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# Divine Healing; A Christian Physician's Perspective

Kenneth E. Schemmer, M.D.

Divine healing definitely occurs today. No doubt exists in my mind that God heals us through his gracious love to us. Sometimes that healing comes instantaneously; at other times, it happens slowly in the natural course of events. Yet, all healing originates in God and therefore, is divine. God heals christians; God heals nonchristians. Nevertheless the term divine healing. as used in the Church of God, has been restricted to a spontaneous, usually instant, healing that occurs only in response to prayer and faith. E. E. Byrum stressed the point in his book, The Secret of Salvation when he said, "It is the privilege of each child of God to get where he can pray the real prayer of faith, whether it be in few words or many, and thereby prevail with God, whether it be for the salvation of souls or for the healing of the body."

Although I have been involved in a number of healing services and have attended many saints of the church during their sicknesses, I seldom witness divine healing as an instantaneous, miraculous healing in which the afflicted child of God experiences full restoration to normal health immediately. I have seen, though, numerous people who have definitely felt the touch of God during their illness; and then, I have noted a definite, lasting change in their condition. Most healing, moreover, happens according to God's natural laws through the

restorative healing power he has put in nature and in our bodies. Occasionally he does speed up the process and a person is healed in a matter of hours. Please refer to my article in Vital Christianity, October 28, 1973 entitled, "I Beheld A Resurrection."

In every circumstance of illness, all of us need to pray and exercise our faith in God to bring our wills into harmony with his so that his healing power may operate in us without hindrance. However, we should seek God for his presence and fellowship; not what he can do for us. Whether God chooses to heal us by his usual healing forces, or not at all, should not be the test of our faith. Miraculous healing comes by the grace of God not because we pray a certain way or have a certain faith. Nowhere in the Bible do we find Jesus specifically refusing to heal people simply because they did not have enough faith. This demand by the church that interprets our lack of miraculous healing as due to our lack of faith poses one of the greatest deterrents to patients finding wholeness of body and soul that I have seen.

I do not believe that Jesus performed miraculous healings to prove his divinity. Rather, he accomplished miraculous healings because he is divine. For us today this means that whether or not people see a miraculous healing in our case or on physical healing at all is not the question. When a person witnesses a change

# Healing — Past and Present

Marie Strong

There is a great deal of interest today in the subject of healing, healing that is independent of medicine and modern surgery. This idea is a vital part of some of the most popular TV programs and paperback literature. This kind of healing is very ancient, and Biblically centered.

Since God was the author of life, He could heal or withdraw health at any time. All of life, particularly its beginning, was in His hands. If a woman were barren, God had shut up her womb. Since the only reason for a woman's existence was to bear children, childlessness was considered a curse. At times God miraculously healed such persons. The classic case is ninety year old Sarah whose promise of a child led to uproarious laughter, causing the parents to name the child Isaac, meaning laughter. (Gen. 17:15ff)<sup>1</sup>

The curse of childlessness sometimes struck whole nations, even foreign nations, such as Gerar. This was considered the punishment of God for King Abimelech's adding Sarah to his harem. Poor old Abimelech had been told that Sarah was Abraham's sister.<sup>2</sup>

Miriam, sister of Moses, was stricken with leprosy because she objected to her brother marrying an Ethiopian. She had to spend seven days in isolation before the Lord would heal her. (Numbers 12)

There are a number of miracles and healings in the lives of Elijah and Elisha. These two prophets were rebels long before the idea became popular. Elijah so shook up the social, economic and political order that the King of Israel was in a constant state of frustration (see e.g. I Kings

18:17).<sup>3</sup> There was nothing ordinary about Elisha, the successor, either. Elisha's major healings are among foreigners which was certainly contrary to Israelite expectancy. Barrenness is cured (II Kings 4:8-17), a leper is cleansed (II Kings 5:8-14), an the dead are raised (II Kings 4:18-37).

