength of this view is that it manages to embrace the Bible’s teaching that God grants gifts of healing today without ignoring the fact that it also tells us that our bodies *are* still wasting away (Rom 8:23) and *are* still destined to die at the end of their fixed lifespan (Heb 9:27, Ps 102:24, Eccl 7:17). It stresses that we should expect miraculous healing from God, but that we should also accept the teaching of Eccl 3:2-3 that there is a “time to die” and a time for the Lord to take life rather than heal. When Kenneth Copeland tells us that “I don’t care how old we are, it’s God’s will to take us home healed, well, whole, and delivered,”²⁹ charismatics ask the obvious question of why we will be “taken home” at all if we are quite so healed, well and whole?! Similarly, since Elisha’s dead bones still contained enough anointing to raise a man to life (2Ki 13:21), but his whole body did not contain enough anointing to heal him when he was afflicted with “the illness from which he died” (2Ki 13:14), they reject the view that healing is always God’s Will for absolutely anyone who has enough faith to receive it. Paul tells us that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (1 Cor 15:50), so charismatics accept the Bible’s teaching that some sickness does end in death, and that a ‘a good death’ at the right time is part of the victorious Christian life (1Th 4:13-18), and not necessarily a ‘failure’.

Another strength is that the charismatic view accords far more with our experience of God's working – at least within charismatic circles! – and with some of the clues we have about God's actual working in New Testament times. Pentecostal triumphalism has no convincing explanation for why Epaphroditus, Trophimus and Paul were all sick and did not receive immediate healing (Phil 2:25-27, 2Ti 4:20, Gal 4:13-15), and it does not easily accommodate Paul's teaching in Gal 4:13 that God sometimes uses sickness for good. In fact, as even the Pentecostal theologian Gordon Fee points out in his book 'The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospel', the Pentecostal viewpoint can come very close at times to sounding like the very opposite of the apostolic Gospel that **"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God"** (Acts 14:22).

Consequently, a third strength is that it appears to be a more 'pastoral' theology than the Pentecostal viewpoint. It is one thing for a (usually itinerant) healing evangelist to promise that a person 'has been healed' and simply needs to deny their symptoms until earthly experience catches up with spiritual reality, but it is quite another to be the pastor of that same Christian the following week when their earthly reality seems rather reluctant to change! The charismatic viewpoint denies that healing is categorically God's Will for any person at any time, and therefore avoids serving up what Jim Carrey's character in the film 'Bruce Almighty' refers to as a **"side-plate of guilt"** to go alongside the **"main course"** of sickness and suffering which has already been laid before them. Nobody wants to be like Job's comforters or to add to a sick person's misery by telling them that they would be healed if only they had more faith. After all, David Watson was a great pioneer of the healing ministry in late 20th-century Britain, but despite the fact that he (and with him many thousands of Christians around the world) had faith not just in God's ability but also in His willingness to heal him, he nevertheless died of uncured cancer.³⁰ This viewpoint therefore refuses to treat faith as a 'magic' which forces the arm of God, and it makes room once again for some of the New Testament miracles which happened without a sick person having faith to be healed. This theology allows for a lame beggar to be healed even though he expected nothing more than money (Acts 3:5), or for another lame man to be healed without having any understanding of Jesus or his mission (Jn 5:12-13).

The other key strength of this viewpoint is that it takes a more biblical view of the Kingdom of God affecting the whole cosmos together rather than every single individual separately. God's agenda is the redemption of the whole universe and not just individual people. To reduce the coming of the Kingdom of God to matters of my own individual life and body is to miss the bigger picture that the Kingdom of God brings the complete redemption of the whole cosmos. We groan with the aches and pains of our mortal bodies as part of a universe which longs for God's redemption of the universe – in a far greater, cosmic sense than just the sickness in my own body (Rom 8:18-25). The charismatic viewpoint rejects the Pentecostal assumption that we are always able to second-guess what God's perfect Will is for any individual in any given situation. It accepts that a particular healing in this life may not necessarily be the ultimate good in God's great Master-Plan, and accepts that we will never grasp the fullness of God's wisdom this side of eternity.³¹ It can accommodate the fact that the apostles Peter and James both had the same promise of God that **"the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you"** (Deut 31:6) and yet the Lord chose that the outworking of this promise for one was deliverance whilst for the other it was execution (Acts 12:1-11).

However, even though there are some real strengths in this fourth viewpoint, I want to suggest that this our traditional viewpoint has some flaws of its own which we need to reconsider and revise to if we are to arrive at a truly healthy theology of healing.

Firstly, it places too much emphasis on a 'theology of sickness' which is not actually clearly stated in the Bible. Since Jesus and the apostles regularly spoke about the fact that *suffering* is an integral part of the Christian life, many who hold to the classic charismatic viewpoint extrapolate that principle to argue that *sickness* is therefore also a normal way in which God sanctifies Christians and glorifies His Name. However, the list of biblical examples which are used to support this teaching do not bear detailed examination. *Job* was indeed sick, but Scripture tells us clearly that it was a work of Satan (Job 2:3-7) which was healed by God within months, and that at least one of the reasons for the delay was that those around Job were too busy theorising about why God might allow suffering to bother to pray for him to be healed. The book of Job was not given to justify a theology of sickness but precisely to prevent people from arguing that God smites people with sickness to deal with their sin! *Epaphroditus*, *Trophimus* and *Paul* were not healed straight away (Phil 2:25-27, 2Ti 4:20, Gal 4:13-15), but Scripture tells us that at least one of them *did* recover after only a short delay so that he was able to leave Galatia. Last, but by no means least, the old classic of Paul's "**thorn in the flesh**" in 2 Cor 12:7-10. He is almost certainly referring back to the Septuagint's description of troublesome *people* in Num 33:55 – hence the fact that he calls the thorn an ἀγγελος/*angel/messenger* which is only ever used in Scripture for a *person* or *spirit* and never for a *thing* – but even if these things were not the case we would need to concede that since the Lord told Paul that He would not remove the thorn in his flesh in order to keep him "**from becoming conceited**" because of the "**surpassingly great revelations**" which He had given him, this is unlikely to be the primary reason why many are not healed in our churches. ³² When we argue that unhealed sickness is a God-given "**thorn**", we prove that we do not believe this deep down for all our claims on Sunday that 'my sickness is God's Will for His glory' because we then visit the doctor's on Monday – presumably as a rebellious attempt to diminish God's glory in the world?!

