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AN EXAMINATION OF THE TEACHINGS
OF FAITH-HEALERS

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Practical Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
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OF FAITH-HEALERS

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. The Doctrinal Basis of Faith Healing	
A. Healing and its Relation to the Atonement-----	5
B. The Error of the Healers Lies in a False Conception of Justification-----	9
C. Strange Conclusions which Follow from the Doctrine of the Healers-----	12
D. Sin as the Cause of Sickness-----	13
E. The True Purpose of Sickness-----	15
F. Sickness Does Not Indicate a Lack of Faith---	18
G. The Will of God and Sickness-----	22
H. Unconditional Praying-----	23
I. Faith and Obedience as Conditions for Healing-----	29
J. Was the Healing Done by Christ and the Apos- tles Always on the Basis of the Faith of the Recipient?-----	37
K. The Purpose of Christ's Healing Ministry and its Continuance-----	44
L. Healers Who Can Be Immediately Branded as False-----	48
M. Healers and Medical Science-----	49
II. An Exegetical Treatment of the Chief Passages Used by the Direct Faith Healers to Support their Doctrine.	
A. Is. 53, 4. 5 and Matt. 8, 17: Used to Prove that bodily Healing Has its Basis in the Atonement-----	56
B. Mark 16, 17. 18. Does the Great Commission Warrant the Practice of the Healers?-----	64
C. James 5, 14-16: The Anointing of the Sick in St. James-----	69
D. Ex. 15, 26 and Deut. 7, 15: The Old Testa- ment Healing Covenant-----	79
E. John 15, 12: The Meaning of the "Greater Things" which Christ Promised Believers He Would Do-----	82
F. Hebr. 13, 8: The Changelessness of Christ---	85
G. I Cor. 12, 9: The "Gift of Healing"-----	85
Conclusion: Faith Healers Find no Support at all in Scripture for their Practice	
III. An Explanation of the Faith Healing Phenomena	
A. The Claims of the Faith Healers-----	90
B. The Screening of Prospects by the Healers---	91
C. Types of Sicknesses-----	93
D. The Class of Sick People with Whom Healers Work-----	96

E. The Chief Factor in Explanation of Cures-----	98
F. The Reason for the Popularity of Religious Cures-----	103
Conclusions: Miraculous Cures Are Possible, but Uncommon-----	103

AN EXAMINATION OF THE TEACHINGS OF FAITH-HEALERS

Introduction

The phenomena of bodily healing appears in various forms in almost all religions, both pagan and Christian.¹ It begins with the crude practices of the medicine man who was employed to drive away disease-producing evil spirits.² Among the cuneiform inscriptions of the Babylonians we find that religious healing was practiced in the cradle of the human race.³ The priests of ancient Egypt claimed cures through the use of incantations and magical words.⁴ In ancient Greece, and particularly at Delphi, religious

1. J. V. Coombs in his book, entitled Religious Delusions, says: "In all ages and among all people the sick have been healed without medicine. These cures have been performed by pagan, heathen, Mohammedan, Mormon, Catholic, Protestant, atheist, infidel and Christian with equal success. The means used to cure the afflicted were charms, incantations, prayer, laying on of hands, relics, bones of saints, king's touch, beating the tom-tom drum, bathing in sacred fountains, and remedies too numerous to record here."

2. The Encyclopedia Americana, XVIII, 584. (1936).

3. William Edward Biederwolf, Whipping-Post Theology, p. 162.

4. Ibid., p. 163.

healing was extensively practiced.⁵ The Vedas or sacred books of India contain formulae of supposedly magic potency that were employed for purposes of healing.⁶

There is a large number of religious cults that practice mental-healing, which may be classified as a form of faith-healing. By mental-healing we mean those cures effected by the realization of the power of the mind over matter, or by the conscious effect of the mind of the healer on the patient. The adherents of Yogaism endeavor to control all bodily functions by meditation and ascetic practices, and so by mental abstraction to become united with the vital breath which pervades all nature.⁷ Unity, Christian Science, and New Thought are very much alike in that they all believe in healing through the mind. Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy repudiated the term mental-healing, preferring to speak of the unreality of sickness, but the effect is the same.⁸ Theosophy and New Thought in their diagnosis of bodily ills refer to one source; that source is mental errancy, perverse or misdirected thought and the abnormal feeling which it engenders.⁹ The Unity cult holds basically the same principle. The origin of Unity, Christian Science, and New Thought goes back to Franz Anton Mesmer (1774-1814) who wrestled with the problem of psycho-

5. Ibid., p. 163.

6. G. H. Bolling, "Vedic Literature", The Encyclopedia Americana, (1936), XXVII, 715.

7. The Encyclopedia Americana, XXIX, 638, (1936).

8. Jan Karel Van Baalen, The Chaos of Cults, p. 75.

9. Henry C. Sheldon, Theosophy and New Thought, p. 164.

therapy, as it is called today. He discovered the power one mind can exercise over another for healing, and attributed this power to a magnetism, later on to a fluid supposed to emanate from the healer and to affect the patient. Though Mesmer himself did not claim supernatural powers, nor did he commercialize his find, his disciples turned their healing recipes into the comundra of a deeply mystic religion.¹⁰ Emile Coue holds a prominent position as a mental-healer. His appeal was, however, not religious. His celebrated formula is well known: "Day by day, in every way, I am getting better and better."¹¹ Shamanism and Emmanuelism are other cults among the many¹² who practice mental-healing and make of it a religion. The basis of faith in the mental-healing systems is the power of one's own mind, or the power of the mind of the healer, to cure.

Faith-healing finds a prominent place in Roman Catholicism with its many shrines where thousands go to pray to the Virgin and the saints for bodily healing. The shrine at Lourdes, France, is probably the most famous. Fully 600,000 people are said to visit this miracle-working grotto annually and numerous miraculous are reported. Lourdes

10. J. K. Van Baalen, op. cit., pp. 71-72.

11. H. D. Mensing, "Divine Healing", Thirty-Second Annual Convention of Associated Lutheran Charities, Sept. 26-29, 1933, p. 97.

12. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., pp. 192-195.

came into prominence in the year 1858 A. D. when, it is claimed, the Virgin Mary appeared to a peasant girl and blessed the waters.¹³ The Virgin Mary and the "blessed" water is the basis of faith in these cases. Another variety of faith healing in the Roman Catholic Church is practiced in connection with relics of all sorts. For example, in Quebec there is the Chapel of Sainte Anne de Beaupre. Cures are frequently reported at this shrine where rests what is reputed to be a small piece of bone from the right arm of St. Anne. St. Anne de Beaupre is said to have been the mother of the Virgin Mary. Thousands make the journey to this shrine yearly seeking healing.¹⁴ The basis of faith in such cases is the holy emblems which are seen or touched.

Finally, there is the phenomenon we shall call direct faith healing. A large number of cults and individuals come into consideration in this class. Their teachings and methods are, however, all more or less the same. They preach Christ as the Savior from sin, but, especially as the Savior from sickness. They conduct religious meetings in which they stir up the emotions by frenzied singing of hymns and by the preaching of highly emotional sermons.¹⁵

13. The Encyclopedia Americana, XVII, p. 655.

14. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 171.

15. H. D. Mensing, op. cit., p. 97.

The basis of faith by which cures are effected lies in the faith healer in whom the patient has confidence, or in one's own faith in supposed Scriptural promises of healing. We shall confine the discussion of this paper to the teachings of those modern American teachers who hold what we shall call the direct faith healing principle.

THE DOCTRINAL BASIS OF FAITH HEALING

Healing and its Relation to the Atonement

The basic teaching of all the direct faith healers is that the atonement of Christ makes provision for bodily healing. Their theory is that all the evil mankind suffers has come as the result of sin, and that in the atonement Christ has provided forgiveness for all sin and so provided release from all the consequences of sin. Therefore, they say that bodily healing is provided for in the atonement.¹⁶ The healers make this an essential doctrine of Christianity and they have summoned many passages from Scripture, from both the Old and the New Testaments, to support it.¹⁷ In the second chapter of this paper we shall study some of the more important passages used by the healers. In passing we make mention of their sedes doctrinae.

16. R. L. Stanton, "Healing Through Faith", The Presbyterian Review, (Jan. 1884), p. 64.

17. I. e., Hardy Mitchell, a minister in the church of the Foursquare Gospel, says, "Healing is one of the essential doctrines of the Bible.....There are 32,000 promises in the Bible fitting into ever need of man---temporal, physical, spiritual." The Foursquare Crusader, (April 10, 1929).

The passage fundamental to all of the healers is Isaiah 53, 4, 5., together with Matthew 8, 16, 17.

"Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Is. 53, 4, 5.

"When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils; and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the Prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Matt. 8, 16, 17.

One of the most prominent healers, Mrs. Aimee Semple McPherson explains these passages in this way:

"Was He whipped that my sins might be washed away? No, child, the blood of the cross was sufficient for that.

Why, then, did they whip Him so?

'Twas thus He bore our suffering, and 'By His stripes we are healed.' 18

At the whipping-post He purchased your healing."

In a sermon on healing found in her church paper she writes: "Jesus Christ made provision not only through His precious blood to cleanse us from our sin. 'Wounded for our transgressions,' but also 'By His stripes we are healed.' 'Himself took our infirmities and carried our diseases.'" 19 In the same line of thought another healer writes: "Much of His precious blood was doubtless shed while receiving that awful bruise (stripes) for our physical healing, but the rest of His precious blood was re-

18. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 9.

19. The Foursquare Crusader, November 27, 1929.

served to shed on the cross for our sins." ²⁰ Still another says virtually the same thing, but with far less certainty: "In the atonement of Christ there seems to be a foundation laid for faith in bodily healing. Seems--- we say, for the passage to which we refer is so profound and unsearchable in its meaning that one would be very careful not to speak dogmatically in regard to it..... The passage seems to teach that Christ endured vicariously our diseases as well as our iniquities." ²¹ A host of other healers like J. W. Byers, A. Dowie, and F. F. Bosworth are very dogmatic in saying that this passage teaches that Christ vicariously suffered to give us bodily healing.

The healers in general place bodily healing on the same level with salvation of the soul. ²² So we are told

20. T. J. McCrossan, "Bodily Healing and the Atonement," quoted from W. E. Biederwolf, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

21. A. J. Gordon, The Ministry of Healing, pp. 16-17.

22. Cf. J. W. Byers, The Grace of Healing, p. 101; F. F. Bosworth, Christ the Healer, pp. 24-27. R. L. Stanton, "Healing by Faith", The Presbyterian Review, April 1884, p. 64, says: "Our own view is this: that the material and spiritual nature of man stands on a perfect equality before the atonement, so far as that the same provision is made for the body that is made for the soul, allowing for their natural and circumstantial differences; that in so far as the soul may be delivered from sin, during life, the body may be delivered from disease, the fruit of sin; that, as to progress in purification, and final conquest over sin and its fruits, there is no greater necessity that Christ's people should pine away during many years or through their whole earthly pilgrimage, in sickness, as many of them do, than there is that they should spend the greater part or their whole lives so largely under the power of sin; in short, if the full deliverance of the

by them that, "it is just as true that Jesus came to put away sickness, as sin, because both are the works of the devil," and, "faith for healing is as simple as faith for pardon."²³ A parallel is then drawn between bodily healing and salvation.²⁴ According to such logic they then say that to decline to accept the Gospel's offer of healing is "as clearly a sin against God as to decline or neglect the offer of salvation."²⁵ This logic is drawn to its terrible conclusion when we are told that, "if you cannot believe in healing, you have no grounds for believing in salvation."²⁶ It is not surprising then to hear J. W. Byers say that churches that do not teach healing on the basis of the atonement are serving the Devil.²⁷

soul from sin may be at any time reached on this side of death, so may the body be freed from disease; or if the soul must struggle with sin till death, the body may not be completely delivered till then."

23. J. W. Byers, op. cit., pp. 54, 98-99.

24. F. F. Bostrom, op. cit., p. 166. R. L. Stanton, op. cit., p. 77, says: "A parallelism runs through the Scriptures upon the provision which Christ has made for our physical and spiritual nature. This principle may serve as a key to answer many questions. Take, merely as an example, the following: Why are not all healed who are prayed for? Why are some healed immediately, and others gradually? Why do some, who have been partially or wholly cured, again relapse into sickness? If this doctrine is true, why do not all the sick embrace it? These and many other questions will apply just as well, and for precisely the same reasons, if asked concerning the curing of the soul of sin, and the general progress of the Gospel among men, both in relation to presenting the truth to the impenitent and to Christians. This parallelism stands forth in remarkable completeness."

25. R. L. Stanton, op. cit., p. 75.

26. A. J. Gordon, op. cit., p. 24.

27. J. W. Byers, op. cit., p. 68.

The Error of the Healers Lies in a
False Conception of Justification

We strike at the very root of the direct faith healing system when we attack this doctrine which finds provision for immediate vicarious bodily healing in the atonement, and the placing of bodily healing on a level with the provision made in the atonement for forgiveness of sins and salvation. It is obvious from what has been said by the healers in previous paragraphs, that they do not have a correct conception of what Christ did for us in the atonement. They have erred in the fundamental doctrine of Scripture---justification. Their error is in this that they do not know what is meant by "imputed righteousness." Imputed righteousness is confused with inherent or essential righteousness, for their teaching comes down to this, that by accepting the merits of the atonement people become perfect in themselves and thereby are freed from the results and penalties of sin. The corrupt and evil nature which remains in the Christian and makes him susceptible to all human weaknesses is not taken into account. This corrupt nature which remains is what St. Paul speaks of in the words: "I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (Rom. 7, 22, 23). The Formula of Concord contains the following on this subject:

"But when we teach that through the operation of the Holy Ghost we are borne anew and justified, the sense is not that after regeneration no unrighteousness clings any more to the justified and regenerate in their being and life, but that Christ covers all their sins which nevertheless in this life still inhere in nature with His complete obedience. But irrespective of this they are declared and regarded godly and righteous by faith and for the sake of Christ's obedience (which Christ rendered the Father for us from His birth to His most ignominious death upon the cross), although on account of their corrupt nature, they still are and remain sinners to the grave (while they bear about this mortal body)."²⁸

Our conclusion is that Christ atoned for our sins and removed the penalty which we should suffer for them, but at the same time, that as long as we live in our sinful and corrupt bodies we will be subject to the weaknesses which have come as the result and as the penalty of sin.

This matter is clearly brought out in the eighth chapter of Romans where St. Paul discusses the relation of the atoning and sanctifying work of Christ and the Holy Spirit on the soul, to the Christian's bodily environment. On the basis of Christ's atonement "there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." (v. 1) Men are judicially right with God. By faith men are made God's children and heirs of eternal life. (vv. 14-17) However, the redeemed man has to work out his salvation in the midst of a great natural economy. The KT 16-15 (creature) is represented by the Apostle as longing (The earnest expectation), (v. 19); as waiting for "the revealing of the sons of God." (v. 19) The creature was

28. The Formula of Concord, Article III, 22.

made subject to vanity, helplessness, physical frailty, to a tendency to deterioration and dissolution characteristic of all material nature. This subjection was not voluntary. It became thus subject by means of Him who laid it under a curse because of man's sin. But this subjection is not hopeless. The creature is subject in the hope of being delivered into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. In the meantime it "groaneth and travaileth in pain" (v. 22), up to the present time. This is a fact of experience. But now, "not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within our selves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." (v. 23) All this suffering Paul describes as being part of the Christian's earthly experience. This certainly could not be, if, as the healers claim, the redemption of the body runs parallel with that of the soul. ²⁹ Speaking of this vast material economy in which the Christians live, H. R. Vincent correctly says that the Christian "grows to spiritual manhood under the thrust and strain of that economy, in the atmosphere of the conflict between the spirit and the flesh. They give him his controlling impulse; they clothe him with courage and faith and patience, but they do not remove him from

29. This whole argument is contained in the article by H. R. Vincent, op. cit., pp. 317-318. W. E. Biederwolf has the same argument, but not nearly so well expressed. Cf. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 80.

the shock and friction. In the shape of sickness, pain, all sorts of physical ills, he is liable to their pressure to the very end." ³⁰ In Biblical language, as to the spirit, we are in the age to come, but as to the body, we are in the present age. This strange discord forms the basis of our present condition. It is in ignoring this that the direct faith healers make their fundamental error.