At times healing is dependent upon obedience such as the statement in Deuteronomy 28:27:

If you will not obey the voice of your God or be careful to do all of his commandments... the Lord will smite you with the boils of Egypt, and with the ulcers and the scurvy and the itch, of which you cannot be healed. Goodness is rewarded, at least in one case, by the lengthening of life; Hezekiah's life span was increased by fifteen years (II Kings 20:1-11).

Very often the term "healing" relates to change of life style or healing of the spirit. This is characteristic of Hosea, e.g. "come let us return to the Lord ... that he may heal us" (Hosea 6:1). The prophets apparently realized, as do some moderns, that peace of mind and spirit are essential to bodily health.

The total healing of man was apparently the intention of God from the beginning. There are some beautiful passages in the Old Testament with great promise, such as—

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me.

Bless His holy name!

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and forget not all his benefits,

Who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases.

Psalm 103:1-3

in our lives which portrays the incarnation of Christ in our lives then they know Christ is divine. Jesus did not call attention to his healing ministry with great crowds or fanfare; neither should we. Actually when we claim a divine healing even when we cannot detect it we hinge on magic not miracle. We indulge in magic when we turn our attention to the healing of our body, God's creation, instead of our relationship to the Creator.

The greatest demonstration of divine healing that I witness in my patients comes not in an extraordinarily fast recovery but in an extraordinary peace, joy and faith in God that allows them to cope with their illness. Especially when the disease process appears to be a tragedy by the world's standards and yet patients grow and mature, am I convinced of divine healing.

Dr. Kenneth E. Schemmer is a Christian physician and surgeon living in Anderson, Indiana. He serves on many committees and boards of the Park Place Church of God where he and his wife are very active in the program of Christian Education.

or If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

II Chronicles 7:145

Although the promises were made and the power was apparently available, healings, in the Old Testament, are rare when one considers the span of time, the centuries covered. They stand in stark contrast to the Gospels and Acts where healings occur on almost every page. The promise of a new dispensation of grace is in the Old Testament. It is found in such statements as "the Sun of Righteousness shall appear with healing in his wings" (Malachi 4:2). Perhaps the most beautiful promise of the coming Messiah is found in Isaiah 53. The believers of our time cling to this statement:

He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.

Isaiah 53:5

Jesus read about his healings one day in Nazareth and said, "today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Isaiah 61; Luke 4:21)

He fulfilled it, not only in word, but in action. He healed "every infirmity among the people" (Matthew 4:23). They knew He cared, and His caring was expressed in action that changed their lives. There are dozens of cases of healings recorded in the Gospels. There are far too many to record here. To try to tell about them would seem redundant for they are well known to most readers of this article. What isn't so well known, or at least well practiced, is the awareness that the same power He expressed was left to His followers to be exercised. Can you think of anything more sweeping than the promise found in John 14:12-14:

He who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it.

He had to leave before the Holy Spirit could come (John 16:7). He went to the Father to send the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17). That same Spirit is to be operating in our lives.

This is the Christian's legacy from Jesus. It is the downpayment on our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14). What a power is turned loose in His church! It may be beyond our ability to express but it is not beyond our capacity to use. The promise is to all who believe (John 14:17 and Acts 2:38-39).

I find a great deal of embarrassment and even of unbelief among Christians regarding divine healing. I have recently been healed of colitus and stomach ulcers that have plagued me for over forty years. The hearers are divided into two classes, the ones who believe and rejoice in my new body and the ones who are embarrassed. skeptical, or wanted to credit it to my retirement. Why this unbelief among people who have always believed in healing? They seem to be afraid of "extremism". Believe me, if you are suddenly healed after forty years of pain and less than normal living you feel like being extreme. I can readily understand how the lame man in Acts 3 "walked, leaped and praised God." To me every meal is a religious experience and the goodness and grace of God quite overwhelm me.

Why can we not believe that people are really and truly healed? Why do we seem to discount or otherwise disqualify "healers" from groups other than our own? Is not God powerful enough to work with the wide variety which we call humanity? Was this not the major problem of the Jews of Jesus' day and of the people in his home town? On that day in Nazareth Jesus reminded the people that there were many sick Jews in the time of Elijah but that the prophet healed foreigners, because of Jewish unbelief?