We can say that there is evidence in the Bible that God may not choose to heal everyone immediately, but this is a long way from saying that sickness is either God's normal means of sanctification or a primary means for His glory. Jesus and the apostles talked very frankly and in some detail about the suffering we must endure as Christians, but not one of them ever talked about the suffering of sickness in this context despite being surrounded daily by crowds of sick people. Importantly, not one of them ever told anyone who came to them for healing that they should go home and continue to glorify God by the faithful way in which they bore their sickness.³³ On the contrary, whilst we never read in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John that a sick person ever glorified God by remaining sick, we do repeatedly read that they glorified God by being healed! (eg Mt 15:31, Mk 2:12, Lk 5:26,9:43,18:43&19:37, Jn 11:4, Acts 4:21). The fact that our 'theology of sickness' is overblown is demonstrated by the way that we often call sickness a *blessing* when Jesus calls it *Satan's prison* (Lk 13:16) and call death *the ultimate healing* when Paul calls it "**the ultimate enemy**" (1Cor 15:26). A 'theology of sickness' ends up blunting our faith that we have authority over sickness and paints a picture of God which defames His character. As Francis MacNutt writes, "When we say that God sends sickness or asks us to endure it, we are creating for many people an image of God they must eventually reject. What human mother or father would choose cancer for their daughter in order to tame her pride?...Those preachers and chaplains who try to comfort the sick by telling them to accept their illness as a blessing from God are giving an immediate consolation, but at what an ultimate cost! In a sense, we unwittingly treat God as something of a pagan deity, placated by human sacrifice." ³⁴

Secondly, it places too little emphasis on the faithfulness of God to His promises In reaction to the crass way in which they feel that some Pentecostals have tried to use the promises of God as a means of forcing God's hand and manipulating Him in to action, many charismatics prefer to emphasise the sovereign freedom of God to heal or not to heal, just as Romans 9 defends His sovereign freedom to save or not to save. This sounds good in theory, but the objection that "**the faith confession movement tends strongly to emphasise God's faithfulness at the expense of God's freedom**" ³⁵ creates a false dichotomy which leaves us wondering how it could ever be possible to *over-emphasise* God's faithfulness or why He might ever want the freedom to be *less faithful*!?

The thing that makes the Gospel *good news* is precisely the fact that in it is revealed a God who grants us what we do not deserve based on the cross of Jesus “**from first to last**” (Rom 1:17 & 8:31-37). The Gospel means that God *does* make promises to us that in view of the cross of Jesus He will act in one way and not in another, and Paul tells us that this Gospel includes miraculous healing as well as justification (Rom 15:19). Not only do we never find Jesus rebuking anyone who comes to him for presuming too much but only for believing too little (eg Mk 16:14), but we actually find Jesus deliberately making himself into servant in order to demonstrate that we will never receive all that is ours through the cross unless we let him assume this role as the great Giver (Jn 13:1-9). The cry that it is presumptuous to act as if it is God’s Will to heal all who ask Him ignores the great compass of the New Testament promises of healing – such as “**Is any one of you sick?...The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up**” (Jas 5:14-15) – and it is a far cry from Jesus’ reassurance “**Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom**” (Lk 12:32). If all our caveats were indeed true under the New Covenant then the *good news* of the Gospel would actually mean that God is *less* willing to heal now and *less* committed to destroying the work of Satan than He was before Christ came, since in BC times He encouraged people that they could all come to Him with faith for healing (Num 21:8-9 & Jn 3:14, Ps 103:3). Clearly this cannot be the case.

The difficulty with dismantling this deep-rooted belief that God decides to heal or not to heal based primarily on ‘the mystery of His character’ is that deep down we know that His character *is* far beyond our comprehension and that this *is* in part the only place for us to take some of our disappointments not seeing people healed. The point is not that there is no mystery in God’s character, but rather that we have placed far too much emphasis on the fact that “**the secret things belong to the Lord our God**” (Deut 29:29a) and not enough emphasis on the fact that “**the revealed things belong to us and to our children**” (Deut 29:29b)! God has not left us with the spiritual equivalent of the National Lottery’s promise that “**It could be you!**” He has given us such great promises that Peter was able to assure a lame man he had only just met that “**the thing that I have I give to you**” (Acts 3:6). The “**revealed thing**” is that neither Jesus nor the apostles refused anyone who came to them for healing, telling them that it was “not God’s will” or “not yet time” for them to be healed.³⁶ On the contrary, we are told consistently and repeatedly that Jesus healed all the sick who came to him (Mt 4:23-24, Mt 8:16-17, Mt 9:35, Mt 12:15, Mt 14:16, Lk 4:40, Lk 6:19), and that the apostles also tended to heal all the sick who came to them (Acts 5:16 & 28:9). Another “**revealed thing**” is that Jesus promised us that “**Anyone who has faith in me will do the works I have been doing. He will do even greater works than these because I am going to the Father**” (Jn 14:12). A final “**revealed thing**” came on the only occasion that anyone ever came to Jesus with a query over whether he was willing to heal him, and he very quickly corrected his theology with the words “**I am willing**” and then healed him! (Mt 8:2-3, Mk 1:40-42). The fact that despite God’s revealed willingness people are sometimes not healed is definitely one of the “**secret things**”, but we need to move from meditating on what has not been revealed to confidence in what has been revealed. There is no Beatitude that reads “**Blessed are those who expect little from God, for they shall not be disappointed**”! On the contrary, Jesus encourages us instead that “**Blessed are the eyes that see what you see**” (Lk 10:23).

There are therefore some great strengths to the classic charismatic theology of healing, but we cannot accept that we have arrived yet at a rounded biblical view when we treat Scripture’s silence about sickness as ‘theology’ and Scripture’s promises about healing as a ‘mystery’.