Strange Conclusions which Follow from the Doctrine of the Healers

If the doctrine of the direct faith healers were drawn to its logical conclusion, several strange results are obtained. For example, if disease must find its immediate and true remedy in the Cross because it is a part of the curse of sin, then the same thing must be true of that part of the curse which penalized women with respect to her pain in childbirth. Likewise, if the healers were correct, man by the proper exercise of faith could expect God, so far as his garden and his orchard and his field and his farm is concerned, to remove the curse, that is, to eradicate, without any effort on man's part, the thorns and the briars and the thistles, while he, like Adam, need only care for the trees and gather the fruits. In

30. M. R. Vincent, op. cit., p. 319.

fact, since disease is merely incipient death, even physical death would be excluded by the atonement.³¹ The healers, of course, will not follow to these conclusions, but it can not be avoided without being inconsistent.

Sin as the Cause of Sickness

The faith healers claim that all sickness is in some way the result of sin,³² it is the work of the Devil. "It is the business of Satan to bind with diseases." "All sickness is in a greater or less degree devil-oppression."³³ In a leaflet, "Do You Know God's Way of Healing?" Mr. McCrossan has the following questions and answers:

Question: Do you mean to say that all disease is Satan's work?

Answer: Yes, for if there had been no sin (which came through Satan) there never would have been any disease.

Question: But does disease never come from God?

Answer: No, it cannot come from God, for He is pure, and disease is unclean; and it cannot come out of heaven, for there is no disease there.³⁴

Some of the sins which are the direct causes of sickness are: jealousy, rebellion, discontentment, adultery, idolatry, murder, covetousness, lying, stealing, and irreverence.³⁵

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31. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., pp. 63-69.
 32. Theo. Graebner, Faith-Cure, p. 17.
 33. J. W. Byers, op. cit., pp. 69-70.
 34. Quoted from W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 21.
 35. J. H. Bostrom, The Causes of Sickness and How to Get Well, pp. 13-40.

As a rule, however, the healers do not actually claim that sickness is always the result of specific sins on the part of the individual, as some have wrongly charged. "Individually we may be sick without having committed sin." The same writer says that though it is possible to be sick without actual transgression, as a rule sin opens the door to sickness. ³⁶ Some even concede the fact that the afflictions which many Christians suffer have a "disciplinary office" ³⁷ to fill. None of the healers will say that sickness is ever directly sent from God, even as a chastisement, but that God merely permits the Devil to inflict

36. J. W. Byers, op. cit., p. 210. A. B. Simpson, Wholly Sanctified, pp. 84-85, says: "The sanctified body has been, or at least should be, separated from disease. We do not say that disease is a voluntary sin, but we do say that it is a blemish and a physical impurity. It is a form of corruption in the flesh. Under the ancient dispensation it disqualified priests from ministering at the altar. It was a defilement or blemish, and so still it is a hindrance to the highest spiritual state and to the most effective service for God. No doubt He can overrule it for much good. He can make the invalid's chamber a beautiful example and testimony. But this does not make the disease the more pleasing to Him nor the less a blemish; an abnormal condition; an impurity in the human system; something from which Christ has come to separate His people; something which He bore upon the cross that we might not bear it, but 'by His stripes be healed.'

"Beloved, have you been separated from disease, from the malarias and tumors that defile your blood, depress your liver, drag down your spirits, cloud your brain, irritate your temper and overshadow all your future life and work, besides holding you back from service for God, and occupying your existence with a morbid self-consciousness and a struggle that is dragging you down when God wants every power engaged in service for a suffering world? Are you willing to be sanctified from disease, and is it valuable enough for you to throw prejudices away and accept the salvation which Christ has come to bring for spirit, soul and body?"

37. R. L. Stanton, op. cit., p. 72; J. H. Bostrom, op. cit., p. 113; W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 17: "0-

the chastisement.

The True Purpose of Sickness

So we see that the direct faith healers trace all sickness directly to the work of the Devil. Though some do admit at times that sickness is not always the result of specific sins, and that at times sickness fills a disciplinary office, they nevertheless consider all sickness to be an absolute evil. Furthermore, the inference is drawn that sickness invariably shows that the victim does not have proper faith, or else he could be rid of his sickness. We shall bring out the facts that sickness can and is at times a good, and that sickness does not necessarily show that a person has not the proper faith, or that he has insufficient faith.

Sickness entered this world as a result of the fall into sin, and it is true that at times sickness and disease is visited upon individuals as the punishment for specific sins. But we maintain that in the case of the Christian, sickness, even when caused by transgression, is a means in the hands of a loving heavenly Father to train His children in Christian living. ³⁹ Sickness is merely a part of the Christian's cross. Luther writes:

thers in the faith healing school, like Mr. Bosworth, Mrs. McPherson, Mr. Rader, Dr. Preece, Mr. Richey, Mr. Simpson, and others would agree that sickness is sometimes permitted by God as a discipline."

38. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 21; J. W. Byers, op. cit., p. 131.

39. Theo. Graebner, op. cit., p. 18.

"A Christian, in so far as he is a Christian, is subject to his dear holy cross, so that he must suffer either from other people or from the devil himself, who torments and terrifies him with tribulation, persecution, poverty, sickness, or inwardly in his heart by means of his poisonous darts."⁴⁰

The Devil and the world afflict Christians with sickness, but it must be noted that it is not on account of their sins, as the faith healers claim, but on account of their holy faith.⁴¹ "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.... Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. 12, 5-11) Sickness and suffering are used by God to serve a very important role in the execution of His plans to save the elect. "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."⁴² We

40. St. Louis Edition, XII, 544 ff., quoted in J. T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 424.

41. Luther says very aptly: "The evil foe and the world are not angry with Christians because they are sinners and stumble and fall now and then. No indeed; the devil and the world gladly tolerate this and even approve of it. But on account of the Word and their faith (they hate them), namely, because they hope in the Son of God" St. Louis Edition, XIII, 434 ff.

42. C. S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 81. C. S. Lewis, op. cit., pp. 93-95, says: "I am only trying to show that the old Christian doctrine of being made 'perfect through suffering' is not incredible.... In estimating the credibility of the doctrine two principles ought to be observed. In the first place, we must remember that actual

conclude that sickness inflicted upon the Christian always serves a good purpose, and that sickness can be called a good in this case. (Rom. 8, 18. 28)⁴³

For Christians, sickness is only part of their Christian cross. As such it is of incalculable benefit to them. "It points them to heaven, Acts 15, 22; renders them humble before God, II Cor. 12, 7; teaches them implicit trust in divine grace, II Cor. 12, 8. 9; strengthens their faith, I Pet. 1, 6. 7; moves them to prayer, Ps. 18, 6; Is. 26, 16; crucifies their old man and destroys the body of sin, Rom. 6, 6; I Pet. 4, 1; and turns their view from this present,

moment of present pain is only the centre of what may be called the whole tribulational system which extends itself by fear and pity. Whatever good effects these experiences have are dependent upon the centre; so that even if pain itself was of no spiritual value, yet, if fear and pity were, pain would have to exist in order that there should be something to be feared and pitied. And that fear and pity help us in our return to obedience and charity is not to be doubted.....Thus the terrible necessity of tribulation is only too clear. God has had me for but forty-eight hours and then only by dint of taking everything else away from me. Let Him but sheathe that sword for a moment and I behave like a puppy when the hated bath is over---I shake myself as dry as I can and race off to reacquire my comfortable dirtiness, if not in the nearest manure heap, at least in the nearest flower bed. And that is why tribulations cannot cease until God either sees us remade or sees that our remaking is now hopeless."

43. M. R. Vincent, *op. cit.*, p. 325. Job's case belongs in two categories. In the category of chastening, and in the category of proof or vindication. God was proving Job by his trial, and at the same time vindicating the encomium He pronounced upon him in the beginning. He was showing Satan that it was possible for a man to go through all the agony of doubt, and all that physical torture, and all those pangs of abandonment and misunderstanding, and yet hold fast to God. He was proving that God was capable of winning, and that man is capable of cherishing an unselfish goodness. That he can serve God for nought; that

perishable world to the eternal, imperishable life to come, II Cor. 4, 18. By their patient and faithful cross-bearing believers also encourage others to be steadfast in their trials and to continue in the glorious promises of the living God, II Cor. 1, 6; I Thess. 1, 6. 7. The lesson of Christ's glorious cross is best taught by him who has victoriously borne his own cross, II Cor. 1, 4; 12, 10.⁴⁴"

We shall not enter into a discussion as to who the direct author of sickness is, since it has no practical bearing on our subject. In passing we mention this, that the healers claim that the Devil is always the author of sickness, and that God never directly afflicts people, but that He allows the Devil to bind people so. We believe that both God and the Devil are the direct causes of sickness, as well as man himself. It is felt that it is sufficient for our subject merely to show that sickness is not an absolute evil as the healers would have us believe.

Sickness Does Not Indicate a Lack of Faith

We can, therefore, conclude that sickness does not necessarily indicate that the patient lacks proper Christian faith, or that he is guilty of some particular sin. No individual can so far separate himself from humanity at large

he can hold fast his confidence in God, even when the supreme Friend seems to be turned into his foe. It is to such proof and vindication that Peter alludes: "That the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth, though it is proved by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (I Pet. 1, 7).

that he can be wholly healthy while humanity as a whole is sick, no matter how great his faith. Neither can a Christian believe that he is immuned to the disease around him because of the perfection of his life. As long as he is a man, and has sinful flesh, he will be subject to sickness. The crucified Christ contradicts such belief. Neither Christ's life nor His teaching lead us to believe that the man physically sound and robust is always the good man, and the torn and bruised man always the evil man. Often, indeed, this is exactly the reverse of the truth. Very often it is just those who bear the burdens of the world, in simple and profound love of God and man, who are the very people that no remedy, spiritual, mental or physical, can touch. Sickness is not invariably the outward sign of infidelity.⁴⁵ If what the healers claim were true one must, being consistent, deduce that sickness indicates a lack of faith, that all the good Christian people who are suffering from sickness and disease are doing so because they are not in proper relationship with God. They are in fact rejecting God's blood-bought remedy for their recovery. They do not esteem Christ's atonement as sufficient for their bodily needs and so deliberately turn away from His shed blood through which God means His children to be physically whole.⁴⁶

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44. J. T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 427.
 45. H. Anson, Spiritual Healing, pp. 206-207.
 46. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 71.

If the principle is carried out, then it condemns Trophimus, whom Paul left sick at Miletum (II Tim. 4, 20); Epaphroditus (Phil. 2, 26, 27); Timothy (I Tim. 5, 23); and the apostle Paul (II Cor. 12, 7-10; Gal. 4, 13, 14). The explanations offered by the healers in these cases are very arbitrary. In the case of Epaphroditus, they say that he may have unwisely overtaxed his strength.⁴⁷ Trophimus' sickness is explained by saying that this was to protect him from the greater evil of martyrdom.⁴⁸ Another has suggested that he may have broken some natural law and was suffering the consequences. Or, that the healing was gradual, and possibly he was not yet well enough or strong enough to accompany the apostle on his journey the day he left town.⁴⁹ The wine which Paul suggested that Timothy use for his stomach trouble the healers say was merely a matter of diet, a natural law of health.⁵⁰ None of the faith healers will concede that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was a physical ailment. Practically all who are conspicuous among modern healers say that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" referred to his persecutions. Against this view we offer the objections that Paul would not have been humiliated by persecutions, but rather that he gloried in them. (Galatians, 6, 7). Paul distinctly states in Galatians 4, 13, that he

47. J. W. Byers, op. cit., p. 220.

48. Ibid., p. 214.

49. J. H. Bostrom, op. cit., p. 171.

50. H. H. Bosworth, Op. Cit., p. 154.

had "an infirmity of the flesh", and it seems that this is the same as the "thorn in the flesh."⁵¹ Mr. Bosworth claims that the "thorn" was a demon.⁵² He calls attention to the fact that Paul calls his "thorn in the flesh," "the angel of Satan." It is true that "the angel of Satan" is in apposition to "a thorn in the flesh," but, as Lange says, "not as though the converse were true and the 'thorn' were an 'angel'." It is merely a mode of expression by which the "thorn" is personified, as say Meyer and Olshausen. Some of the healers have followed the interpretation of some of the monks and ascetics of the Middle Ages who said the "thorn" was the uprising of Paul's carnal nature. This, however, can not be urged especially since Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians declares himself to be free from this. (I Cor. 7, 7 and 9, 27) Other explanations of this indefinite "thorn in the flesh" have been made, but the most natural explanation is to regard it as some bodily ailment. Just what kind of an ailment it was can not be determined. Some speculate that it was an eye disease taking the clue from the fact that he wrote in large letters (Gal. 6,11), and that the Galatians would have plucked out their own eyes for him (Gal. 4, 15).

51. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 111.
 52. H. H. Bosworth, op. cit., p. 119.

Others have thought of malaria, epilepsy, and other maladies. Regardless of exactly what it was, we would hardly censure Paul for not having sufficient faith to claim healing for his body for which he prayed the Lord so earnestly.

The Will of God and Sickness

The healers who regard sickness as an absolute evil, of course, claim that it is always the desire and will of God to remove sickness, and, therefore, include it as one of the provisions of Christ's atonement. They tell us that the greatest barrier to healing is uncertainty as to the will of God to heal all.⁵³ Their contention is that Christ gave specific promises of healing to all. "Each individual sufferer must be convinced by the Word of God that his or her healing is the will of God; for it is impossible to have real faith for healing as long as there is the slightest doubt as to its being God's will."⁵⁴ The same writer laments that modern theology emphasizes Christ's ability to heal, but neglects His compassionate willingness.⁵⁵ Men are bound in sickness because of a lack of faith in that will.⁵⁶ Mr. Bosworth⁵⁷ makes the absurd statement that when the le-⁵⁸

53. W. E. Biedorwolf, op. cit., pp. 112-117.

54. F. F. Bosworth, Christ the Healer, p. 33.

55. Ibid., p. 84.

56. Ibid., p. 66.

57. J. W. Byers, op. cit., p. 49 ff. A. J. Gordon, op. cit., pp. 232-236.

58. F. F. Bosworth, op. cit., p. 34.

per who prayed, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean," (Matt. 8, 2) and Jesus answered, "I will; be thou clean." Jesus was confirming the leper's faith in his will to heal universally. In his pamphlet "Do You Know God's Way of Healing?" we read the following question and answer posed by Mr. Bosworth:

Question: Do you not think that sickness is often God's will, and sent for our good, and, therefore, God may not wish us to be healed?

Answer: No, that cannot possibly be, for diseases of every kind are the Devil's work, and his work can never be God's will, since Christ came for the very purpose of "destroying the works of the Devil." (I John 3, 8). 59

It is claimed that God is never glorified through sickness, but that He is glorified in this that He heals sickness. The case of the man born blind is cited as an example.

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(John 9) One of the reasons for which many people suffer affliction is that they have been educated to believe in it as "a regular, essential, and blessed means of grace."⁶¹

⁶²
J. W. Byers asks, "Is God ever glorified by sickness? No. God is glorified in saving us from sickness."

Unconditional Prayers

All of the healers then emphasize that when praying for healing one should not add the qualifying phrase, "If it be Thy will." This is the logical result that follows

59. F. F. Bosworth, quoted in W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 13.

60. J. H. Bostrom, op. cit., p. 109.

61. R. L. Stanton, op. cit., p. 72.

62. J. W. Byers, op. cit., p. 224.

from the teaching that Christ by the atonement provides bodily healing and so always will heal all. "We see no reason why we should hesitate to pray for the healing of our bodies any more than for the renewal of our souls. Both are miracles; but both are covered and provided for by the same clear word of promise."⁶³ Some confess that there are requests which God refuses for our good, but add that "salvation and healing need no proviso."⁶⁴ They say that "if we pray earnestly we have assurance that we will be healed, as did Elijah when he prayed."⁶⁵ "We can not pray the prayer of faith for ourselves or for another if we add 'If it be Thy will.' No such person has ever yet received any help."⁶⁶ Those who have prayed for healing for years and have not received help are told that "this is because they do not claim a definite experience, but add 'if it be Thy will.'"⁶⁷ Earnestness in prayer is

63. A. J. Gordon, op. cit., p. 193.

64. J. W. Byers, op. cit., pl 79.

65. Ibid., p. 203. J. H. Bostrom, op. cit., p. 135, says: "So many in our day when asking God for healing add to their prayer the words, 'If it be Thy will.' This is no doubt due to the fact that they have never been enlightened as to this part of the glorious gospel of Christ. Healing for the body is so seldom and so fragmentarily preached from many pulpits, it is no wonder that the will of God in this regard is not known. Ministers who are not acquainted with God's will in the matter, add the same phrase when concluding their prayer for the sick. But wherever there is an 'if' there is uncertainty, and faith does not deal in uncertainties. Faith is being fully persuaded that God will do exactly what He has promised to do, and you are not fully persuaded when you put an 'if' in your prayer."