Very early we had the message of divine healing. Were we, and are we, good stewards of that message? The good steward is the one who uses what has been entrusted to him (Matthew 25:14-30). How well are we using this truth?

**Dr. Marie Strong** for more than twenty-five years was professor of religion at Anderson College. At the time of her retirement a few weeks ago she was named Professor Emeritus. She has been used effectively by God in the leadership roles in teaching the Bible and Christian Doctrine.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>An interesting case among foreigners was that of the Shunammite woman in the Elisha stories, II Kings 4:11ff.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>One is struck by the seeming lack of ethics in Abraham's passing Sarah off as his sister, rather than his wife. Middle East customs would have made proba-

# What Do We Say About Divine Healing?

John W. V. Smith

One of the accompaniments of the current renewal of interest in "born again" religion is a new emphasis on Divine Healing. It is not surprising that the "charismatic revival" should also give new impetus to healing since this is included in the biblical list of gifts. Consequently, a great deal is being said, particularly on radio and television, and written these days about the doctrine and practice of divine healing. Where does the Church of God fit into the picture of this renewal focus on a doctrine which has been an important part of our teaching since the beginning of the Movement?

Historically, we can say that divine healing was only an incidental part of D. S. Warner's preaching while he was associated with the Churches of God in North America. He mentions two instances of healing in his diary in September, 1878, but the manner of reporting suggests these were regarded as unusual answers to prayer. After 1881, without dramatic fanfare and with no announcement of "new light" he and those associated with him began to practice praying for the sick as a normal part of their ministry. Testimonies of healing appeared in the early issues of the Gospel Trumpet. The most remarkable of these was the healing of Emma Miller (later Mrs A. B. Palmer) of blindness at the Bangor, Michigan campmeeting in 1883, an event which created considerable excitement and gave no small amount of publicity to the ministry of the "saints." In Missouri, Jeremiah Cole and his sister Mary were each healed of long-standing illnesses in the mid 1880's and both became outstanding ministers in the Movement.

ble the killing of the husband and the addition of the widow to the harem. Abraham is undoubtedly aiming at survival. Much of this type of lying was considered clever, not evil. It is not until Jesus that lying is seen in its true light and even He had a difficult time getting the message across. Sarah was in reality Abraham's half sister.

<sup>3</sup>The most remarkable healing in the life of Elijah was the raising of the dead son of the widow of Zarephath (I Kings 17:17-24).

<sup>4</sup>For other examples the reader is referred to Hosea 6:11-7:1; 11:3; and Jeremiah 17:14; 30:17 and Isaiah 6:10.

<sup>5</sup>In the same vein as Psalm 30:2 and 107:20.

With the coming of Enoch Byrum to the publishing work in 1887 the doctrine and practice of divine healing took on new significance. Byrum himself had earlier experienced healing of tuberculosis and a serious eye affliction so he was already a strong advocate. As the years passed his interest grew and his success in praying for the sick led him to claim a special gift of "healing faith." This was confirmed in the 1895 Grand Junction campmeeting when he discussed the matter with Warner who concurred in the validity of the evidence, laid his hands on Byrum's head and thanked God for the bestowal of such a gift. For the rest of his life Byrum gave major attention to his healing ministry. Under his editorship the Gospel Trumpet carried a regular feature under the caption, "Divine Healing," plus "Testimonies" and other substantive articles dealing with the subject. He traveled widely to pray for the sick, to speak on healing, and to encourage the faith of the saints.

In the process of developing the teaching and practice of divine healing as a special emphasis in the Movement a number of questions and problems arose. The first of these occurred in late 1895 when Warner answered a query in the Trumpet regarding the use of "natural remedies" by stating that it was not necessary for a person to "ask God to do for us by his divine power what we could do with remedies he had placed within our reach and given us knowledge to use." Byrum regarded this as "lowering the standard below the Bible line" and apparently confronted Warner on the issue and, according to a report published shortly after Warner's death, secured from him an admission of error. Thereafter Byrum and most other leaders for many years interpreted belief in divine healing as the complete avoidance of all medicine and doctors with total "live or die" dependence on God.