Since we have dismissed the classic liberal and cessationist theologies of healing as decidedly unhealthy, and have seen major flaws in both the classic Pentecostal and charismatic theologies of healing, let’s draw together in conclusion a fifth, more healthy, theology of healing.

CONCLUSIONS

What, then, are the vital elements which join together to form a truly healthy theology of healing?

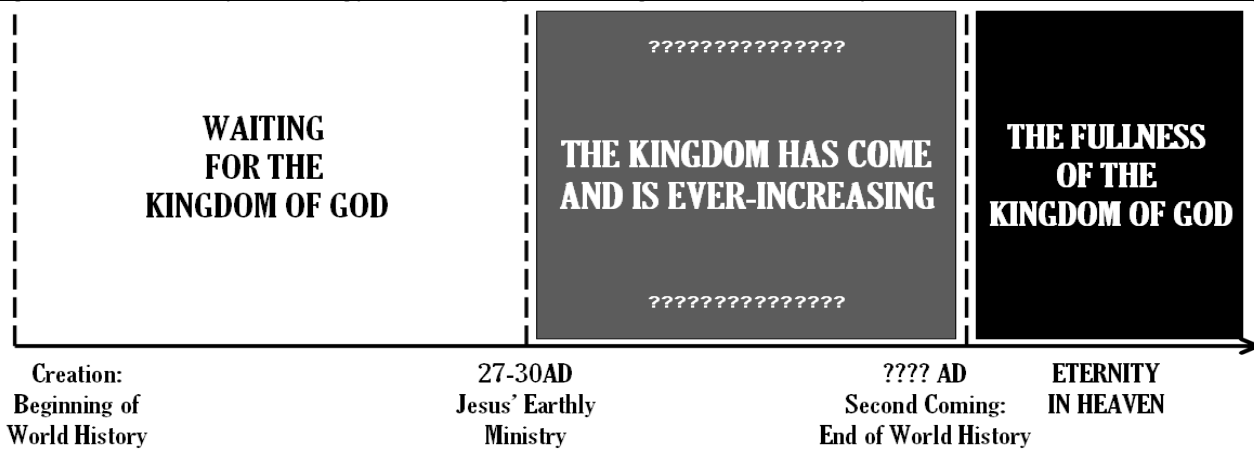
Firstly, there is *Jesus Christ*, the Messianic King who has brought in the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom characterised by miraculous healing (Mt 11:5&12:28) as part of the loving character of God.

Secondly, there is the *cross of Jesus*, where sickness was dealt a decisive death blow and God’s eager desire to heal was matched with the justice and authority to do so. This means that healing is no longer something alien to the here-and-now which occasionally ‘breaks in’ like an intruder who does not really belong here. Satan’s weapon sickness is the real intruder on ground which he lost two thousand years ago. It now *belongs* to the healing Kingdom of God, and only ignorance about what happened at Calvary will enable sickness to squat there any longer (Hos 4:6, Mt 28:18).

Thirdly, there are the *healing promises of God* which are “the revealed things” which “belong to us and our children forever.” We freely admit that despite God’s revelation that He is willing to heal and has given us authority to heal in His Name, we do not generally see the same success in praying for the sick as many Christians who have gone before us. However, we refuse to construct grand doctrines which speculate about what has not revealed, but simply accept that there are times when even though the cross of Jesus means that God has “put everything under his feet”, nevertheless we have some catching up to do because “at present we do not see everything subject to him” (Heb 2:8).

Putting these three things together, we accept the small question marks which remain in our practice of the healing gifts, but press forward in faith that our experience of healing will *increase* as we move further along from Pentecost to the Parousia. Ezekiel’s river of the Spirit got deeper and deeper the further on it flowed (Eze 47:1-12); Jesus’ mustard seed grew bigger and bigger over time (Mt 13:31-33); and the Kingdom of God which Daniel saw inaugurated as a “rock” at the time of the 1st-Century Roman Empire became a “mountain” by the time of the Second Coming (Dan 2:34-35). We will experience the reality of these pictures as we take God at His Word and preach the good news of the Kingdom.

Fig.5 – “A Healthy Theology of Healing: The Kingdom has Already Come and is Ever-Increasing”



If we accept this as the right framework for a healthy theology of healing, then there are some important implications for us as charismatics trying to bring our experience of healing more into line with God’s Word. I want to close with four key lessons from Jesus in John 11, which I believe are the four crucial areas of growth for us if we are to see more and more healing in these last days.

1) THE WISDOM OF GOD

Jesus displayed great wisdom in his healing ministry when John tells us that **“Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Therefore, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was”** (Jn 11:5-6, lit Greek, cf KJV/RSV /ESV). He recognised that there is a **“sickness which ends in death”** (v4), and he had absolute confidence that the Father’s Will was to heal those who were not ill with such a sickness (v41-42). Nevertheless, he had such a high regard for the Father’s perfect timing in bringing miraculous healing (Jn 5:19) that he refused to presume that God’s willingness would always result in automatic and immediate healing. Only the foolish onlookers made that mistake (v37).

If we minister with the wisdom of Jesus, then we also will share his triumphant but not triumphalistic approach to praying for the sick. We will be able to reassure people that it is not lack of faith for them to go to a doctor (Col 4:14, 1Ti 5:23), nor for those suffering from infertility to adopt children (Eph 1:5, Esth 2:15). We will be able to give reassurance to those who have not yet been healed, and to offer them encouragement either to press on in faith towards healing or to press on in faith towards the victorious death which gains the promised resurrection body. Jesus’ wisdom in v44 involved sensitive follow-up for those he prayed for, and not just a time of power ministry.

This wisdom of Jesus in v23 also saves us from perhaps the biggest error which prevents us from seeing more miraculous healing in our churches today, and this is a false understanding of what it means to be *pastoral*. Any church leader who has prayed for the sick and seen some of them fail to receive healing knows the terrible anguish and pain which can result both for the person receiving prayer and for the person doing the praying. It is understandable that some of us tacitly decide that we will downplay the biblical promises of healing in our churches in order to spare people any further disappointment. Understandable, but very, very wrong.