66. J. T. McCrossan, quoted in W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 55.

67. J. W. Byers, op. cit., p. 120.

demand and people are assured that where all conditions are fully met on the part of the seeker, there will be a direct and instantaneous answer, or the witness of the Spirit and that the prayer has been heard and will be answered, or the reason why will be given. ⁶⁸ Mrs. McPherson illustrates what she claims in these words:

"Then comes the pitiful cry of those who are sick and afflicted. No matter if the devil is saying that they are receiving the just dues for their error and folly, Jesus is interceding. 'I bore their sicknesses and carried their sorrows upon Calvary. Father, by My stripes they are healed. I bore it all for them so that you in your love and wisdom should bear with with them.' The cry is answered and the suffering one is healed." ⁶⁹

In meeting the objection that sometimes sickness is a blessing, the healers say that then we should not pray at all. Rather, that we should pray that the Lord would keep us ill, and that our loved ones and others will also be afflicted.

"We will grant that there are those who are honest in their belief that healing is not for all, that God desires some to remain sick for His glory. An amusing thing about many of them, however, is that when their prayers for healing---with an 'if'---are not answered, and they try to console themselves with the thought that perhaps it is not the Lord's will to heal them, they immediately go about trying to get well some other way. They will take a dose of this or that, and do first one thing and then another, trying their level best to get well, whether it is God's will for them to remain sick or not. How inconsistent! If they honestly believed that it is God's will for them to remain sick for His glory, why do they pray, why do they

68. Ibid., p. 197.

69. The Foursquare Crusader, April 10, 1929.

ask others to pray, and why do they use many other means in endeavoring to effect a recovery?" 70

When we remind the healers that Jesus prayed, "Not my will, but Thine, be done," they answer that the experience of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane was unique, that there has never been another like it before or since, and hence, that there is no comparison here. They say that Jesus was not praying for physical healing, nor was He asking God to fulfill any particular promise that He had made to Him. It is said that Jesus prayed here according to the flesh, which always desires to avoid suffering. Therefore, says Mr. Bostrom:

"When trials and testings come your way, never say that you are going through your Gethsemane. There was only one Gethsemane experience, and Jesus had it. No matter how severe your suffering may be, it can never be compared with that of the Saviour in the Garden. And when you ask God for the healing of your body, you are coming to Him on the basis of His invitation and His will, as revealed in His words and actions, and when conditions are met, you have perfect right to expect Him to answer prayer. Therefore, you never need add to your prayer for healing, 'If it be Thy will.'" 71

We have already shown that sickness for the Christian is a part of the Christian's cross which is to train him in patience and humility so that he "may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James 1, 4) If God always wills to heal all, what has become of the Christian's faith under the cross?
72 This wonderfully comforting and clearly

70. J. H. Bostrom, op. cit., p. 145.

71. Ibid., pp. 168-169.

72. Craebner, op. cit., p. 17.

taught doctrine of the Bible is absolutely eliminate by such a teaching. W. E. Biederwolf is very emphatic on this point. He says:

"Where is it said in the Word of God that 'It is always the will of God to heal all who have need of healing?' Where has it been revealed in God's Word that it is His will for His children always in each and every particular instance to remain in unimpaired health?.....I venture to say there is not a Christian in all the world today, mightier in prayer, more devoted, more Spirit-filled and enlightened than was the Apostle Paul---in fact, not one so much so. Why, then, did this mighty man of prayer have to leave Trophimus at Miletus sick? Why did his prayer not avail to raise him up? Why were the prayers of this man of mountain-moving faith not availing to heal Epaphroditus immediately, as all who came to Jesus while He was here on earth were healed? Why did this holy man, to whom the 'deep things of God' were revealed, have to advise Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake, to endure his "often infirmities?" Why did this man, who revealed to us so much of the knowledge of the ways of God, this bond-servant of Christ, who loved his Master unto death---why did he have to earnestly pray three times for the thorn in his flesh to be removed, only to be told by the Lord that it was better for him to endure it? Why, we ask again, unless it was that in these particular instances it was not the will of God that the sick ones should be healed? Dr. Torrey puts it well when he says, 'The antecedent probability in any given case is in favor of healing; for health is the general will of God for His people. But one may need a "thorn in his flesh," "a messenger of Satan," just as the Apostle did, to keep him humble. In such cases no amount of praying, nor of anointing either for the physical infirmity is allowed of God; it is His gift, with the gracious purpose of keeping the sick one humble in the midst of many revelations.'" 73

The simple truth of the matter is that God gives us no assurance in His Word that He wills all Christians to be exempt from sickness during their life on earth, or that it would be best for them to be thus exempt.

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73. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 2.

74. xIbid., p. 30.

The healers, in asserting that to pray "if it be Thy will" shows a lack of faith, and that such prayers will not be answered, again are following the logical conclusion of their doctrine that it is always the will of God to heal all since bodily healing has been made possible by the atonement of Christ. In showing that bodily healing has not been procured in the atonement, and that it is not always the will of God to heal, we have already destroyed their argument against conditional praying. But what about the charge that conditional praying destroys faith and therefore the value of the prayer? We maintain on this point the Scriptural teaching that inso far as believers are still flesh, they often do not will what God wills; but because they are new creatures in Christ, they should suppress the will of the flesh, and offer up their prayers according to the rule of Christ: "Not My will, but Thine be done." As Christians acknowledge the Word of God as the only source and rule of their faith, so they should also acknowledge solely the will of God as the norm of their petitions. (I John 5, 14) From this we derive the general rule, that whenever believers pray for temporal blessings, they pray conditionally, Matt. 26, 39; but if they pray for spiritual blessing, they pray unconditionally, since God has promised to grant them His grace, forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation under all circum-

stances, II Cor. 12, 9.⁷⁵ The healers, of course, consider bodily healing to be a spiritual blessing, having placed it on a level with the atonement for the soul. We have already shown this to be a false premise. So beginning from a false premise, their conclusion with regard to unconditional prayer for healing is also wrong. It is also not true to say that conditional praying shows a lack or weakness of faith. Rather it shows true Christian faith. The true Christian prays in accordance with the will of God as given in Scripture.⁷⁶ Such prayer God does answer. Christ's conditional prayer in the Garden was answered: "There appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." (Luke 22, 43) It is certainly weak and evasive to say that the Christian, when laboring under the cross, cannot pray as did the Lord in Gethsemane. Rather the Christian should do exactly that.

Faith and Obedience as Conditions for Healing

The healers are most evasive when they speak of the need for faith and obedience on the part of the person desiring help. Mr. Bostrom asserts that "faith and obedience are two inseparable prerequisites for claiming fulfillment of divine promises. If you desire to truly believe, you must obey, for faith implies obedience."⁷⁷ Mr. Bosworth says that getting things from God is like playing

75. J. T. Mueller, op. cit., pp. 452-453.

76. Cf. Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism, p. 148.

77. J. H. Bostrom, op. cit., p. 128.

a game of checkers, "first we move and then God." ⁷⁸ "Faith and obedience must always be met to obtain and retain

healing." ⁷⁹ When someone fails to receive healing, the healers immediately claim that it is because he did not have sufficient faith or that he is living in sin. Mr. Bostrom gives the following illustration:

"Someone in need of healing hears this and says to himself, 'I believe I'll ask that preacher to pray for me.' So he makes his way to the platform; but when prayer is offered for his recovery, he does not feel better, and returns to his seat rather dejectedly; no praise in his heart to God; no shout of victory. Perhaps he says to himself, 'Well, I guess it's not the Lord's will to heal me.' How some people do like to fall back on that unsupported theory (even though they are ready to ask the next preacher that comes along to pray for them), rather than acknowledge their unbelief! That man's idea was to get well first and then believe God; and the same notion seems to possess large numbers of people in need of healing. But Jesus said, 'When ye pray, believe.' Not after you pray or after you get well, but when you pray." ⁸⁰

These who complain that they can not have faith are told, "I fear you are not a worshipper of God and doing His will, or faith would naturally follow.....Faith is believing God, and if we are walking in perfect obedience we will believe God." ⁸¹ Healers tell those who seek relief to believe that God has healed them even before they experience help. This illustration is offered: "When you sit down at a dinner table, you are apt to say, 'Thank you for the potatoes,' before you receive them, before you eat them,

78. F. F. Bosworth, op. cit., p. 98.
 79. J. W. Byers, op. cit., p. 206.
 80. J. H. Bostrom, op. cit., p. 157.
 81. J. W. Byers, op. cit., p. 253.

before you enjoy them. You thank in advance, in faith, believing that as soon as your hostess knows your desire, she will grant it. Why not have at least as much faith in your heavenly Father, and say as Jesus did, 'Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me,' before your healing is complete?"⁸² Mr. Byers goes a step farther in saying that at times imperfect faith brings imperfect healing. He claims that the case of the blind man whom Jesus healed in Mark 8, 22 is proof of this.⁸³ In fact, the healers all say that Jesus' miracles of healing were all conditioned on the faith of the recipients.⁸⁴ The words of Jesus, "Go and sin no more," are used over and over again as proving the necessity of absolute obedience for healing.⁸⁵ The sick are told that they must reach a certain point of earnestness to do their part for healing, and that what is necessary is the willingness to obey, and then that God will supply the powers.⁸⁶ When a person's disease returns it is claimed that he lost his faith and therefore the disease returned.⁸⁷

An exception is made to the rule that one must have faith for healing in the case of irresponsible persons. Therefore, in the case of those who are insane and infants this exception is used. In such cases intercessory prayers

82. J. H. Bostrom, op. cit., p. 155.

83. J. W. Byers, op. cit., p. 125.

84. Ibid., pp. 51-60.

85. Ibid., pp. 144, 211, 235.

86. Ibid., pp. 121-129.

87. Ibid., p. 207.

are necessary and effectual. The cases of demon possession as related in Luke 8, 2; 6, 18; and 9, 36 are said to be subject to intercessory prayer.⁸⁸ When asked how far intercessory faith will go, the healers reply, that it adds to the faith of the person who has obedience and faith in so far as he is responsible. When one is wholly irresponsible the intercessory does all.⁸⁹ Then, there are also those who have the special gift of healing (to be distinguished from universal healing through the faith of the individual) who can intercede for those who do not have sufficient faith of their own, though they may be responsible, and so make up for the lack.⁹⁰ But even this is qualified, for they say that intercessory faith may bring one to the threshold of healing, but then one must believe for himself.⁹¹

In this teaching of the healers that faith and obedience are necessary to receive and to retain healing the Scriptural doctrine of justification and sanctification are hopelessly confused. First, they place bodily healing on a level with the forgiveness of sins, both being provided for in the atonement and being obtained in the same way. Then they speak of faith as a work on man's part by which he obtains healing, and obedience as necessary to re-

88. Ibid., pp. 83-85.
 89. Ibid., p. 136.
 90. Ibid., pp. 190-191.
 91. Ibid., p. 124.

tain this healing. Now, think what that means if bodily healing is on a level with forgiveness of sins. In other words, saving faith is made the same as faith for healing. Furthermore, to say that saving faith is a work on the part of man ⁹² is in direct contradiction to the Scriptural doctrine of sola gratia. In opposition to this we quote Dr. J. T. Mueller, who in his Christian Dogmatics (p. 326) says, as follows: "But though faith is itself a most precious work and the unfailing source of constant good works, it does not save as a good work or as the source of good works, but solely as the means (medium ληπιτικόν), by which the believer apprehends the grace of God and the merits of Christ which are offered to Him in the Gospel. Again, although faith is an act of both the intellect and the will of man,---for not the Holy Ghost, but the believer himself trusts in the mercy of God,---yet it does not justify inasmuch as it is an act or work of man."

What the faith spoken of by the healers amounts to, is simply to believe that God is able to perform a miraculous cure through this particular healer. A mental attitude of trust in the healer's power, confidence in his gift to heal disease by prayer, is the faith demanded of the patient. ⁹³ Certainly, this has nothing to do with saving faith. If the atonement contains a provision for healing

92. Cf. note # 78, p. 30, "Getting things from, etc."
 93. Theo. Graebner, op. cit., p. 15.

the sick body, parallel with the provision for the sinful soul, the parallel ought to be born out in the working of the two provisions. The provision for the body ought to assert itself invariably in response to the prayer of faith. The provision for the soul does thus assert itself. Without exception, the man who repents, prays, and believes, is forgiven and reconciled to God. But every man who prays and believes, and for whom others pray and believe, is not cured of sickness.⁹⁴

This teaching that "what is true with regard to sal-⁹⁵vation is true in connection with healing" provides the healers with a loop-hole by which they can explain their failures to heal. But it is surely presumption of the most unwarranted sort to say that when a man fails to receive healing it is because he has not met the conditions, that he is living out of communion with God in some way. This is not only anti-Scriptural, but it is a vicious dogmatic assertion that has caused irreparable damage to the souls of weak Christians.⁹⁶ The result of such a teaching is that those thousands who come with utter faith to these healers and depart disappointed must ever after believe that they have not Christian faith, that Christ did not die for them, since He did not remove their curse of sickness. Therefore, they have no Savior, since the healer

94. M. R. Vincent, op. cit., p. 326.

95. J. H. Bostrom, op. cit., p. 136.

96. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 32.

proclaimed that the lack of faith alone can prevent a
 cure. That means they are lost, damned!⁹⁷

The obedience which the healers demand for healing is a cheap evasive thing. In the first place, when the healers like J. W. Byers and Mrs. McPherson say to the father of a little boy, "Go and sin no more, and your son will be healed," they require an impossible condition. As Dr. Theo. Grabner in his article, Faith-Cure (p. 34) says, one might just as well say, "Swim across the Atlantic with a crowbar around your neck, and your little cripple will be cured!" Then, too, if, as the healers say, forgiveness of sins and bodily healing are obtained in the same way and are on the same level, they are saying that one perseveres in his salvation (this being on the same level as bodily healing) by good works, by obedience to the law, in opposition to this we quote the Formula of Concord which says on this point: "Since, then, it is manifest from God's Word that faith is the proper and only means by which righteousness and salvation are not only received, but also preserved by God, the decree of the Council of Trent, and whatever elsewhere is set forth in the same sense, is justly to be rejected, namely, that our good works preserve salvation, or that the righteousness of faith which has been received, or even faith itself, is either entirely or in part kept and preserved by our works."⁹⁸ The faith healers

97. Theo. Grabner, op. cit., p. 15.

98. Formula of Concord, IV, 35.

have hopelessly mixed the doctrine of justification and sanctification. It is from this that their errors in other respects stem. When Jesus tells the man healed to "Go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee," He is warning him against the particular sin that had wrecked his life in the past.⁹⁹ To conclude from this that Jesus makes abstinence from sin in general a condition for receiving, or as in this case, a condition for retaining healing is an unwarranted deduction.

The allowance that the healers make for the use of intercessory prayer in the case of those who are not responsible, confuses the matter even more. The Scriptures certainly do speak of the value of prayer for our fellow-men whenever it enjoins us to pray for others. (I Tim. 2, 1; Matt. 5, 44; Gen. 18, 23-32; Matt. 15, 22-28; Luke 25, 34; Acts 7, 60). This, however, is not what the healers have in mind. They say that the intercessory prayer of faith adds to the faith of the person who is irresponsible or not entirely responsible. In other words, they are speaking of the value of a vicarious faith. This Scripture condemns whenever it speaks of the necessity of having faith. Faith for healing (if it is considered to be on the same level with faith for forgiveness) must be entirely a personal matter. One person cannot believe for another. (Hab. 2, 4; Luke 7, 50; Matt. 25, 8-12).