The wisdom of Jesus shows us that whilst this may be an expression of loving care, *it is not pastoral in any biblical sense of the word*. In Paul’s great teaching for the Ephesian eldership team on what it means to be **“shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood”** and pastors of **“the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers”** (Acts 20:28), he makes it very clear that there is one sin, one great and heinous sin, that he or any other Christian pastor might commit in shepherding a local church, and that sin would be if he **“hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you”** (Acts 20:20). Since miraculous healing is not merely an authentication of the Gospel but part of the Gospel itself (Rom 15:18-19, Mt 4:23, Mt 9:35), then to decide to downplay part of the Gospel because of trials and disappointments along the way is not being pastoral, it is being disobedient. Paul reminds us that **“If we or an angel from heaven should preach a Gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!”** (Gal 1:8), and just in case we failed to grasp the full importance of this message with regard to our teaching about healing, he repeats it a second time when he places a curse on us if we downplay any aspect of the Gospel: **“Now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a Gospel other than what you received, let him be eternally condemned!”** (Gal 1:10). This is very serious indeed!

As those called by God to pastor His Church, we dare not back away from the Bible’s theology of healing and so abdicate this ministry to evangelists and ‘charismatic specialists’. James tells local church elders to make sure that they are at the very heart of the healing ministry (Jas 5:14-16), and only when the wisdom of God is expressed through the elders appointed by God will we have a context free from the opposite evils of a false ‘theology of sickness’ and a false triumphalism. Being truly pastoral means taking a lead to bring miraculous healing to the sheep in our care, whilst offering continued love and care for those who for some reason are still experiencing the delay of Jn 11:5-6.

2) THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Jesus' prayer in v41-42 is based almost entirely on his *relationship* with the Father and not on any *formula* for praying for the sick. His confidence that the sick would be healed was not based on a technique he had come to know, but on the Father he had come to know. Perhaps this is why Jesus began entrusting the healing ministry to us by choosing Twelve **"that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons"** (Mk 3:14-15). We cannot bypass this principle and hope to minister healing through the Holy Spirit without first coming into an intimate friendship with Him. No servant is greater than his master (Jn 13:16).

Some hope to see miraculous healing as an automatic right so long as people have enough *faith* to receive it, but Jesus did not operate based on that formula. Martha only had a little faith (v21-27), Mary had less faith (v32), the onlookers had even less faith (v37), and of course dead Lazarus had no faith at all! And yet even in this context of little faith the miracle came.

Others hope to see miraculous healing through techniques such as *laying on hands*, *speaking commands* rather than prayers, *anointing with oil*, ending prayers with the words *in the name of Jesus*, and so on, but we must note that the gospel writers deliberately contrive to prevent us from seeing any comprehensive formula in the healing ministry of Jesus. If we only had the Matthew account of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law then we would assume that *laying on hands* was the key factor in her healing (Mt 8:14-15), but Mark's account of the same healing would lead us to assume that *helping her to her feet* was the key factor (Mk 1:29-31), and Luke's account would lead us to assume that *rebuking the fever* was the key factor (Lk 4:38-39). Matthew, Mark and Luke all give us partial accounts of the methods which Jesus used in his ministry because they want to keep us focused on Jesus as the perfect example of ministering in partnership with the Holy Spirit, not on any secret formula (Mt 12:28, Lk 4:18, Lk 5:17, Acts 10:38). The same is true for the healing of blind Bartimaeus. If we only had Luke's account then we would assume that the key factor was Jesus commanding him to **"See!"** (Lk 18:35-43); if we only had Matthew's account then we would assume that the key factor was *the laying on of hands* (Mt 20:29-34); and if we only had Mark's account then we would assume that the key factor was proclaiming over him **"Your faith has healed you"** (Mk 10:46-52). Perhaps Luke gives us the most damning assessment of reliance on a *formula* rather than *relationship* when he tells us that the seven sons of Sceva were seeing some success in the healing ministry using the words **"In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out"** – a well-worked formula if ever there was one! – until one day they learned a very salutary lesson (Acts 19:13-16).

Jesus clearly attributes the miracle at Lazarus' tomb to the intimacy of his prayer life with the Father, the same thing he taught when he told the disciples in Mk 9:29 that he was only able to heal because he had communed intimately with God through **"prayer and fasting."** The Old Testament had long taught that removing the sin which hinders our walk with God is a vital step towards seeing miracles of healing (Is 58:6-8), and so it should not surprise us that Paul also stresses the prime importance of our walk with God when he tells us that **"gifts of healings"** come as the Holy Spirit **"apportions them to each one, just as he determines"** (1 Cor 12:9&11). Both Old Testament and New Testament testify together that the work of the Holy Spirit is to bring healing through any person who allows His River to flow through them (Eze 47:12, Rev 22:2, Jn 7:37-39). Therefore we need to reject any confidence we have in *formulae* so that we can place our full confidence in fellowship with the Holy Spirit (Zech 4:6) and let His River flow through us (2 Cor 13:14, Phil 2:1, 1 Cor 3:9). When we know intimate fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit then the healing comes through His initiative, not through our know-how.

3) THE PASSION OF GOD

The passion which gripped Jesus' soul and which brought about such a great miracle was primarily the **love** of God. John comments three times in the first half of the chapter that Jesus was filled with love for Lazarus and his family (v3,5&11), and even the cynical crowd saw his tears of compassion and commented "See how much he loved him!" (v35-36). The united testimony of almost all those who are ministering successfully in the area of healing is that their breakthrough was linked to them beginning to feel the love and compassion of God towards the sick people in front of them. Mahesh Chavda feels this so strongly that he titled his autobiography 'Only Love Can Make a Miracle', and he writes that his healing ministry only began after "It was as though the Lord broke off a little piece of his heart and placed it inside me...I was learning that the power of God was to be found in the **love** of God...The healings came almost as a by-product. I learned that only love can make a miracle." ³⁷ Godly compassion was one of the key factors in Jesus' healing ministry (Mk 1:41&5:19, Mt 9:35-36,14:14&20:34), and it will be in ours too. ³⁸

Note, however, that love was not the only passion which gripped Jesus' soul at Lazarus' tomb. He was also deeply moved by the righteous **anger** of God against the devil and the sickness he brings. Twice John uses the strange verb ἐμβριμαομαι/*embrimaomai* (v33&38), which means literally that Jesus *snorted like a horse* eager to get into battle. He also uses the verb ταρασσω/*tarasso* (v33), which means *to be churned up* like the sea. Jesus was able to confront the rule of Satan powerfully and effectively because he was churned up by its reality and was angered that it had usurped the rightful rule of God. The great healing evangelist John G Lake urges us that the same will be true for us when he tells us that the pivotal springboard for his healing ministry was that when he saw his sister dying, "A great cry to God, such as had never before come from my soul, went up to God. She must not die! I would not have it! Had not Christ died for her? ... No words of mine can convey to another soul the cry that was in my heart and the flame of hatred for death and sickness that the Spirit of God had stirred within me. The very wrath of God seemed to possess my soul!" ³⁹ The sad truth is that the reason why much sickness remains around us is that we acquiesce to its existence and bring no godly challenge to its pretended authority.

A third passion which gripped Jesus' soul in this passage was a passion for the **glory of God**. The reason he delayed to come to Lazarus' bedside was that his number one priority was "God's glory" (v4), and his shorthand description for the miracle he was about to perform was "the glory of God" (v40). He had no qualms about risking his own reputation outside Lazarus' tomb because he had already counted his own glory as nothing compared to the glory of the Father (Phil 2:6-7). Sadly, many of us care too much for our own reputation and too little for the glory of God. We will only begin to see more healing when we realise that the Kingdom came through Jesus looking foolish on the cross (1 Cor 1:18, Heb 12:2), and it has only ever advanced through his followers being willing to look foolish for His sake too (1 Cor 4:9-10). Unless we are so passionate to see God being glorified that we are willing for ourselves to be vilified, then we will see very few miracles of healing in our own generation.

4) THE FAITH OF GOD

The fourth and final principle which Jesus demonstrates in this chapter is the crucial role which *faith* plays in ministering miraculous healing. The gospel writers consistently emphasise that faith is vital if anyone is to be healed (eg Mt 9:22, Mk 10:52, Lk 17:19, Acts 14:8-10), but Jesus and the apostles took responsibility for having this faith themselves rather than rebuking the sick for not having enough faith. Jesus was happy to restore Lazarus' decaying body despite the distinct atmosphere of doubt in Bethany, and Peter was equally happy to heal the lame man at the Beautiful Gate despite the fact that his expectation was all about money not miracles (Acts 3:5)! The closest that Jesus ever comes to praying for a sick person in the gospels is in this very passage, but note that it is not a prayer that the Father might heal "if it is your will." Instead, it is the bold statement that **"I thank you that you have heard me...I only said this for the benefit of the people standing here so that they may believe"** (v41-42).

Now this does not mean that we should place the same emphasis as many Pentecostals on the *size* of our faith being the crucial factor in receiving healing. Jesus responded to this kind of theology in the mouths of his disciples by telling them that even if they had a tiny amount of the right kind of faith then it would be enough to bring about even the greatest kind of Holy Spirit miracle (Lk 17:5-6). Jesus' emphasis is not on the *size* of our faith but on the *substance* of our faith – namely our faith that God is not only *able* to heal each person but is also *willing* to heal them too. This is the great battleground in which the Kingdom of God advances.⁴⁰

We have not placed enough confidence in God's willingness to heal those around us because we would rather not attribute their continued sickness to *our own actions*. We may be more passionate for our own glory than for His glory, or our faith may be in our method rather than in His character, or we may simply prefer to hang onto cherished sin rather than become vessels for the Holy Spirit. We find this in Matthew 17:14-23 where despite the fact that Jesus had given the Twelve **"authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and every sickness"** (Mt 10:1), the combined efforts of nine of them failed to heal a child with epilepsy because the disciples lacked faith in the Father's willingness (v16-20) and had not pursued the kind of intimacy with the Father which results in effective partnership (v21).

We have not placed enough confidence in God's willingness to heal those around us because we would rather not attribute their continued sickness to *our lack of the persistent prayer which characterises true faith*. Mark tells us that on one occasion Jesus **"entered a house and did not want anyone to know it,"** and therefore appeared more unwilling to heal than at any other point in the gospels (Mk 7:24-30). Note, however, that Mark carries on to tell us that *even on this occasion* he quickly granted healing when he saw evidence of persistent and genuine faith on the part of a Gentile mother. The Lord had been actually been willing to heal all along, but had been waiting to see genuine faith expressed in the kind of perseverance he both demanded (Lk 18:1-8) and displayed personally (Mk 8:22-25). Most of those who see any fruit in ministering healing bear testimony to the way in which the Lord taught them to express faith in His willingness *in spite of* their bad experiences along the way. John Wimber's breakthrough was in response to God's command, **"Don't preach your experience, preach my Word."**⁴¹

To those who refuse to believe that God is willing to heal those around them, Jesus gives no proof beyond his promises. He will not let us spiritualise the words of Scripture any more than he let Martha in v23-27, but asks us plainly **"Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"** (v40). Of course we would prefer it if Jesus would come into line with the English proverb that **"seeing is believing"**, but he does seem quite insistent that, on the contrary, **"believing is seeing."** He seems resolutely committed to the statement that we will only fully minister in healing when each of us **"does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen"** (Mk 11:23).