99. Cf. Lenski, Lange, Starke.

**Was the Healing Done by Christ and the Apostles Always
on the Basis of the Faith of the Recipient?**

The healers, one and all, claim that the miracles of healing performed by Christ and the apostles were done on the basis of the faith of the recipient.¹⁰⁰ The first question asked on the white card given to those who come to the meetings of healers seeking a cure is, "Are you saved or born again?"¹⁰¹ They would have us understand that faith is absolutely necessary for the type of healing they offer, just as it was to the healing miracles of Jesus and the apostles. Mr. Byers says: "Out of nineteen of the most prominent individual cases of healing mentioned in the ministry of Jesus and the apostles, there are twelve of these where their faith is spoken of. The rest are sufficiently plain to show us that faith brought the healing in every case. In his own town where he had been brought up, Jesus could heal but few, because of their unbelief."¹⁰² "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief," (Matt. 13, 58) is a stock passage among the healers to show that Christ could heal only when the person had faith. The healers claim that they perform cures today in the same manner as Christ and the apostles.

Mr. Mensing makes a statement with regard to the st-

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100. J. W. Byers, op. cit., p. 59.
 101. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 48.
 102. J. W. Byers, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

titude of the healers toward the healing of Christ that deserves comment. He says:

"When modern faith healers deal with the miracles of Christ, they usually take the attitude that He performed His miracles of healing not by a suspension or a contravention of natural laws, but rather in accordance with natural laws, the laws of psychology, which He understood better than we do at the present time, and, above all, by using the subjective faith of the person to be healed. According to them, therefore, the healing miracles of the Lord were not so much miracles, as we think of a miracle, but rather faith-cures, brought about by a psychological appeal to the mind and faith of the patient." 103

As far as we are able to discover, this statement is not true. The healers are very emphatic in calling the healings of Christ miracles in their real sense, that is, a suspension or contravention of natural laws. At least, this is the position of such healers as Mr. Byers, Simpson, Dowie, McPherson, Bosworth and others. The healing comes as an answer to their prayer of faith, it is claimed, though, as we shall show later, the cures they do effect are generally brought about by the use of subjective faith and a psychological appeal to the mind and faith of the patient.

When the healers say that they perform their miracles in the same way that Christ and the apostles did, and that Christ and the apostles always healed only those who had faith, they are forced to treat the record of Jesus' miracles, and those of the apostles, with violence in order

103. H. D. Mensing, op. cit., p. 94.

to make it conform to their teaching. However, this is a necessary part of their system of doctrine, for with this they explain their frequent failures, ascribing them to a lack of faith on the part of those who come to them for aid. Just how much truth is there to the claims of the healers that Christ and the apostles always healed only those who had faith?

In the first place, it can easily be shown that Jesus healed at times without regard to the faith of the afflicted. W. E. Biederwolf lists the following cases in which no mention was made of any faith of any kind:

"The healing of Peter's wife's mother of a fever, Matt. 8, 1, Luke 4, 39.
 The healing of the man full of leprosy, Matt. 1, 1; Luke 5, 12.
 The healing of the dumb man possessed of a demon, Matt. 12, 10; Mark. 3, 5; Luke 6, 10.
 The healing of the man blind and dumb, Matt. 12, 22; Luke 11, 14.
 The healing of the two blind men by the wayside, Matt. 20, 30.
 The healing of the deaf man with an impediment in his speech, Mark. 7, 35.
 The healing of the blind man of Bethsaida, Mark 8, 22.
 The healing of the woman bowed with eighteen years infirmity, Luke 13, 11.
 The healing of the man with the dropsy, Luke 14, 2.
 The healing of the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda, John 5, 8.
 The healing of the man blind from birth, John 9, 1.
 The healing of large groups of people, Mark 6, 56; Luke 6, 19; Mark 3, 10; Matt. 15, 30; Luke 4, 40." 104

Carrying this argument against the healers farther, Dr. Th. Graebner in his article, Faith-Cure, (pp. 14-15) points

104. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

out that the man referred to in John 5, 1 ff. did not even know who Christ was (v. 13), yet he was healed. The long, detailed account of the healing of the blind man in John 9 renders it very clear that he had no saving faith in Christ when he was healed; he first calls Jesus merely "a man," and only later on he becomes convinced that Jesus is a "prophet" and Lord. When the people of Galilee did not accept the Gospel, the record does not say that on account of their unbelief Jesus was unable to heal their sick, but that He "did not many works there;" He did perform a few, despite their unbelief. (Matt. 13, 58)

The healings of the faith healers and those of Christ differ also in this that while Christ's miracles were always instantaneous (See Luke 22, 51; Matt. 9, 39; 11, 5; 9, 33; 12, 22; 8, 1-4, 14; 14, 36; 12, 13; John 5, 8, 9; Mark 5, 1; Matt. 8, 13), the present day healings are nearly always gradual. Healers like Mr. Bosworth claim that the healing of Jesus was not always instantaneous and refer us, first of all, to Luke 17, 14: "And it came to pass that as they went they were cleansed," as proof. But it certainly is an arbitrary thing to say that this shows that the lepers were healed gradually. In fact, the context indicates immediate healing, if anything, when in the following verse we are told: "One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God." It is likewise gratuitous to claim that

the blind man whose healing is recorded in Mark 8, 23-
 105
 25 is a case of gradual healing.

The practice of the healers also differs from that of Christ in the matter of making an exhibition. In the healing of Jesus the wide publication of the miracle was, as a rule, discouraged and in most cases actually forbidden. Nowhere did He use His power to heal in order to enhance His personal fame and to draw the multitudes around Him, but on the other hand, He made it His rule to discourage their publicity. See: Matt. 8, 4; 9, 30; 12, 16; Mark 1, 44; 7, 36; 8, 26; Luke 8, 56; Matt. 9, 6. The healers, on the other hand, conduct huge meetings and advertise them widely. The afflicted are brought before the assembly for all to see and hear. The healings that they then claim to have performed are publicized as widely as possible. This certainly does not conform to the practice
 106
 of Christ.

The theory of the faith healers also breaks down at certain forms of human infirmity. The postulate of the healers logically admits no exceptions. The atonement has provided for bodily healing on the same scale with soul-cure. There is no valid reason, therefore, why an amputated limb should not be restored; why an extracted tooth should not be replaced; why a new eyeball should not appear

105. Ibid., pp. 36. 37.

106. Ibid., pp. 53. 55. 56.

in the socket formed by the surgeon's knife; why a hare-lip should not be rectified, and a sliced-off ear be made good. Christ did this for Malchus' ear in the Garden of

107

Gethsemane. It should also be noted that Malchus was certainly not healed because of his faith in Christ as his Savior.

108

The records of faith-cures are void of such cases. Its advocates are compelled to admit a practical limit to its operation. Furthermore, why should not the prayer of the faith healer raise the dead? Did not Christ, by His atonement "abolish death, and bring life and immortality to light?" (II Tim. 1, 10) Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave (Luke 7, 12); He raised Jairus' daughter from death (Luke 8, 49-56).

The healings of Christ were always complete. Those of the healers today are, as a rule, only partial. Mr. Biederwolf tells of a woman who was herself at one time engaged in this perverted form of Christ's work, and who in more than three hundred and fifty meetings occupied a place on the platform where she could observe all that was going on. She gives the following report:

"I have seen countless cases of deaf and dumb and blind men, women, and children anointed. I have never seen one who had hearing, speech, or sight restored. Through the sign-language or written note the dumb were told to say "Praise the Lord." After they got an idea of what was expected they would make the effort, but all that would follow would be a pitiful 'Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!' This was not clear to the audience, but the declaration would be made that they had

107. M. R. Vincent, op. cit., pp. 325-327.

108. Theo. Gracner, op. cit., p. 15.

said, "Praise the Lord," of course, imperfectly, but "They had spoken." 109

These same difference apply in contrasting the healings of the disciples and apostles to those of the present day healers. When the disciples failed to work miracles, our Lord did not blame the unbelief of the people, but the lack of faith in the disciples. (Matt. 17, 14-21) Publius on Malta "courteously lodged" Paul, and his father was healed by the apostle. Not only this, but soon others of the island on which Paul had been cast came with their sick, and he cured them. Not a word is said about faith, nor is there even any suggestion that a company of believers had been formed during these first days of the apostle's stay. ¹¹⁰ Peter and John healed the lame man at the temple who was not seeking healing in faith, but was simply begging for alms. (Acts 3, 1-7) Indeed, miracles of healing, just as other miracles of the apostles, were performed as a sign, "not to them that believe, but to them that believe not." (I Cor. 15, 22) So we conclude that while Christ and the apostles did relieve those of sickness who had faith, they were by no means able to exercise this power only on those who had faith. God was not limited in His power to confirm the Word by the attitude of those on whom He would work His wonders. If the healers of our day are so limited, and this they freely admit and

109. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., pp. 39. 42.

110. Theo. Graebner, op. cit., p. 15.

urge it strenuously to explain their failings, their power is not of God.¹¹¹

The Purpose of Christ's Healing Ministry and its Continuance

Moreover, the healers tell us that the miracles performed by Christ were not for the purpose of witnessing His divinity, but rather that they were simply the outgrowth of His compassion for the suffering, and for the fulfilling of prophecy. "It is just here that our opponents make their most signal logical blunder. They assume that the primary purpose of primitive healings was the authentication of the preacher's commission, and now that the necessity for that is past, that healings must have ceased."¹¹² Mr. Byers says it could not have been for authentication for all who Jesus healed were believers, and that if it had been for authentication the same necessity would be needed now.¹¹³

The healers claim that the miracles performed by Christ and the apostles are performed by the church today and in all ages. Mr. Gordon says that healing is to be regarded as a token of the final kingdom just as was healing done by the disciples---that the Gospel and healing always go together.¹¹⁴ Mr. Stanton says that healing the

111. Theo. Grabner, op. cit., p. 15.

112. R. L. Stanton, op. cit., p. 69.

113. J. W. Byers, op. cit., pp. 102-105.

114. A. J. Gordon, op. cit., p. 49.

sick is expressly mentioned in the universal and perpetual commission given to the Church to "preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16, 17, 18).¹¹⁵ This matter will be discussed in full when we consider this commission in detail.

The question to be dealt with here is whether the Lord still performs signs and wonders as He did while He was on earth and during the time of the apostles. Men-
sing summarizes our answer briefly and accurately when he writes in his article, Faith Healing and Mental Therapy, (p. 96):

"Surely, the Lord can perform any miracle when and if He so desires, and when He knows that His Word must be confirmed by signs and wonders, He will surely make His promise true and perform them. If, however, anyone comes and claims that the Lord through him performs such signs and wonders, then let him bring the proof and perform not a sign, but "signs and wonders," and if he does not preach the Gospel, as the Lord commanded him, and does not continue in the words of Christ, then he is not a true disciple of Christ, but a fraud. If, however, a false teacher, who perverts and corrupts the Word of God, nevertheless claims the ability to perform miracles, then I shall not gainsay him, but merely refer Him to the prophecy of Christ: "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders." (Matt. 24, 24)

We also should see that although the healings performed by Christ and the apostles were at times evoked by their compassion for the sufferer, yet their purpose was to confirm the Word of God. Mark 16, 20; Hebr. 2,

115. R. L. Stanton, op. cit., p. 69.

3. 4; Luke 7, 19-23 plainly teach that miracles of healing were to confirm the Word of God. Two facts must be kept in mind in discussing this subject. The first fact is that God once did give the gift of healing, along with others, to the church. They were found in the church at Corinth and on the day of Pentecost in the church at Jerusalem; and to His disciples the Lord says: "These signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Mark 16, 17, 18. The other fact is that God nowhere has promised that every Christian would have all or any of these gifts; nor did He anywhere in His Word promise that He would continue these gifts to the end of days; nor did He anywhere say that He would altogether discontinue to give these gifts. The Holy Spirit gives these special gifts "as He will." This is a conditional promise, not an absolute one. Therefore, people who insist that Christians today must have these gifts as the Christians had them in the days of the apostles, are trying to force the Holy Spirit to bestow these gifts upon them rather than to leave it to Him to do "as He will."¹¹⁶ The Holy Spirit can, and possibly does, give us these gifts today. However, the reason why such gifts are not given

116. J. H. C. Fritz, The Preacher's Manual, Concordia Pulpit, 1942, Vol. XIII, p. 188.

as in the days of the apostles, is that today they are no longer needed in the divine economy. In the early Church these gifts were for the purpose of establishing the Christian religion. Even Jesus in His day refused to perform miracles when they did not serve this purpose. We read: "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from Thee. But He answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas," Matt. 12, 38-39. When the rich man in hell asked that a miracle be performed by the sending of Lazarus from heaven to the rich man's five brothers, he received this answer: "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead," Luke 16, 31. So also today. We have the sure Word of God, and for many centuries an abundance of evidence has been piling up in favor of the Christian religion. People who will not accept this evidence will not be converted by signs and miracles. ¹¹⁷ So we hold that miracles of any kind, if they can be proved to take place in the Church today, are properly, and by virtue of a divine arrangement, exceptional; that each case must stand upon its own merits and be judged

117. J. H. C. Fritz, *op. cit.*, of Theo. Graebner, *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 8. for the same view. Here it is said that it may well be that in foreign countries in which the church is performing her task of bringing the revelation of God's grace to the heathen, outward credentials such as miracles of healing may be still needed.

in the light of its own circumstances; and that no attempt to combine these several cases into a law for Church life and work and prayer, is legitimate. ¹¹⁸ We also hold that the gift of healing has no connection with the atonement in the sense that provision for bodily healing was there provided. ¹¹⁹

Healers Who Can Immediately Be Branded as False

In some cases we can immediately say that the healings are frauds or works of Satan. This can be done when someone asserts that his miracles are proof of a divine mission. ¹²⁰ By making such a claim, he denies what the Bible plainly teaches, that signs and wonders constitute no such proof since they will be performed also by the false prophets of the latter days. (II Thess. 2, 10; Rev. 16, 13, 14).

It is also noted that prominent among the professional healers are several women, of which Mrs. Aimee McPherson is probably the most well known. The very fact that these women claim the right to preach is proof that God is not in the work. God will not "confirm His Word" through those who are distinctly forbidden to speak in the assembly of believers. (I Cor. 14, 34; I Tim. 2, 11, 12). Regardless of

118. M. R. Vincent, op. cit., p. 313.

119. The healers distinguish between the gift of healing and faith healing in general. They say that while the gift of healing is only for certain individuals, faith healing is for everyone. They nevertheless hold that the gift

the genuineness of cures wrought by women evangelists it cannot be asserted that God is there confirming His revelation to the world. He will not forbid women to preach and then employ women preachers to perform miracles in His name.

Healers and Medical Science

It is only logical consistency on the part of the direct faith healers to reject the use of all medicines and many of them do just that. Mr. Simpson says that those who use medicine show that they do not fully trust Christ.

Mr. Byers asks: "Having taken the Lord as your Healer, should you abandon all medicines? Yes. The Lord does not need medicines to help Him do His work. It would dishonor Him to try to help Him with medicine. If you were to employ a physician who would prescribe a certain medicine, you would express a doubt of His knowledge and skill by adding some other medicine to the prescription, or employing another physician at the same time." This is more consistency on their part, for if they are right, God must of necessity disapprove absolutely and altogether of the use of medicine or means of any other kind than that furnished by the redeeming work of Christ on the Cross. If

of healing finds its warrant in the provisions made for it in the atonement.