To those who struggle with past disappointments, Jesus says tenderly that **“For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe”** or **“so that you may have faith”** (v14). He does not feel the need to justify himself to us, but simply calls us to have the same confused but determined faith as Martha, who told him that **“If you had been here then my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask”** (v21-22). Kathryn Kuhlman testified that **“No one really knows how I hurt inside when a service is over, and I see those who have come in wheelchairs leaving in the same wheelchairs in which they came... But the answer I must leave with God. And one of these days, when I get home to glory, I’m going to ask Him to give me the answer from His own lips, as why everyone is not healed.”**⁴² Lex Loizides testifies that once when he was crying out to God over an individual who had not been healed, he heard God give him the simple reply **“Yes, we must pray more, mustn’t we?”**⁴³ Those who see God healing people in response to their commands in Jesus’ name are those who have pressed through the disappointments of v21 to find the faith of v22.⁴⁴

Finally, to those of us who are digesting the words of this paper in an earnest desire to grasp a healthy theology of healing for the sake of the glory of God in our generation, Jesus tells us to place our faith in him as **“the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world”** (v27) and in the fact that he brought a Kingdom which is characterised by supernatural healings (Mt 11:2-6). His closing instructions to us are similar to the ones he gave to the men of Bethany when he commanded them to **“Take away the stone”** (v39). Have you ever wondered why Jesus asked for help to move the stone away from the entrance of Lazarus’ tomb? Surely the one who ministered in enough power to raise the dead also had enough power to move a stone as part of the same miracle? Of course he did. He didn’t want to. He deliberately called the men of Bethany to take one small step of faith so that this could form a catalyst for the miraculous work of God. In our lives, this will probably not mean moving physical stones, but it may well mean moving the deadweight stone of false theology about healing – even such mighty rocks as a resistance to the link which Isaiah 53 and Matthew 8 make between physical healing and the death of Jesus on the cross. It may well mean moving the heavy stone of fear in order to risk looking foolish so that God might look great. It may be moving the stone of passivity so that we get ready to pray for healing the next time, and every time, that we come into contact with sickness. It may even be as simple as moving our heavy bodies out of bed a few minutes earlier each morning in order to give ourselves to prayer and fasting and to the intimacy with God which enables Him to use us as partners with His Holy Spirit.

Jesus cheers us on, urging us to move these stones and encouraging us with the promise **“Did I not tell you that if you believed then you would see the glory of God?”** (v40). The men of Bethany moved forward to move the stone. Heaven waits with baited breath to see if we will do the same in our generation.

Phil Moore,
Woking 2008

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Several verses link sickness not only to demonic activity but specifically to *sin* which opens up a door for demons and sickness. The clearest verses are Jas 5:14-16 and 1Cor 11:27-31, although Jesus warns us in Jn 9:1-3 that we must not overemphasise the link between sin and sickness. Sin may open a door for sickness, but Job's sickness was demonic in origin yet came in spite of him being the most righteous man on earth! (Job 1:3-7)
- ² For example, even though it is helpful to refer to a 'classic Pentecostal view', it is over-simplifying the case to imply that all Pentecostals therefore hold to this view. Gordon Fee is a Pentecostal whose book 'The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospel' (USA, 1979) argues against the classic Pentecostal view that 'healing is in the atonement'. Fee was very disenchanted by many Pentecostal preachers whom he felt abused this teaching with their man-centred and hedonistic messages of 'health and wealth' through the cross of Jesus.
- ³ Rudolph Bultmann 'Jesus Christ and Mythology', p37-38, (USA 1958)
- ⁴ Quoted from an article by Langon B Gilkey in 'The Journal of Religion' (Vol 41, No 3, July 1961, University of Chicago Press, p194-205) entitled 'Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language'
- ⁵ Rudolph Bultmann 'Jesus Christ and Mythology', p84 (USA 1958)
- ⁶ Richard B Gaffin in his co-authored book 'Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views', (USA 1996)
- ⁷ It is important that we do not misunderstand the phrase *cessationism* to mean a belief that divine *healing* itself has ceased, but only the charismatic gifts of healing as outlined in 1 Corinthians 12 and described in operation in the book of Acts. Perhaps one of the clearest insights into what cessationists actually believe is afforded by Walter Chantry in his book 'Signs of the Apostles' (USA, 1973) in which he explains that "There is no Biblical reason to limit God to performing miracles at certain seasons only. No doubt God is yet executing unusual feats of power...It is plain that God's working of wonders cannot be limited to ages past. 'Charismatic' enthusiasts, however, are not merely claiming that *God* is doing miracles in the twentieth century. They are asserting that some twentieth century *men* have power to perform miracles...The question of our inquiry is not 'Should God be working miracles today?' It is rather, 'Should men be doing miracles on behalf of God?'...Serious students of God's Word must deny that miracles are being performed today by men who are filled with God's Spirit" (p8-9 & p116). The issue for Chantry and other cessationists is that if *men and women* today have been given the same gifts of healing as the NT apostles, then somehow the finality and supremacy of the New Testament Scriptures will be compromised.
- ⁸ Cessationism grew out of a fear that Pentecostal miracles were creating a 'cult of man' in which Christians placed more value on what was taught by an anointed man or woman of God than on the words of the Bible. Walter Chantry writes in 'Signs of the Apostles' (USA, 1973, p23) that "Great numbers believe the opinions of those who perform wonders because their 'gifts' indicate that they are 'filled with the Spirit'. The implication of such logic is clear. How can anyone question the doctrines of miracle workers?... 'Can a man be teaching false doctrine when he does such mighty things?' ask the captivated." We would share the concern that charismatic gifts should not be understood as an endorsement of all that a person teaches (1 Cor 1:7,12:9&15:12-14, Gal 3:5&1:6-7), but we understand that the primary purpose of the charismatic gifts was not to authenticate the New Testament canon and therefore we do not see the same need to fight the gifts as many alarmed cessationists (1Cor 12:7&14:26).
- ⁹ The best verse I have seen used to argue this point is 2Cor 12:12 from the NIV which reads that "the things that mark an apostle – signs, wonders and miracles – were done among you with great perseverance." The argument is that Paul is teaching here that miracles were essentially signs to authenticate true apostles. Unfortunately for those who seize upon this verse as a proof-text, the NIV translates Paul's Greek in a misleading way. Paul actually says that τὰ μὲν σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου κατειργάσθη ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν πάσῃ ὑπομονῇ, σημεῖοις τε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ δυνάμεσιν, and the dative nouns "signs, wonders and miracles" simply cannot be placed grammatically alongside the nominative noun "the things that mark" an apostle. What Paul actually says literally in Greek is that "the signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, [accompanied] by signs, wonders and miracles." He is not arguing that miracles authenticate apostles but that his life of suffering in order to plant churches is the sign of a true apostle, and that miracles were one of the key ways in which he planted churches. Not only does this spurious appeal to the misleading NIV translation weaken rather than strengthen the cessationist cause, but on the contrary by drawing our attention to this verse the cessationists remind us once again how we had better not give up on stepping out for miracles of healing if ever we want to see great churches planted in our own generation.

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- ¹⁰ Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones underlines how arrogant and foolish it is to assume that now the canon of Scripture has been completed that we need the authenticating sign of miracles less than 1st-Century Christians. He points out that this argument “means that you and I, who have the Scriptures open before us, know much more than the apostle Paul of God’s truth...It means that we are altogether superior...even to the apostles themselves, including the apostle Paul! It means that we are now in a position in which...‘we know, even as also we are known’ by God...Indeed, there is only one word to describe such a view, it is nonsense.” ‘Prove All Things’, p32-33, (published in the UK in 1985)
- ¹¹ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who cannot strictly speaking be called a ‘cessationist’ because he died before the birth of Pentecostalism ushered in both a rediscovery of the charismatic gifts of healing and the cessationist movement which rejected them, claimed that **“The miracles were the great bell of the universe which was rung in order to call the attention of all men all over the world to the fact that the gospel feast was spread; we do not need the bell now.”** (The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Vol 23 p471). The first part of this statement is certainly backed up by Rom 15:18-19, which links the rapid growth of the 1st-century Church to signs and wonders, but there is less evidence for the second part of the statement that the Kingdom is now advancing so rapidly that miracles are no longer needed. On the contrary, the experience of those who preach the Gospel in Muslim or Hindu nations, and even our own limited experience in the UK, is that when God rings the “bell” today non-Christians become much more open to receiving the “gospel feast.” It would appear that the “bell” still has a great part left to play!
- ¹² Mk 6:5 tells us that Jesus “could not do any miracles” on one visit to Nazareth, but it goes on to qualify this with “**except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.**” Clearly for Jesus a bad ministry time was not failing to see people healed when they came to him in faith, but seeing fewer people coming to him in faith for healing than he hoped. Similarly, when Luke 5:17 tells us that on a particular occasion “**the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick**”, the phrase comes with no evidence that there were other times when the power of the Lord was *not* present for healing, but rather appears to stress that this one occasion was particularly fruitful.
- ¹³ DA Carson ‘Showing the Spirit’, p166, (USA 1987)
- ¹⁴ John Calvin’s ‘Commentary on 1 Corinthians’, p305. Although Calvin does not refer to Amos 8:11-12, this is a good defence of his position. If the Lord withheld the charismatic gift of prophecy from His People because of their sin, rebellion and unbelief, then we can assume that He also withholds the charismatic gift of healing from His People because of their sin, rebellion and unbelief. The problem with assuming that our lack of experience equates to God’s lack of willingness is that it tries to foist all of the blame for our lack of experience onto God, and therefore abdicates our responsibility to repent and to respond to the Word of God with faith.
- ¹⁵ John Wimber ‘Power Evangelism’, p160, (USA 1985)
- ¹⁶ John Wimber ‘Power Evangelism’, p151-166, (USA 1985). Wimber’s overview of church history includes amongst many others miraculous healings in the time of Augustine in the early 5th century, in the time of Francis of Assisi in the early 13th century, and in the ministry of Martin Luther in the 16th century. Only a crass prejudice against finding any miraculous healing in church history could dismiss the consistent testimonies of all these people of high spiritual calibre as myth or superstition
- ¹⁷ Jesus put the failure of the Twelve on one occasion to see healing down to their *unbelief* rather than to any unwillingness on God’s part, and promptly healed the sick person to demonstrate that God had been willing to heal him all along (Mt 17:16-18)! We need to be careful that we do not dismiss the arguments of cessationists out of hand because of their bad experiences, but we cannot ignore the fact that experience affects everyone’s theology of healing. Benjamin B Warfield, the founding father of cessationism, suffered tragedy on his honeymoon in August 1876 when his wife Annie was struck by lightning, resulting in paralysis for the rest of her life. The fact that Warfield spent all 39 years of his married life juggling the twin roles of theologian and carer, without seeing any answer to his prayers and fasting for healing, must have had a significant impact upon his theology.
- ¹⁸ John G.Lake ‘Adventures in God’, p55, written in the USA in the 1920s.
- ¹⁹ Oral Roberts in ‘Abundant Life Magazine’, Sept 1976 edition.
- ²⁰ Kenneth Hagin ‘Healing Belongs to Us’, p32.
- ²¹ Kenneth Hagin ‘Exceedingly Growing Faith’, p10.
- ²² Taken from DA Carson’s commentary ‘When Jesus Confronts the World: An Exposition of Matthew 8-10 (USA, 1987)
- ²³ Wayne Grudem ‘Systematic Theology’, p1063, (USA, 1994), my underlining.