120. Concordia Cyclopedia, "Faith-Healing," p. 248.

121. Theo. Graebner, op. cit., p. 13.

122. A. B. Simpson, op. cit., p. 47.

123. J. W. Byers, op. cit., p. 221.

this teaching about physical healing being in the Atonement is Scriptural, then by using medicine we would be trying to assist Christ in the work He did for us once for all on Calvary? It would be the same as trying to help Christ in the salvation of your soul, if Christ died for our diseases in the same sense that He died for sin. Then God could have no more mercy upon those who seek healing medicine than He has for the Pharisee who seeks salvation through his own good works. ^{124.} The use of medicine and doctors is called idolatry. ¹²⁵ Fortunately many of the faith healers are inconsistent on this point and allow the use of medicine and doctors in spite of their position. For example, Mr. Byers would say that medicine may be used to ease pain and suffering for non-Christians ¹²⁶ or those who cannot accept divine healing. It is interesting to note that recently the Christian Science Church together with the teachers of direct faith healing submitted an amendment to the educational laws of Missouri to exempt children of Christian Scientists and members of other churches teaching healing by prayer from instruction in physiology in the public schools. The amendment was ¹²⁷ rejected.

In forbidding their people to make use of medical sci-

124. W. E. Biederwolf, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-75.

125. J. W. Byers, *op. cit.*, pp. 55, 148.

126. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

127. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, (Feb. 25, 1947).

ence the healers have caused terrible and unnecessary suffering on the part of many, and in many cases death may have been avoided by the use of medicine and doctors. This, then, is a serious matter. Surely God can heal without medicine, but this is an extraordinary mode. Usually God works through means.¹²⁸ The core of the matter is that we must not think that God is most present where human endeavor is most absent.¹²⁹ Mr. Sadler tells of speaking to a man who believed in the Pentecostal type of divine healing. He said: "My friend, I want you to remember one thing in the program of initiating this divine healing movement--- as a surgeon I have learned to depend not on what God can do, but on what God does do."¹³⁰

There is a fortunate inconsistency on the part of many healers for many of them do not repudiate the services of dentists and surgeons. They do not rely on the

128. J. W. Conley, Divine Healing and Doctors, p. 8.

129. H. Anson, op. cit., p. 9.

130. Sadler, The Truth About Mind Cure, p. 51. Mr. Anson makes this significant statement: "It is very common nowadays to find many earnest Christians who feel that this resort to medical skill shows a want of faith in Christ. I do not myself believe that this is true. The church in the Middle Ages attempted to stem plagues and pestilences by purely religious treatment. The attempt was a great failure. We must believe that the failure points to a want of understanding of God's laws. We must realize that medical science.....has, as a matter of fact, done what no purely religious system of healing has ever accomplished. It has absolutely banished many of the greatest scourges which have ever afflicted mankind, so that all civilized nations now are practically freed from leprosy, cholera, typhus, and bubonic plague. If we find that medical science and sanitation have accomplished this, and we remember that no amount of purely religious healing has ever been able to do this, it is surely a rash thing to talk as though it were blasphemy for religious people to acknowledge the value of

prayer to extract an abscessed tooth nor to set a broken bone or remove a bullet embedded in the flesh. On the other hand, a rather sweeping range of diseases of the body and disorders of the minds is subjected to the prayer of faith transfused with intense emotionalism. The conclusion is warranted that most of the ailments cured by them are functional or interpersonal. Many adherents of the enthusiastic sects believe in a combination of scientific medicine and divine healing. They unite prayer and medical attention.

131

But now what does the Bible say about doctors and the use of medicine? It is true that the Bible has not a great deal to say on this subject. This, however, is to be expected since Scripture is not a text book on medicine. Furthermore, the medicine that was practiced during the period in which the Bible was written was not only quite uncommon but also very crude. At the same time the Bible does not forbid the use of doctors and medicine, and even alludes to its place in the world.

132

In II Chronicles 16, 11, 12 we are told that "Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians." The healers cite this passage as proving that the

medical science."

131. K. R. Stolz, The Church and Psychotherapy, p. 260.

132. A. C. Gaebeloin, The Healing Question, pp. 1-10.

Bible condemns going to physicians. Even the casual observer can, however, discern that it is not the physician that is condemned here, but the ungodliness of Ass. Certainly God must bless the work of the doctor or medicine before it will be of any avail. Dr. Sadler has an interesting comment to make in this connection.¹³³ He was asked whether he believed in divine healing. He answered, "Of course I do. I don't believe in any other kind.....I simply mean by that statement that when a sick man gets well, it is because God---God working through nature---heals him. Doctors and nurses do not heal; we only treat, we do not cure disease---except in the sense that we employ germicides to kill microbes which may be the possible cause of some diseases." The "balm" spoken of in Genesis 43, 11 and Ezekiel 27, 17 is known to have been used for medicinal purposes.¹³⁴ That medicine serves a good purpose is alluded to in the words, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." (Prov. 17, 22) In Jeremiah 30, 13 "healing medicines" are expressly mentioned. The medicinal value of "oil" is spoken of in Isaiah 1, 6. Isaiah recommends a treatment for Hezekiah when he says, "Take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover." (Is. 38, 21). In Jeremiah 9, 22 we read: "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?"

133. Sadler, op. cit., p. 50.

134. J. W. Conley, op. cit., p. 13.

It is admitted that this passage is used only in a symbolical way to bring out Israel's much needed spiritual remedy. Nevertheless, it still shows that the Bible recognized the true and natural effect of medicine, and uses this knowledge to illustrate and teach spiritual truth. In Ezekiel 47, 12 the statement is made that "the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine."

In the New Testament there are also many allusions to the good of medicines and doctors. From the Lord we learn that a current proverb was "Physician, heal thyself." (Luke 4, 23). Jesus also said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." (Matt. 9, 12; Luke 5, 31). The references are again used in a figurative sense, but they show that Jesus recognized the proper function of medicine. In Luke 10 we read of the Good Samaritan using oil and wine in a medicinal way. Paul recommends that Timothy use a little wine for his stomach trouble. (I Tim. 5, 23). The healers say this was merely a dietary measure. But that is a gratuitous explanation. Finally, there was Paul's faithful companion "Luke, the beloved physician." (Col. 4, 14). The usual explanation of the healers is that Luke no longer practiced medicine after his calling to do the work of the Lord.¹³⁵ This certainly seems improbable as Dr. Conley points out. If Paul's letter

135. J. W. Byers, op. cit., p. 223.

to the Colossians was written in 54 A. D. ¹³⁶ Luke had been a Christian for some time for in his Gospel he says that the things he writes were "delivered unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word." (Luke 1, 2). Now it is hardly probable that Paul would still be calling Luke the "beloved physician" if a physician were condemned by Scripture. That would be similar to Luke calling Paul "the beloved persecutor." ¹³⁷ From all the foregoing it becomes quite apparent that the Bible does not forbid the use of medicine and the practice of doctors, but indicates very definitely that they have a proper place in our earthly economy.

136. Cf. Dr. Wm. Arndt's notes on New Testament Introduction.

137. J. W. Conley, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

AN EXEGETICAL TREATMENT OF THE CHIEF PASSAGES
USED BY THE DIRECT FAITH HEALERS
TO SUPPORT THEIR DOCTRINE

Isaiah 53, 4 and Matthew 8, 17

"Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." (Is. 53. 4).

"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." (Matt. 8. 17).

These two passages are the sedes doctrina of all the direct faith healers.¹ It is on the basis of these two passages that they claim warrant for their healing practice. "This prophetic promise distinctly specifies that it is our sickness and pain that Jesus bore. There are no exceptions here. This shows that the blessing of healing is just as general as that of salvation."² In these passages the faith healers find these points: This atonement was not only made for sin, but also for disease, the fruit of sin. In atoning, for our diseases of body, just as for our sins of soul, Christ took them upon Himself that He might bear them away, and thus relieve His people from the need of bearing them.³ Much emphasis is placed upon the fact that griefs should be translated sicknesses, as in Matt. 8, 17.⁴ The problem which we must face in connection

1. Cf. pp. 5-8, "Healing and its Relation to the Atonement."

2. J. H. Bostrom, op. cit., p. 139.

3. R. L. Stanton, op. cit., p. 67.

4. J. W. Byers, op. cit., pp. 34-35.

with these verses is this: In Christ's suffering and death, did He vicariously bare also bodily infirmities, which were originally a penalty for sin, and so provide an immediate deliverance from these infirmities for those who accept the merits of the atonement? Let us study the verses in detail.

The Isaiah passage is attended with a real difficulty from the manner in which it is quoted by Matthew. The general sense as it stands in the Hebrew, is not difficult. It is immediately connected with the previous verse. The meaning is, that those who despised and rejected the Messiah, had greatly erred in contemning Him on account of His suffering and humiliation. "We turned away from Him in horror and contempt. We supposed that He was suffering on account of some great sin of His own. But in this we erred. It was not for His sins but for ours. It was not that He was smitten of God for His own sins---as if He had been among the worst of mortals---but it was because He had taken our sins and was suffering for them. The very thing, therefore, that gives offence to us, and which made us turn away from Him, constituted the most important part of His work, and was really the occasion of highest gratitude."⁵

5. A. Barnes, The Prophet Isaiah, II, p. 270.

The word rendered "surely," יִשָּׁר, is sometimes a particle strongly affirming, meaning truly, of a certain truth. (Gen. 28, 16; Ex. 2, 14; Jer. 8, 8) Sometimes it is an adversative particle meaning but yet. (Ps. 31, 23; Is. 49, 24) It is probably used in that sense here, meaning, that though He was despised by them, yet He was worthy of their esteem, for He had borne their griefs.⁶

"He hath borne:" נָשָׂא. Vulg. Tulit, LXX ἔθηκε. He bears. In these versions, the sense is that of sustaining, bearing, upholding, carrying, as when one removes a burden from the shoulders of another and places it on his own. The word נָשָׂא means properly to take up, to lift, to raise. (Gen. 7, 17; 29, 1; Deut. 32, 40; Job 10, 15; II Kings 24, 27). It then means to bear, to carry, as an infant in the arms, Is. 46, 3; Ez. 17, 8; Ps. 70, 3. Hence, to endure, suffer, permit, Job 21, 3. Hence to bear the sin of any one, to take upon one's self the suffering which is due to sin. (Cf. Ez. 18, 19, 20; Lev. 5, 1, 17; 17, 16; 24, 15; Num. 5, 31; 9, 13; 14, 34; 30, 16). Hence to bear chastisement, or punishment, Job 34, 31. It is also used in the sense of taking away the sin of anyone, expiating, or procuring pardon, Lev. 10, 17; Ps. 33, 5; 85, 3; Job 7, 21; Gen. 1, 17.⁷ Matthew excellently renders נָשָׂא by ἔλαβε, ἔλαβε, carried, by ἐβάρυνσε. For while ἔλαβε signifies the toilsome bearing of a bur-

6. A. Barnes, op. cit., p. 270.

7. A. Barnes, op. cit., p. 270.

den taken on oneself, SN WJ combines the ideas of
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tollere and ferre.

In all cases there is the idea of lifting, sustain-
ing, taking up, and conveying away, as by carrying a bur-
den. It is not simply removing, but it is removing some-
how by lifting, or carrying; that is, either by an act of
power, or by so taking them on one's self as to sustain
and carry them. If applied to sin, it means that a man
must bear the burden of the punishment of his own sin, or
that the suffering which is due to sin is taken up and
borne by another. If applied to diseases, as in Matt. 8,
17, it must mean that He, as it were, lifted them up and
bore them away. It cannot mean that the Savior literally
took those sicknesses on Himself, and became sick in the
place of the sick, that is, became a leper in place of the
leper, or was Himself possessed with an evil spirit in the
place of those possessed,⁹ but it must mean that He took
them away by His power, and, as it were, lifted them up
and removed them. So when it is said (v. 12) that He
"bare the sins of many," it cannot mean literally that He
took those sins on Himself in any such sense as that He
became a sinner, but only that He so took them upon Him-
self as to remove from the sinner the exposure to punish-
ment, and to bear Himself whatever was necessary as a pro-

8. F. Delitzsch, Commentary on Isaiah, II. p. 202.
9. There are healers who go to this extreme.

10

per expression of the evil of sin.

The thought is not merely that He took hold of those ailments and rid the sufferers of them. Is. 53, 4-7, describes the Messiah as our substitute. Matthew sees Jesus in His entire ministry as our substitute, as the burden-bearer who loaded on Himself all our sins and all their penalties. By means of all His preaching and teaching He was freeing men from the grip of their sins, and by means of His constant healings He was freeing them also from the disease and the pains brought on them through sin. Like the prophet, Matthew does not separate the two. Only He who would die for our sin on the cross and work an eternal redemption from sin could work a ministry of healing from disease. Both the pardoning and the healings rested on His atoning death. "He Himself took and bore" cannot refer only to the strain put upon the heart of Jesus because of the sympathy He spent upon sufferers; nor to the mental and the physical strain of healing so many, for the first

10. A. Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 271. Cf. Lenski, "It is an untenable, mechanical view to think of a transfer of these diseases to the body of Jesus. The old Jewish view even imagined that the Messiah would be a leper. Just as the sins Jesus expiated did not become sins that He had Himself committed, for He was and had to be holy and sinless in order to be our expiation, so the diseases did not become the diseases of His own body, which was and had to be untainted by any results of sin in order to be fit for His vicarious work.....'He Himself took and bore' implies a vicarious, ethical assumption of this burden." (On Matt. 8, 17, p. 226).

would not tire Jesus.¹¹ It seems, however, that both the element of the sympathetic or compassionate and the vicarious element are found here, and are especially recognizable in Matthew.¹² The important fact to be observed is that the Evangelist here very beautifully refers to the words of the prophet, and so shows the completeness of the work of Christ. His atoning work and grace will effectually deliver the believer from all sin, and the illustration or proof is found in the circumstance that the Lord here exhibited His power to deliver men already in this world from the consequences of sin, which effect the body as well as the soul, such as sickness. "Although the prophet primarily refers to the sufferings which Christ endured, in order to deliver us from our sins, Matthew here very happily refers to the whole work which Christ performed, by

11. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., pp. 294-295. Those who think that it refers only to Jesus' sympathetic entrance into the sufferings of others are many. Alford, Lange, Riddle, Olshausen, Meyer, Maclaren, and others. Dr. Arno C. Gaebelain says: "It can mean but one thing. The Lord Jesus entered in divine sympathy into the depth of the need He so graciously relieved. He suffered with those who suffered. The burden of infirmities and sicknesses He shared sympathetically with the afflicted ones. 'In their affliction He was afflicted.' In this sense and in no other He took our infirmities and bore our disease." Those who hold to this interpretation contend that while Is. 53 as a whole, does refer to Christ's suffering and exaltation, it does not follow that every verse in the chapter must necessarily find our Lord upon the Cross. The first three verses, they tell us, most assuredly do not find Him there, and the fourth, which is concerned with sympathetic participation in the nature and condition of those needing redemption, serves as a transition to the substitutionary sacrifice for our sins as set forth in verse five.

12. M. R. Vincent, op. cit., p. 315.

which He delivers us from all evils, whether they are those of body or those of soul."---Luther.¹³ But the doctrine of faith-cure is in neither Isaiah nor Matthew.

"Our griefs." The word here used $\nu\tilde{\nu}\pi$ means properly sickness, disease, anxiety, affliction. It does not refer to sins, but to sufferings.¹⁴ It is translated sickness, Deut. 28, 61; 7, 15; II Chron. 21, 15; I Kings 17, 17; disease, Eccl. 6, 2; II Chron. 21, 18; 16, 12; Ex. 15, 26; grief, Is. 53, 3, 4. Although the LXX rendered it in this place, ἁμαρτίας, sins, this is not correct. Dr. Magee, Atonement and Sacrifice, (p. 229) thinks there can be no doubt that this is a corruption which has crept in later copies of the Greek. A few Greek MSS of the LXX also read ἰσθερείος, and one μαλακίας, denoting bodily disease. Matthew has rendered it ἰσθερείος and applied it to the fact that Jesus healed diseases. There can be no doubt that Matthew has used the passage, not by way of accommodation, but in the true sense in which it is used by Isaiah; and that it means that the Messiah would take upon Himself the infirmities of men and would remove their sources of grief. It does not refer here to the fact that He would take their sins. That is stated in other pla-

13. C. F. Schaeffer, The Lutheran Commentary, Part I. Matt. I-XV, pp. 191-192.

14. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., pp. 296-297. Mr. Rowland V. Bingham takes the words for sicknesses and pains in a spiritual, or figurative sense. A. R. Fausset takes the same position. A. R. Fausset, A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments, by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, Vol. III, p. 730.

ces. (vv. 5. 6. 12).¹⁵ But it means that He was so afflicted, that He seemed to have taken upon Himself the sicknesses and sorrows of the world; and taking them upon Himself He bore them away. Therefore, we take this to mean, that He became deeply afflicted for us, and that, being thus afflicted for us, He was able to carry away our sorrows, the real consequences of sin.¹⁶ The removing of our sins vicariously should not be separated from the removing of the penalty of sin. The completeness of Christ's atonement is here brought out.