- ²⁴ The Hebrew of Is 53:5 (נִרְפָּא-לָנוּ בְּכַרְתּוֹ גְּרָמָיו/by his stripes there is healing for us) is technically an imperfect verb which suggests *ongoing* action rather than a perfect verb of *completed* action. The crux of this argument comes not from the Hebrew text but from the fact that when Peter quotes this verse in 1Pe 2:24 he follows the Septuagint reading which places the action in the aorist/past tense (οὐ τῶ μώλωπι ἰάθητε/by his stripes you have been healed).
- ²⁵ Lex Loizides has told this story several times at the 'Front Edge' events he has organised in Africa, Europe and India to equip Newfrontiers leaders to minister in gifts of healing.
- ²⁶ Henry Knight, writing in 'The Journal of Pentecostal Theology', expresses his concerns that based on the teaching of some Pentecostals **"Faith is essentially trusting in God's promises in Scripture rather than trusting in God. Indeed, the believer is assured of healing because, given the spiritual laws and scriptural promises, a faithful God has no choice in the matter"** (1993, p69).
- ²⁷ See p37 & pp146-165 of John Wimber's book 'Power Healing' (USA, 1986).
- ²⁸ This link between Moses' piece of wood in Ex 15:25 and the cross of Jesus is not just the result of commentators' tendency to spiritualise Old Testament passages. Even within the New Testament, we find that the writers take the word ξυλον/wood/tree which appears in that verse in the Septuagint, and they use it to refer to the cross of Jesus. See any of Acts 5:30,10:39&13:29 or Gal 3:13 & 1Pe 2:24. The counter-argument is that the New Testament use of the word ξυλον/wood/tree refers back to Deut 21:23, but even if we were to accept this supposition then we are still looking at an Old Testament verse which talks about the *curse* (eg of sickness) only being able to be removed because someone (ie Jesus) hung on a tree for us.
- ²⁹ Kenneth Copeland quoted in the 'Calvary Contender', 15th Sept 1989 edition.
- ³⁰ Wimber tells a moving account of David Watson's death in spite of his faith for healing on pp147-149 of his book 'Power Healing' (USA, 1986).
- ³¹ One of the best examples of our need to admit humbly that we do not fully understand how God works out His promises in Scripture is perhaps the promises which He made to King David in 1 Chronicles 17. God promised David that one of his descendants would rule on his throne over the kingdom of Israel forever (v7-14), but the outworking of this promise has involved the nation state of Israel ceasing to exist from 70AD to 1948AD and there actually being no Davidic King ruling over Israel or even Judah since 586BC! God is entirely faithful to His promise, and has made David's great descendant Jesus into the great King of kings who rules over the whole universe, but this much more glorious outworking of the promise is far greater than David fully grasped even in his most inspired Messianic psalms. We must leave room for God to fulfil His promises in a way which is incomprehensibly better than our best interpretations on the basis of our own logic.
- ³² The Septuagint translation of Num 33:55 refers to people who troubled the People of God as a σκολοψ/*thorn* in their bodies. We cannot prove that Paul has this verse in mind, but the fact that he also calls it an ἀγγελος/*angel/messenger* of Satan is certainly personal language. We cannot state categorically that this *isn't* an example of sickness, but we certainly cannot state with any credibility whatsoever that it categorically *is*.
- ³³ The closest example I can find in Scripture which comes anywhere close to this would be in Jn 11:3-6 where Jesus delays going to heal Lazarus - in fact delays so long that he dies in the meantime. Technically this is not an example of someone requesting healing, since Mary and Martha merely tell Jesus that **"The one you love is sick"**, and do not specifically ask for healing. However, this example is worthy of further attention, and this paper deals with it in more detail on p16.
- ³⁴ Francis MacNutt in his book simply entitled 'Healing' (USA, 1974).
- ³⁵ This quotation comes from Henry Knight's critique of the Pentecostal position in 'The Journal of Pentecostal Theology 1993' entitled 'God's Faithfulness and God's Freedom' (p69) - as if they were somehow in opposition to one another.
- ³⁶ See footnote number 33
- ³⁷ Mahesh Chavda 'Only Love Can Make a Miracle', p84&86, (USA, 1990).
- ³⁸ Jesus' healing ministry was not motivated primarily by his desire to prove he was the Messiah, or even primarily by his desire to usher in the Kingdom of God. It was primarily motivated by the compassionate character of God who reveals Himself as Yahweh-Rophe, The-Lord-Who-Heals. Francis MacNutt writes very helpful in his book 'Healing' on p110 (USA, 1974) that **"Jesus did not heal people to prove that He was God; he healed them because He was God."**
- ³⁹ John G. Lake 'Adventures in God', p50-51.

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- ⁴⁰ We should not be surprised that this is the main battleground. If we argue that God is *willing* to help the sick but *unable* to do so, then we doubt His strength. However, if we argue that He is *able* to help the sick but *unwilling* to do so, then we doubt His love. Neither of these views is likely to bring healing because **“Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he is the rewarder of those who earnestly seek him”** (Heb 11:6).
- ⁴¹ John Wimber shares this testimony as one of turning points in his ministry in his book ‘Power Evangelism’ (USA, 1985)
- ⁴² Kathryn Kuhlman (1907-76) always refused to be drawn publicly on the question of why God does not always heal. The quotation comes from Jamie Buckingham’s book ‘A Glimpse Into Glory’, p35, (USA 1983)
- ⁴³ Lex Loizides sharing his testimony at the Newfrontiers ‘Front Edge’ Conference at King’s Church Catford in May 2007
- ⁴⁴ As ministers of healing, we press through disappointments to focus on what God is doing through us rather than on what He has not done. If only three out of ten are healed then we are still advancing the Kingdom of Heaven and we are still seeing supernatural miracles which bear testimony to God’s glory a third of the time! However, we do need to give an answer to those whom we have not received the healing we pray for. I personally tend to say something along the lines of **“Three different things can happen to people when they receive prayer for healing. Some are healed straight away which is wonderful. Some do not sense their healing straight away but discover later that something decisive happened when they were prayed for and that their symptoms change shortly afterwards – this may well be the case for you. Others do not get healed straightaway but are healed the next time someone prays for them, so if this is the case for you then keep pressing into God in faith because He wants to heal you.”** One of the best explanations I have heard from another Newfrontiers evangelist was simply to say **“I find that some people are healed when I pray for them and some people are not, but when I look at Scripture I see that Jesus healed everyone. I know that there is still quite a gulf between me ministering healing and Jesus doing so, so I assume that as I get closer to Jesus that more and more people will be healed.”** A key principle is to keep the burden of responsibility on you as the minister rather than laying a ‘side-plate of guilt’ on the sick person. Jesus rebuked the disciples for not being able to heal people, but he did not rebuke the sick people for not being healed, even when he might have had grounds to do so (Mt 17:14-21).