We are not here told whether we are totally exempted from suffering pains, or whether we also suffer with Him the consequence of our misdeeds. That we suffer with Him is emphasized in many other places.¹⁷ Neither can it be deduced from this that we are to receive all the physical benefits of the Atonement here and now. We are distinctly told in Romans 8, 19-23 that the curse upon the earth and the curse of death are not to be removed until the coming of our Lord. In this life we still have our old sinful nature and suffer from its pollution. We are delivered from the curse of sin in this life in this sense, however, that infirmities are no longer a curse for believers.¹⁸ To believers sufferings remain as a cross to strengthen them and keep them in the faith, and to be healed in response to

15. Aug. Pieper, Jesaias II Kommentar, p. 402: "Was der Knecht auf sich lud und trug, waren oholajeimu und makh'obejmu. Das sind zunaechst nicht unsre Sunden (davon redet erst der naechste vers), sondern die Folgen derselben, Leiden und Schmerzen, alles Weh und Leid dieser Zeit und der

their prayers when in His wisdom He finds it best to do
 so. ¹⁹ Part of men's sickness Christ removed by direct
 miracles as in Matthew 8, 14-18. Part of men's sickness
 Christ removes today through the means of medical science.
 It is interesting to note that wherever Christianity has
 come in the world, the care of the sick has accompanied it.
 Even today in our foreign mission fields the first hospi-
 tals have come with the establishment of Christian missions.
 And then, we will have to concede the possibility, that at
 times and in places Christ removes sickness even today by
 direct miracles. But this is the unusual mode and is far
 from being a basis for the direct faith healing principle.

The next passage which we must consider is a section of
 the Great Commission in Mark 16, 17, 18:

"And these signs shall follow them that believe;
 In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak
 with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if
 they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them;
 they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall re-
 cover."

The healers say that "the great commission bids us to
 go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every crea-
 ture, and this gospel includes healing."²⁰ Mr. Gordon
 voices the opinion of the healers in general when he says
 that the signs to follow are meant for all ages and for all
 people, even as Baptism.²¹ We are told that "there is a direct

Ewigkeit, das die Suende ueber uns gebracht hat, der Suenden
 Sold, der Tod, Roem. 6, 23."

16. A. Barnes, op. cit., p. 275.

17. George Adam Smith, The Book of Isaiah, II, pp. 352-
 353.

command from Christ that His followers should pray for the sick and expect to heal them." ²² Let us consider this passage more closely.

There are three interpretations offered. First, there are a few who go so far as to say that the words were meant only for the apostles. ²³ However, the words "And these signs shall follow them that believe" are surely of much wider scope, even though we know that every one of the signs enumerated did occur during the ministry of the various apostles. ²⁴ Secondly, there are those who limit the passage to believers of the apostolic age alone. ²⁵ This again, is going beyond the actual words of the text. There is no limitation set here. ²⁶ Finally, there is the view that these gifts were not only for the early church, and not only for the apostles, but for all times whenever they were needed. ²⁷ This is the view which we consider to be in closest agreement with the actual words of the text. The text does not,

18. P. E. Kretzmann, Popular Commentary of the Bible, the New Testament, Vol. V, p. 45.

19. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., pp. 300-302.

20. J. H. Boston, op. cit., p. 144.

21. A. J. Gordon, op. cit., p. 22.

22. Statement quoted from McCrossan in W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 262.

23. J. V. Coombs, Religious Delusions, p. 148.

24. Lange-Schaff on Mk. 16, 17, 18, also A. Barnes, op. cit., p. 403. H. A. W. Meyer, op. cit., p. 204.

25. B. Weiss, op. cit., p. 378. Also Lenski, op. cit., p. 476. E. Bickersteth, The Pulpit Commentary, St. Mark, II.

26. J. A. W. Haas, The Lutheran Commentary, p. 281.

27. J. A. W. Haas, op. cit., p. 281. Also P. E. Kretzmann, op. cit.

however, warrant the practice of the faith healers.

It was a responsible commission which the Lord entrusted to His disciples and He, therefore, cheers and strengthens them by the assurance of special signs, miracles, or powers with which He will accompany their work. The words form a logical entity and must be read together. If that is done, it is at once apparent that it is illogical and foolish to make the last half of verse 18 "they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" say that Christ here conferred upon the apostles or believers the power only to heal the sick, as this text is often employed by modern faith healers. ²⁸ Casting out devils, speaking with new tongues, taking up serpents, and drinking a deadly thing without harm, these signs shall, according to the Lord's word, follow the preaching of the gospel under the identical conditions and circumstances as the healing of disease. Many of the faith healers ignore and eliminate the other signs, because they do not fit into their scheme. If the healers lay claim to one sign, they must take them all. ²⁹ Some even do this, like Mrs. Margaret Mullins, a 32 year old mother of nine daughters, who died as a result of drinking poison at a religious cult ceremony at Queens Shoals, W. Virginia. ³⁰ The snake cults of some of our southern states have also received wide publicity in

28. Lenski, op. cit., p. 476.

29. H. D. Mensing, op. cit., p. 24.

30. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, (Feb. 4, 1947).

recent years, though most of them have now been banned by law. Ecstatic speaking has always played a large part in pentecostal movements. Aimee Semple McPherson has made it an integral part of her religion. The casting out of devils has also been claimed. Strictly speaking, however, these other signs are minimized and even eliminated by the general body of faith healers. The power to cast out devils was exercised by the disciples during the lifetime of Jesus (Mark 3, 15; Luke 10, 17), was afterward used by Philip, the deacon (Acts 8, 7), and Paul (Acts 16, 18; 19, 15), to show the power of Christ over Satan. The speaking in various tongues probably refers not only to the various languages in which the apostles spoke at Pentecost (Acts 2, 11), but also to the peculiar ecstatic words of the Spirit (Acts 10, 46; 19, 6; I Cor. 12, 10; 14, 2 sq.). Paul was bitten by a serpent on the island of Malta (Acts 28, 5). Tradition relates that John was given hemlock, but that he was not poisoned. Healings were performed by Peter (Acts 3, 7) and Paul (Acts 28, 8; cf. also I Cor. 12, 29).

The central thought, the one command in the whole passage is: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." That is the Lord's one concern. He does not command believers to heal the sick. "They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover," Christ promises a concomitant to the preaching of the Gospel, as a

credential, as the Lord's testimonial for the truth of the Gospel message. These signs were to confirm that message, as we read in verse 20: "And confirming the word with signs following."³¹ While this is the true sense of the words, the faith healers make the ~~sign~~ of healing their Gospel.

During the early days of the Christian church it was especially necessary that the miraculous signs accompany the preaching of the Gospel so that the church would be firmly established. Besides this, these signs were not given promiscuously and like a common thing, but only in given cases as the Spirit saw fit. The healers claim that everyone should exercise the power of healing. But after the Church was founded we can expect that God would withdraw these special means by which He confirmed the Gospel. Those signs recorded in Scripture also stand today as credentials just as if they had been wrought before our eyes. To call for an endless line of signs only declares that the original signs were not enough. That would make the Lord discredit Himself and His promised signs.³² Nevertheless, we know that Christ is just as powerful today as He ever was. Where conditions are the same as they were in the early days of Christianity we would not say that there are

31. H. D. Mensing, op. cit., p. 25.

32. R. C. H. Lenski, op. cit., p. 476.

no miracles performed to confirm the Word. On the other hand, we can not demand that such miraculous signs be given, as do the faith healers. "If I believe I can do it then it is in my power, for faith gives me so much, that nothing is impossible, if it be necessary. For Christ has not spoken that they always must go and do thus, only that they have the power and can do it." ³³ And even if it were possible for a person to perform deeds that had all the external marks of true miracles, the Gospel and the Sacraments are still the means by which the Christian church is to carry forward the work of the Savior till the end of time. Without hesitation we can say that the doctrine of direct faith healing is not found here.

Another passage constantly referred to by the faith healers in support of their doctrine is James 5, 14-16.

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another that ye may be healed."

The healers claim that this passage supports three of their fundamental teachings. In the first place, they say that here is the definite command for the practice of healing as done by them, in conjunction with the anointing of oil and prayer. They assert that this practice on a par with

33. Luther, quoted by J. A. W. Haas, op. cit., p. 282.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper. What water is to Baptism
oil is to healing.³⁴ Secondly, they claim that this is
proof that all sickness is the result of sin. J. H. Bos-
trom says, "It is quite obvious then, that there is not
only a possibility, but also a probability that the rea-
son the afflicted person is ill, is that he has committed
sins."³⁵ Finally, they use it to prove that the use of
medicine is wrong.³⁶ Therefore, it is necessary that this
passage be treated in detail.

There are, in general, three views on the meaning of
this passage. I. That it refers to a miraculous healing
by those who were endowed with the gift of healing diseases
in this manner. Those who speak for this view hold that
the use of the oil enjoined must be symbolical, sacramental
in some way, at least an aid to the sick person's faith.
They usually connect this passage with that of Mark 6, 13:
"And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many
that were sick and healed them." This is the view adopted
by the faith healers.³⁷ Some hold this position even though
they do not adhere to the faith healing doctrine. They a-
void the pitfall of the healers by limiting this to an apos-
tolic practice.³⁸

34. F. F. Bosworth, op. cit., p. 61; J. H. Bostrom, op. cit., p. 144; A. J. Gordon, op. cit., p. 48; J. W. Byers, op. cit., p. 65; Aimee Semple McPherson, The Four-square Crusader, (June 12, 1929).

35. J. H. Bostrom, op. cit., p. 39.

36. A. J. Gordon, op. cit., p. 32.

37. A. J. Gordon in W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 104.

38. F. Weidner, The Lutheran Commentary, II, p. 76.

II. The second view is that this refers to a ceremonial use of oil. They say that James here enjoins an act of dedication or consecration, implying on the part of the anointed that he was to be absolutely and wholly consecrated to do the will of God. The oil itself was a symbol of the Holy Spirit manifesting Himself in healing power. The anointing with oil having thus taken place the elders were to "pray over him" that he might be healed, and "the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick." They emphasize that it is the "prayer of faith" that heals the sick, and not the anointing with oil. This view has something in its favor, and yet does not allow anointing to take on the meaning given to it by the faith healers. They claim that it is the prayer of the believer for his fellow believer that results in the healing, while the anointing with its symbolical ceremonial significance strengthens the faith of the sufferer.

III. Finally, there are those who regard the anointing to be of medicinal value, while the prayer is for the purpose of invoking the blessing of God upon the treatment. This is the view which is taken in this paper. It is the most natural interpretation, and it meets the requirements of a fair interpretation.

That this is a difficult passage is illustrated by E.

39. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., pp. 98-108. Also E. N. Wilson, The Anointing of the Sick in the Epistle of James.
 40. Lenski, op. cit., on James. A. Barnes, op. cit., p. 94. R. Weiss, op. cit., II, p. 260.

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M. Wilson who lists the large number of commentators who refer to the anointing as a medicinal remedy, and the large number who regard the anointing as a remedy, though they do not all agree as to its purpose.⁴²

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church." Some have said that it is spiritual sickness that is meant here. We can dispense with that view immediately. The entire context speaks without any doubt of physical sickness. The Roman Catholic claim that their sacrament of Extreme Unction is found here is entirely gratuitous, and does not need to be taken up here. The term "elder" was an official title, taken from the Synagogue, given to the leaders of the local Christian church, to those "that labored.....and were over" the congregation, (I Thess. 5, 4) "who had the rule.....and watched in behalf of souls" (Hebr. 13, 17). That they did not differ in apostolic times from the bishops and overseers, is evident from the fact that the two words are used indiscriminately in Acts 20, 17. 28, and in Titus 1, 5. 7 and further, the duty of the presbyters

41. E. M. Wilson, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

42. Of the first class there are: J. Brown, Commentary on the Bible; F. T. Bassett, Epistle of James; McClintock and Strong, Cyclopedia, article on "oil" by J. M. Worman, and on "anoint;" E. H. Plumptre in Cambridge Bible; Hasting's Dictionary, under "External applications;" Davis' Dictionary under "anoint;" Wayland Hoyt; J. W. Conley; Schaff-Herzog, Encyclopedia, article on "oil" by E. Leyer; R. Weiss; Huther (in Meyer); J. R. Dummelow. Those who come into the latter class are: Calvin; Nicholas Homminge; Richard Turnbull; Thomas Manton; Bernard Jacobi; J. Adam; R. Johnstone; R. Wardlaw; J. Wesley; P. J. Gloag; Bengel; A. A. Hodge; Meyer.

or elders is specifically described as being that of oversight (I Pet. 5, 12). Only two kinds of church officers are recognized in the New Testament, presbyters or bishops, and deacons (Phil. 1, 1; I Tim. 3, 1. 8). The word presbyter denotes the dignity of the office, the title bishop denotes the function of oversight and is borrowed from Greek institutions.⁴³ The fact that James says to call the elders speaks against the position that this anointing was done by those who had the special gift of healing. That would qualify the statement of James to read something like this: Call the elders of the church, provided they have the gift of healing. It seems unlikely that every church had those who had the gift of healing.⁴⁴

"Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." Here we come to the problem of what is meant by "anointing with oil." Those who claim that medicinal healing is meant point to the fact that James uses ἰλαίρω,⁴⁵ which ordinarily refers to the common use of oil. χρίω is the word generally used in referring to ceremonial anointing. Compare the use of ἰλαίρω in Luke 7, 38. 46; John 11, 2; 12, 3; Mark 16, 1; and the

43. F. Weidner, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 76.

44. E. M. Wilson, op. cit., p. 77.

45. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 100 points out that oil was used in anointing in five different senses in the Bible. Namely, 1. Cosmetical, 2. Reverential, 3. Funereal, 4. Medicinal, 5. Ceremonial. The first three are necessarily eliminated in interpreting this passage.

use of χρίω in Acts 4, 27; 10, 38; Hebr. 1, 9. The difference is lost when both verbs are translated "anoint."⁴⁶ It is, therefore, asserted that since ἀλείψω is used by James that it refers to a medicinal act.

Those who regard the anointing with oil as medicinal say that this then means that the sick person's body was rubbed with oil, just as the nurse now rubs a patient's body with alcohol. The ancients used olive oil in this way. There are plenty of illustrations that demonstrate this fact. Isaiah 1, 6 has the expression "mollified with oil;" the Good Samaritan applied oil and wine to wounds and bruises, wine to cleanse, oil to mollify them. A mixture of oil and wine was used for the malady which attacked the army of Aelius Gallus, and it was applied both externally and internally.⁴⁷ Herod the Great was bathed in a vessel full of oil when it was thought that he was at death's door.⁴⁸ Celsus recommends rubbing with oil in the case of fevers and other ailments.⁴⁹ There are many other such cases.

The anointing was to be done "in the name of the Lord." The question arises here whether this means "by the authority of the Lord." If that is the meaning it supports the interpretation that holds the anointing to be a ceremonial act. It would indicate that Christ had given this injunction, al-

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46. R. C. H. Lenski, op. cit., p. 666.
 47. Dion Cassius, 53, 59; Strabo, 16.
 48. Josephus, Antiquities, 17, 6, 5.
 49. R. C. H. Lenski, op. cit., p. 667.

though there is no record of it. ⁵⁰ Lenski ⁵¹ says that this phrase does not mean "as the Lord's representatives," "in the Lord's authority," or anything similar. He says that it means "in connection with the revelation of the Lord." "Follow the phrase through the New Testament and note that we are baptized "in connection with the name," etc., believe in the name, etc. By His name the Lord reveals Himself; by His name we apprehend what He reveals of Himself. Adding 'the name of the Lord' to the application does not make this a sacrament or a ritual for 'we do in word and deed all in the name of the Lord Jesus.'" (Col. 3, 17). Medicinal anointing is then a valid interpretation.

The praying was the main act and the using of oil in the name of the Lord was a secondary and a minor act. The reason for summoning the elders of the church, one or more answering the summons, is natural since the prayers of the church are to be made for those who are in need. In Acts 12, 5 we have the example of the church praying for Peter. ⁵² James commanded them to do just what any sensible physician would do. Prayer itself is curative. It prepares the mind for the reception of mental remedies. But beyond that, the Christian physician knows that his remedies must have the blessing of God if they are to be effective. So James told them to pray for God's blessing upon a medicinal remedy.

50. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 99.
 51. R. C. H. Lenski, op. cit., p. 667.
 52. Ibid., p. 671.

Those who regard the anointing as a ceremonial act performed by those who possessed the gift of miraculous healing have some formidable arguments on their side, but the view also has certain objections that seem to me to be insuperable. Mr. E. M. Wilson ⁵³ holds that the argument that ἀλείφω refers to the common use of oil, and, therefore, here it refers to a medicinal remedy, is not valid because in five places ἀλείφω is used in a non-medical sense. (Matt. 6, 17; John 12, 3; 11, 2; Mark 16, 1; 6, 13). But this is really not a valid argument since, in the first case cosmological anointing is meant, and in all the others, except the last one the anointing is reverential. The fact remains that ἀλείφω is used for the common use of oil, while χρίω is used in ceremonial acts. In the second place, they say that if James was advising a medicinal remedy he would have told him to call for the professional masseur and the medical doctor to do their part in the cure as well as calling the elders to do the praying. They claim that it can hardly be that the elders were skilled in manipulations or that they were adepts in Materia Medica.⁵⁴ This objection can, however, be explained by the simple and common application of oil and by the crude practices of medical men of the day who so often connected their cures with some form of superstition.

53. E. M. Wilson, op. cit., p. 70.

54. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 102.

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." The prayer offered in faith, or in the exercise of confidence in God, is what is meant by this phrase. It is not said that the peculiar form of faith exercised shall be that the sick man shall certainly recover.⁵⁵ The faith meant, is that evidenced by the patient when sending for the elders and of the elders when praying as they do. James does not say, the prayer and the oil; still less, the oil used in the name of the Lord (as if this were a sacrament). James writes as Jesus Himself speaks when He simply adds His great promises to Prayer (Matt. 7, 7-8; 21, 22; Mark 11, 24; John 14, 13; 15, 7; 16, 23). It is the Lord who raises up the patient to renewed health and strength. The prayer directed to Him moves Him, even as He Himself has promised. The elders do not bid the patients to rise up and walk. The fact that natural means are not to be discarded, as the healers claim, the mention of the oil sufficiently indicates, for all means would be ineffectual without the blessing of God.⁵⁶ That the "prayer of faith shall save the sick" must be understood as the promises are everywhere, with this restriction, that they will be restored to health if it shall be the will of God; if He deems it best for them. It cannot be taken in the absolute and unconditional sense, for then, if these means were used,

55. A. Barnes, op. cit., p. 92.

56. R. C. H. Lenski, op. cit., p. 672.

the sick person would always recover and need never die.⁵⁷
 That every patient for whom the elders prayed would promptly recover, and that none would die, is certainly not the meaning of James. To argue that prayer is, therefore, not effectual is fallacious. Hezekiah may serve as an illustration,⁵⁸ Isaiah 38, 1.

"And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." The perfect tense refers to repeated and continued sinning in the past. The thought is that the Lord will not withhold His answer to the prayers made in true faith, will not withhold recovery because of such sinning in the past.⁵⁹ He will forgive and graciously heal.

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed." This seems, primarily, to refer to those who were sick, since it is added, "that ye may be healed." It might be supposed that such confession would contribute to a restoration to health. The duty inculcated is that if we are sick, and are conscious that we have injured any person, to make confession to them. This is a duty at all times, but in health it is often neglected, and there is special propriety that such confession should be made when we are sick. It would contribute to a restoration to health. If the mind were troubled by the recollection of guilt, the calmness and peace resulting from confession is favorable to a restoration to health.⁶⁰ The de-

57. A. Barnes, op. cit., p. 92.
 58. Lenski, op. cit., p. 673.
 59. Ibid., p. 673.
 60. A. Barnes, op. cit., p. 94.

duction that all sickness comes as the result of personal sin cannot be made from this passage.

In conclusion, we can say that the faith healers are not justified in claiming that this passage is a basis for their practice. It is not a ceremony by which miraculous healings are brought about. It does not prove that all sickness is the result of personal sin. It directly contradicts their view that medical remedies are forbidden in Scripture by advising the use of oil as a medicinal remedy.

The Old Testament Healing Covenant

The healers have gone to great extents in order to give the impression that their doctrine is founded in Scripture. The healing covenant which God made with the children of Israel after bringing them out of Egypt is another favorite passage which they summon to prove that faith healing was part of God's arrangement with the people of the Old Testament. The main passages which they refer to are: Ex. 15, 26 and Deut. 7, 15.

"If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee." Ex. 15, 26.

"And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee." Deut. 7, 15.

By some strange feat of interpretation the healers relate this covenant to Gal. 3, 13: "Christ hath redeemed us

from the curse of the law being made a curse for us." Mr. Bosworth says, "Here it is stated that it was on the Cross that Christ redeemed us from the following disease specified in Deuteronomy: consumption, fever, inflammation, the botch of Egypt, emerods, scab, itch, madness, blindness, plagues, all the diseases of Egypt, also every sickness and every plague which is not written in the book of this law. This would include cancer, influenza, mumps, measles, and every other modern disease." ⁶¹ Mr. Bostrom says that the first promise of healing that was given is found in Exodus ⁶² 15, 26.

What then is the true meaning of these passages. The words in Ex. 15, 26 were spoken immediately after the bitter waters of Marah had been sweetened. The pact that was then made was one requiring obedient trust on the one side, and protection on the other. If they felt their own sinfulness, it asserted that God who had just healed the waters could also heal their hearts. Doubtless by reminding them that there are better exemptions than from hardship, and worse evils than privations, they were to appreciate God's care for them. If they do not realize this at the spiritual level, at least, they can appreciate the threat that "He will bring upon them again all the diseases of Egypt which thou wast afraid of." (Deut 28, 60). To be a favored race, but infec-

61. Quoted in W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 133.

62. J. H. Bostrom, op. cit., p. 137. J. W. Byers says the same thing, Byers, op. cit., p. 20.

ted by repulsive and hopeless ailments, was not a desirable alternative. The climate in Egypt is known to be unhealthy, especially at certain seasons of the year. Elephantiasis and other skin complaints, dysentery, and ophthalmia are particularly prevalent.⁶³ God, it appears, after healing the water and satisfying the physical thirst of His people, gave them this ordinance which He connected by a promise with the miracle. If they would render strict obedience to all His commandments, then He would heal them as He had healed the water. "All those diseases" refers not only to the plagues in Egypt, which are nowhere else called "diseases, but to the diseases in general that were prevalent in Egypt."⁶⁴ Such evils, though certainly not in each individual, yet in a race, are the punishments of non-natural conditions of life, such as make the blood run slowly and unhealthily, and charge it with impure deposits. If Israel would follow the guidance of God, and accept a somewhat austere destiny, then they would be exempted from such scourges. It is significant that at this day the Hebrew race is proverbially exempt from repulsive and contagious diseases. They enjoy immunity from the ravages of cholera, fever and smallpox in a remarkable degree. Their blood seems to be in a different condition from that of other people. They seem less receptive to disease caused

63. S. R. Driver, "Deuteronomy," International Critical Commentary, p. 61.

64. George Rawlinson, "Exodus," Pulpit Commentary, Vol. II, pp. 19-20.

by blood poisoning than others. So, imperfect as was the obedience of the children of Israel, this covenant has been literally fulfilled.

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It requires a great deal of manipulation on the part of the faith healers to make this covenant given to the Jewish people in the wilderness support their doctrine of faith healing. In the first place, the diseases mentioned were to be visited upon the Jews as special judgments from God for disobedience. Nothing can, therefore, be argued from them with regard to our own diseases. Secondly, this dealing of God with the Jews is not written as a matter of universal application. Therefore, we have a case here in which a passage of Scripture is adduced to prove a predetermined doctrine. It certainly does not support the doctrine of faith healing in any way.

The Meaning of the "Greater Things" Which God promised Believers He would Do

There are several other passages which need to be discussed briefly. The first is John 14, 12:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

The healers insist that this promise of Christ refers to the physical works of healing. Practically all exegetes are

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65. G. H. Chadwick, The Expositor's Bible, "The Book of Exodus", pp. 60-61.

66. F. F. Bosworth, op. cit., p. 20; J. H. Boström, op. cit., p. 144; A. J. Gordon, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

agreed that the "works" and the "greater works" which Jesus' believers will perform are of a spiritual nature. They refer to the saving of souls for eternal life. The converting of three thousand souls on Pentecost was just the beginning of this work. Jesus means that although His miracles and those of the apostles were absolutely genuine, yet they were wrought only in support of the greater works, or saving souls.⁶⁷ That this interpretation is the only correct one is obvious from the fact that no one has ever performed works greater than Jesus on a physical level. No one has done a greater physical miracle than raising Lazarus.⁶⁸ The faith healers cannot find support for their doctrine here.

The Changelessness of God

Another passage constantly referred to by the healers is Hebrews 13, 8: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." From this passage they conclude that Jesus performs miracles of healing through the healers, just as He did while on earth. We refer you to an interesting article in the Foursquare Crusader:

"Last Wednesday afternoon the Lord poured out His spirit and blessed in a marvelous way. Sister McPherson chose for her subjects the words, "I AM," bringing out the assuring thought that Jesus Christ IS the same yesterday, today and forever---the same in saving and

67. R. C. H. Lenski, op. cit.

68. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 264.

healing power Divine.....Many people testified to their healing by the Great Physician and these testimonies were surely convincing enough to satisfy any skeptic that Divine Healing is for this day and hour. At the conclusion of the pastor's message scores made their way to the tear stained altars where so many have found Christ as their Saviour and Healer. Then came the service of prayer and anointing, and a procession of men, women and children wended their way to the platform that Sister McPherson might offer prayer in the Name of Jesus and the elders anoint them. Faith was mightily rewarded at that time as the power of the Lord fell upon the supplicants and many testified that they felt God had touched them and they knew they were healed." 69

Mr. Bostrom has this to say:

"Never do we read of the compassionate Christ refusing to heal any who came to Him. Never a crowd so large but what Jesus healed everyone who sought Him. No one ever appealed to Him in vain. Has He changed with the passing of the years? No, no, a thousand times NO! 'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.'"

The answer to such statements is simple. Because Jesus is "the same yesterday, today and forever," it does not mean that He must do what He does do in exactly the same way. This does not mean that His method of dealing with man must of necessity be the same in all ages. He does not change in the essential attributes of His character which make Him what He is. ⁷⁰ The advocates of faith healing must be hard pressed when it becomes necessary to support their teachings with such passages.

69. Foursquare Crusader, (June 12, 1929).

70. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., pp. 34-35; 280-281.

The "Gift of Healing"

The final passage that needs to be considered is I Cor. 12, 9: "To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit."

There is no question as to what the "gifts of healing" mean. It is a special gift from God whereby the one who receives it can, through the power of the Holy Spirit, heal the sick. It is made clear that in Paul's day there were such things as special gifts, one of which was the gift of healing the sick.⁷¹

J. W. Byers⁷² holds that while different gifts are distributed ("Dividing to every man severally as He will"), all can use any of the gifts in case of necessity for the glory of God. The healers claim to make use of the gift of healing, but not at all times. As we have brought out in Chapter I, they distinguish between the gift of healing, and healing in general. Everyone has the right to receive healing on the basis of the atonement by the proper exercise of faith, while others have the special gift to heal others. The difficulty arises in this that many frequently claim the gift and frequently exercise it. Another error is found in this that they regard the gift as a proof of faith rather than "a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not." (I Cor. 15, 22).

71. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 120; Lenski, op. cit., I Corinthians.

72. J. W. Byers, op. cit., pl 188.

**Faith Healers Find No Support at all in
Scripture for their Practice**

Is the gift of healing present in the church today?

We have no Scriptural grounds for saying absolutely that it is not. But we can say this that the gift of healing was a special means used by God to found the Christian Church.

It was for the purpose of gaining a hearing for the Gospel.

We must not now take the credentials of the Church's divine authority as her mission, her spiritual purpose, as the

healers do.⁷³

We know that God has used supernatural means only when it was necessary to establish supernatural facts. When God ushers in a new era in His dealing with man, He ordinarily inaugurates that dispensation with special and supernatural signs and manifestations. So at the time of Noah (Gen. 9, 12-13), at the time of Abraham (Gen. 15, 17-18), and at the time of Moses (Ex. 19, 16). Taking the last-mentioned as an example, it would be absurd for pious Israelites to look for, or insist on seeing a smoking mountain, or hearing the awe-inspiring trumpet blast as the normal experience of the chosen people to be repeated continually. It is just as absurd and far more erroneous for the healers to believe that they can expect to experience such special supernatural manifestations as the gifts of healing now that the church has been firmly planted. We are not to make that common and normal

73. H. J. Stolle, Pentecostalism, p. 26.

which the Lord has plainly indicated as special and super-
⁷⁴
 normal.

In fact, the healings performed by the faith healers would themselves indicate that they generally do not possess the gift of healing at all. Those who possessed the gift of healing performed instantaneous cures, while those of the healers are almost always gradual. Those who possessed the gift of healing, healed all types of maladies, while the healers are confined to minor troubles, and more especially to nervous disorders, or diseases resulting from the same. ⁷⁵ We cannot say, however, that the gift of healing has been lost to the Church altogether. In circumstances like those of the early Christians, for example, in foreign countries where the Gospel has never before come, God may see fit to bestow special spiritual gifts, among which may be the gift of healing. Reports of missionaries seem to support this. ⁷⁶ Aside from such mere possibilities, we must say that the charismatic gifts, and here in particular, the gifts of healing have ceased in the Church. This passage would then not support the faith healers' doctrine and practice.

There are other passages which the healers appeal to in order to justify their practice, but none of them are of great importance since it will be easily seen that they do

74. H. J. Stolee, op. cit., p. 32.

75. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 126.

76. H. J. Stolee, op. cit., p. 102.

not apply. In concluding this chapter we are convinced that the faith healers have no basis for their doctrine in Scripture. It is evident that they are trying to prove a human and un-Christian scheme by divine authority. The endeavor is without success.

AN EXPLANATION OF THE FAITH HEALING PHENOMENA

The Claims of the Faith Healers

In this concluding chapter we shall endeavor to give an explanation for the popularity of the direct faithhealers, and an explanation of the cures which they claim and which they effect.

It is an undisputed scientific fact that eighty per cent of all people get well normally. Let nature have her way and in four cases out of five health will gradually come back without a physician or a human healer of any kind. All healing agencies have, therefore, an eighty per cent advantage to start with.¹ As we stated in the introduction to this paper, there always have been people of various religions, Christian and pagan, who have claimed to be able to work supernatural cures. But it is exceedingly hard to get evidence which is incontestable as to the reality of these supranormal events. They tend to appear most frequently in those circumstances in which it is most difficult to get reliable witnesses. In circles where strict scientific evidence is required, the alleged events either do not happen, or the evidence for them is so uncertain that we are not able to be sure whether they happened or not.² With regard to the direct faith healers, our attitude, as already indi-

1. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 159.
2. H. Anson, op. cit., p. 161.

cated, is not one of wholesale denial, as if no cures were wrought at all, but one of discrimination and explanation. And our explanation is not that of satanic powers, unless the miraculous element is clearly established.³

What then can be said as to the reliability of the claims of the direct faith healers? Sadler says:

"In twenty-five years of sympathetic inquiry and study of divine healing, Doweism, Pentecostalism, Spiritualism, Christian Science, etc., during which time I have seen many apparent miracles wrought and many diverse diseases cured, I have not seen a single case of bona fide organic disease that has been cured by prayer, Doweism, Christian Science, or any other of these present day healing cults."⁴

Francis M. Wetherhill, M. A., D. D., of Philadelphia writes:

"In rehearsing the results of these healers we may confidently affirm that less than one per cent of those who attend the meetings give proof of permanent cure of the removal of their disabilities."⁵ Another says that of one hundred of the cases who claimed to be healed by Mr. Hickson's laying-on of hands, over two-thirds of the patients died in less than two years from the very diseases which physicians had pronounced incurable, but from which the patients themselves⁶ professed to have been triumphantly cured by faith. Dr. Schofield of England speaks of a published list of two hundred and fifty cases of diseases cured among which were such conditions as "consumption," one "diseased hip," five "abscess," three "dyspepsia," four "internal complaint," two

3. Theo. Graebner, op. cit., p. 19.

4. W.S. Sadler, op. cit., p. 56.

5. Quoted from H. D. Mensing, op. cit., p. 97.

"throat ulcer," seven "nervous debility," nine "rheumatism," five "diseased heart," two "withered arm," four "bronchitis," three "cancer," two "paralyzed arm," three "pains in the head." He then says, "The list causes amusement and perhaps surprise; and impatience may be felt that such puerile details should be given."⁷ Many a similar list can be found in most any of the books published by such healers as Byers, Bostrom, Bosworth and others. The same results are recorded with regard to the reports made by Mrs. Aimee Semple McPherson. For example, after a campaign in Denver, leading Christian workers as well as physicians of the city declared that while thousands of those supposedly healed could not be found, among those who were found not a single genuine case of healing could be established.⁸ So one could go on showing how unfounded and overly exaggerated the claims of the healers are.

The Screening of Prospects by the Healers

It is highly significant to an understanding of the claims of the healers to note that not just anyone may come to the meeting and ask to be healed. All prospects are carefully screened by one method or another. Dr. C. S. Blumel says that in the meetings of Mrs. McPherson at Denver,

6. H. D. Mensing, op. cit., p. 72.

7. A. T. Schofield, The Force of the Mind, p. 160.

8. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 91.

the patients were carefully sorted over by the evangelist's mother, and if they appeared to be good risks, they were given cards entitling them to healing prayer. At St. Louis a trained nurse definitely asserted that she had observed the ushers carefully weed out all cases that looked hopeless. "The neurotics had the stage. And these sometimes performed abominably." ⁹ Most all of the evangelists do this type of screening, but their methods are not all alike. But there are always certain conditions imposed before one can gain access to the platform for healing. In another instance the applicant must attend at least two preliminary meetings before he can be presented at the third meeting for healing. He must attend an "instruction meeting" where special instruction is given to those seeking healing. In some of these "instruction meetings" they are told what to do on the platform when the evangelist deals with their particular case, including arrangements that have been made for their care when they "fall" to the platform. In the first meeting they were given a colored card containing questions. Now this is exchanged for a white one. On this card the following questions are asked:

1. Are you saved, or "born again"?
2. Are you living in obedience to God's will?
3. Have you any restitution to make or any wrongs to right?
4. Are you harboring an unforgiving spirit toward anyone?
5. Do you read the Bible and pray every day?

9. Theo. Graebner, op. cit., p. 34.

6. Are you convinced that it is God's will to heal you?
7. Is your faith based exclusively upon the promise of God?
8. If you are healed will you be willing to give or write your testimony?

On the reverse side of the card appears the question: "What is your trouble?" At this time, provided the answers to the questions are properly given, they have an O. K. put on their card. Then comes the third meeting at the close of which in response to the invitation of the evangelist they may come or be brought to the platform for anointing and prayer.¹⁰

With such methods the healers can quite confidently conduct a healing meeting without any slips. To the general public the results are very impressive.

Type of Sickness

In order to appreciate modern faith healers, we must bear in mind that many ailments to which our race is subject are neurotic in nature, and that there is a most intimate relationship between body and soul or the physical and mental make-up of man, and that in this field, therefore, mental suggestion must be a powerful factor.¹¹ Human beings are afflicted with two classes of disease---the functional and the organic. An organic disease is some condition of the body in which an actual change has taken place in the bodily structures; something has happened to the physical

10. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., pp. 51-52. J. H. Bostrom, op. cit., p.126, describes a similar procedure as used by him.

11. H. D. Mensing. op. cit., p. 96.

tissues---some modification or degeneration of a bodily structure or vital organ has occurred. Illustrations of organic diseases might be a broken bone, cancer, tuberculosis and the like. The other type of diseases are called functional. Most disorders of the nervous, circulatory, and digestive systems are purely functional. The brain, the heart, and the stomach may be in perfect condition as regards their structure and organic constitution, but something may happen to upset the digestion, to unbalance the circulation, or to excite the nerves, which results in setting up such disturbances in the life of the individual¹² that he comes to regard himself as sick.

There are many disorders that can be definitely classified as functional or organic, but, on the other hand, there are many in which a clear distinction cannot be made. K. R. Stolz says: "The relations of intimacy which subsists between the mind and the body makes tenuous a rigid distinction between the organic and the functional. After all, the man who is at least relatively normal moves through this life as a unit and not as a collection of dissociated entities

12. Sadler, op. cit., p. 5. On page 7 Sadler writes: "It is my belief, my personal opinion, that outside of surgical disorders, contagious disease, and accidents, nine-tenths of all the people who come to the physician seeking relief for their ailments are suffering from functional disturbance....and that the vast majority can be successfully treated and cured by some system of mind cure." Doctors Strecker and Ebaugh claim that psychoneuroses constitute 60 to 70 per cent of medical practice. E. A. Strecker and F. G. Ebaugh, Practical Clinical Psychiatry, p. 512.

and exigencies. When religious faith is creative in one area of human nature, all the rest of the personality is benefited. The dynamic of faith alters the psychosomatic constitution of man." ¹⁴ In her survey of the literature on psychosomatic interrelationships from 1910 to 1933, Dr. Dunbar ¹⁵ cites many different cases of the power of the emotions to produce chemical and other alterations in the human body. An elderly business man with diabetes was hospitalized, placed on a diet, and given small doses of insulin. Under this management the sugar content of the blood was brought within the limits of normality. One day, without a change in treatment, the patient passed forty-three grams of sugar; on another day, seventy-six grams. No physical cause for the radical increase could be detected. Finally, it was learned that the patient had been informed that the corporation with which he was associated had taken steps to retire him. The extent of his ensuing perturbation could be measured in the tangible terms of ounces of sugar. The sugar curve coincided with the emotional curve. K. R. Stolz says that "deafness, dumbness, and blindness are seemingly in all instances organic disabilities, but under certain conditions they are purely functional disorders. That such impairments are in many cases rooted in psycho-

13. Psychosomatic: pertaining to bodily and psychological inter-relations.

14. K. R. Stolz, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

15. H. F. Dunbar, Emotions and Bodily Changes, p. 188.

logical conditions and social situations cannot be successfully disputed in the light of modern science.....

In fact, the hard and fast distinction between organic and functional diseases has been obliterated by modern scientific medicine. What ails the body effects the mind, and the disorders of the mind have physiological repercussionsMind and body interact."¹⁶

Keeping this in mind we can say that faith, putting into operation such a powerful agent as the unconscious mind, or, as you may prefer to call it, the forces of nature, is not limited to so-called functional diseases at all in its ability to bring about cures.¹⁷ This is a fruitful field for the practice of mental therapy, which properly applied, can often heal the disease or greatly alleviate the suffering. This, then, is the welcome field also of all manner of faith healing, and has been shamefully exploited by faith healers and all manner of therapeutic quacks.¹⁸

The Class of Sick People with Whom Healers Work

Many who seek and find help from faith healers are undoubtedly sufferers of the various forms of hysteria (not "hysterics", which is another matter).¹⁹ Hysteria is a disease that manifests itself either in contracted vision, anaesthesias, exaggerated emotional displays with fits, or in the

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16. K. R. Stolz, op. cit., p. 29.
 17. A. T. Schofield, op. cit., pp. 164-165.
 18. H. D. Mensing, op. cit., p. 96.
 19. Theo. Graebner, op. cit., p. 138.

accurate but unconscious mimicry of definite disease. It will, therefore, be seen that it is widely different from "nervousness" or neurasthenia, with its long train of well-marked nerve symptoms that suggest no disease but the one that is there. In hysteria proper there is no intention to deceive; and it must carefully be distinguished from malingering or shamming, which is a direct attempt at fraud, though, of course, the two may at times co-exist. The essential difference that determines the question of fraud is that in the former the power that perfectly produces the symptoms of the hysterical disease is the unconscious mind, a force of which the sufferer is necessarily wholly ignorant. ²⁰

Hysteria is a disorder that can imitate almost every known disease. ²¹ There is no form of paralysis that is not simulated by it, from the loss of power in a single finger or joint to the total paralysis of one side, or of both legs, or of the entire body. Tumors of all sorts are simulated with a fidelity that is absolutely startling, and skilled doctors are constantly being deceived. They may occur in any part of

20. A. T. Schofield, op. cit., p. 252.

21. W. S. Sadler, op. cit., p. 138. A. T. Schofield, op. cit., pp. 254-255, says: "Hysteria often begins in some slight but real disease in a person with an ill-balanced brain, and this slight but real disease sets up a train of associations that produce a true 'hysterical' disease. While the seat of the disease appears to be in the body, it is really in the brain. Hysteria is most common in the spring, when the nervous system is least well balanced. It is common in the under- and over-worked, in the poorly trained and imperfectly educated, in boys from ten to fourteen, in girls from sixteen to twenty-five, and in spinsters of any age."

the body, but are most common in the breast and abdomen. ²²

"There can be no doubt that people die solely from hysterical affections, though some may question it." ²³ Hysteria may also mark organic disease. Dr. Sutton speaks of a lady who was on her back seven years with a pain in the spine. She was diagnosed as a case of hysteria by two authorities, and made to get up. She died a few days after of cancer of the lung.

As hysteria is a disorder due to nerve instability, no method of treatment can have the slightest success unless it be believed in by the patient. And since hysteria, is a condition in the unconscious mind the best cures are naturally effected through the unconscious mind. If the case is in every way in good health, it may be cured instantaneously by applying good suggestions to irritated ideal centers that keep up the disease, consciously or unconsciously, sufficiently powerful to overcome the bad ones. Their application by means of hypnotism is unnecessary, and often in the end aggravates the condition which it is meant to relieve; for suggestions are thoroughly effectual without it, if made by a powerful personality who has gained the respect ²⁴ and trust of the patient.

The Chief Explanation of Cures

Suggestion is the explanation to the answer of the

22. A. T. Schofield, op. cit., pp. 255. 256.
 23. Ibid., p. 258.
 24. Ibid., pp. 227. 267.

cures performed by faith healers. Suggestion is the systematic and scientific employment of various methods designed to bring about a process or state of mind and thereby to determine the physical reaction. There are only two ways of removing a set idea from the mind---first, by a process of re-education, and secondly, by the persistent cultivation of "opposite ideas."²⁵ It is therapeutically important to instill into the minds of the sick the positive idea of health, confident faith, and expectation of recovery. In many cases such faith and courage are the pivotal elements of which a cure depends. Resignation to a serious illness may be the determining factor in premature death; the will to live may be the determining element in recovery of health. The attitudes of the patient toward himself, his physicians, and his God may condition the issue of life or death.²⁶ When other measures fail to cure a disease, strong expectation and unshakable confidence may be effective. This is the very thing for which the faith healers work. Suggestion is, figuratively, a form of mental contagion. In fact, it often becomes epidemic when large numbers are involved.²⁷ Here we have the psychology of the crowd. If people are brought together in a large building with the expectation that the healer is going to work miracles, and with the belief that he has quite recently worked them, a great many events of this kind will take place. Mr. Anson

25. W. S. Sadler, op. cit., p. 34.
 26. K. R. Stolz, op. cit., p. 143.
 27. W. S. Sadler, op. cit., p. 35.

says, "Possibly as many as five percent of the sick people who go to them will be cured.....But I think that at least ninety percent of the sick people who go to them are not cured, and among these will be many of undoubted and abounding faith."
28

Suggestion is the method Emile Cune used to perform his amazing cures. This example may be illustrative:

"Last year a young lady came to see me at Nancy. She was 23 years old. Since the age of three years she could not see anything with her left eye, absolutely nothing. Immediately after the meeting she saw with this same eye as clearly as you see. People thought it was a miracle, but it was not. When the young lady was a child two years old she got an illness in her left eye and this illness required about a year to be cured. During that time she was obliged to have a bandage on her eye and during that time also the eye took the habit of not to see, and when the bandage was taken off, the eye preserved the habit of not seeing and this lasted two years. I persuaded her that she could see, and she saw." 29

The methods of suggestion are numerous. Touch is often a material aid in the conveyance of thoughts, as wires aid telegraphy. In some cases a decided manner, with a hand laid firmly on the patient's arm, will enable him to assimilate suggestions otherwise inoperative. Some can do more, and cure directly by bold assurance. A doctor who has the patient's full confidence may cure a patient by telling him he is cured.
30 If John Alexander Dowie prayed for you and you got well, your recovery in no wise constituted evi-

28. H. Anson, op. cit., p. 172.

29. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 150.

30. A. T. Schofield, op. cit., p. 232.

dence that Dowie had a special gift of healing from God, any more than when your own minister who prayed for you before, when you did not get well. It simply meant that Dowie's means and methods of suggestion were more powerful. His dress and personal appearance, what you had heard about him and what he said to you all resulted in making such a mental impression upon you that you had implicit faith in him, and that he took possession of your mind, routed fever, and banished doubt. By throwing your whole mind into the one grand conclusion that you were going to get well you did get well. ³¹ All true and personal prayer contains a large element of self-suggestion. While we do not by any means refer all the benefits of prayer, or even the chief benefits, to this source, yet the action of self-suggestion as an element of prayer cannot be denied. When a man in prayer dares to stand face to face with his highest ideals and believes in the possibility of their realization he is offering himself strong suggestions of victory and improvement.

It should be remembered, though, that while suggestion is a potent factor in healing disease, it has its limits. If a thorn is in the foot, suggestion will not pull it out. Neither can the faith healers set a broken bone or replace a dislocated joint. Material remedies are essential, surgeons are valuable. Material remedies may be a potent

31. W. S. Sadler, op. cit., p. 44.

suggestion to the mind, however. But to pray to God to set a broken leg, and refuse to call a doctor is criminal. If medicine cures and healer refuses to give it, and his patient dies, as often happens, he is guilty of manslaughter. ³²

It must be made clear to the reader that a mind cure need not be the truth to be successful. The practitioners of mental medicine need not be honest in order to succeed. ³³ The healers need not be Christian at all in order to perform cures. The principle is the same whether the method is called Divine Healing, Faith-Cure, Christian Science, Magnetic Healing, whether the cure be attributed to a special gift, to the bones of saints, the Holy Coat at Treves, to charms, or idols. It was known to Egyptian doctors a thousand years before Christ. Plutarch says that thousands of patients used to flock to the Temple of Serpis, and scores of them were healed. It is the same principle that is applied by all the prominent direct faith healers, whether they are all consciously aware of it or not. In all this there ³⁴ was and is nothing miraculous.

The Reason for the Popularity of Religious Cures

Very often the reason why religious mind cure is so popular and why it is destined to be more successful and

32. J. V. Coombs, op. cit., p. 146

33. W. S. Sadler, op. cit., p. 21.

34. Theo. Graebner, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

pleasant than scientific and secular mind cure is that divine healing gives people an excuse for immediate recovery; it dignifies all past performances of doctoring and fussing over self; it glorifies people as special pets of the Almighty; it saves their faces at home, and helps them to get right up off their knees and go about their business--- cured. In medical mind cures it is often necessary to spend much time in camouflage treatment in order to give the patient an excuse for getting well.

35

We conclude this study of direct faith healing with the conviction that while there is such a thing as miraculous healing in answer to true Christian prayer, the theory that all bodily maladies find their solution in the atonement of Christ is entirely false, and that while the healers claim to perform miracles by the hundreds, they are generally false or at least greatly exaggerated, and that while we do not say absolutely that they perform no remarkable cures, and neither do we immediately say that the cures are the result of Satanic power, we affirm that all the cures which are effected by them are very likely mental cures of one sort or another since any of their cures can be duplicated by non-religious mental cures, and since their methods are definitely aimed at mental cures.

35. W. S. Sadler, op. cit., p. 49.

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