As might be expected, such a stance provided numerous occasions for testing. Perhaps the most notable of these was in 1898 when one of the saints, Sarah E. Johnson of Marion, Indiana, died in childbirth. During her illness she and her husband William had called "elders of the church," George R. and Sarah Achor, to come and pray for her healing. The Achors came and continued there in prayer for several days until her death. A physician had been called out but was not treating the patient at the time of her

decease. Knowing that the Johnsons were "trusting God" for healing some of the neighbors became irate and filed a legal charge of "murder" against Johnson and the Achors and all three were jailed. A grand jury later modified the charge to "involuntary manslaughter" and they were allowed to post bail. At the trial several months later all were exonerated, but the affair created considerable discussion and identified the Church of God in the public press as a "healing sect."

Another aspect of the healing emphasis was an extensive discussion of the theological question of whether physical healing was included in the atonement. Certain biblical passages (e.g. Matt. 13:15; Luke 9:2; Matt. 9:2-7) link conversion and healing. I Peter 2:24 speaks specifically: "By whose stripes ye were healed." The implication of a positive answer to this question, of course, was to make healing as available and as certain as salvation, contingent only on faith. Failure to be healed could be attributed only to some flaw in faith. Sickness, in this context, was inevitably linked with sin. Such a position came to be defended by many leaders in the Movement, thus enhancing the importance of the doctrine but raising many questions regarding the cause of a given person's sickness or the reasons why an individual was not being healed.

The healing emphasis continued with strength through the 1920's and 30's, usually with the "trust . . . live or die" interpretation. Others like Willis M. Brown, O. L. Yerty and Ralph Poole claimed the "gift" of healing and found success in their ministry. Still others such as J. W. Byers and E. H. Ahrendt wrote extensively on the subject. One of the "attractions" at the Gospel Trumpet office was a museum of testimony for healing—a collection of discarded crutches, braces, hearing aids, eye-glasses and other therapeutic paraphernalia from people who had been healed of infirmities and no longer needed such aids. The anti-medicine viewpoint was dominant to the extent it was sometimes even made a test of fellowship.

By the early 1940's, however, the emphasis began to change, moving toward Warner's earlier expressed view that one should utilize available means to combat sickness and infirmity—including the skills of physicians and surgeons, medicine, and other forms of therapy. Such a stance did not negate belief in divine healing but did tend to relegate its practice to a "last resort" status. Testimonies of healing came to focus on divine intervention regarding incura-

ble or medically baffling cases rather than answers to prayer for common maladies. The number of persons in the Movement claiming the "gift" of healing decreased markedly, though most ministers considered the ministry of healing a significant part of their vocation.

In assessing the present stance in the Movement regarding divine healing at least three observations become evident:

- (1) Post World War II advances in medicine have been dramatic, making aids to prevention and control of disease more credible and more available—and made to appear more "natural" in the healing process.
- (2) "Faith healing" came to have many undesirable associations: some flamboyant "healers" turned out to be charletans; the gifts of healing and "tongues" came to be closely linked; many reported "miracles" were proved to be fakes or only temporary cures.
- (3) New understandings of the nature of illness, linking closely the physical to the mental and spiritual has given a strong impetus to pastoral counseling as an indispensable ministerial function relating to physical health as well as to mental and spiritual well being. Many doctors, on the other hand, recognize the importance of the spiritual factor.

Some see the present stance as a lowering of the standard in regard to healing. Others see it as more comprehensive—the "elder" being trained to probe and prompt as well as pray for the sick. Others see the necessity of making the church as only part of a team of God called helpers of those who are ill. Ralph Poole, one of those in the Movement who experienced a miraculous healing himself and who claims the gift of praying for others, expressed this thought well when he recently said, "May God hasten the day when devout doctors, conscientious psychiatrists and ministers work hand in hand with God in the healing of the sick."

We still have to face the question of where we stand on this doctrine in the light of the present re-emphasis. In finding the answer we must again search the Scriptures, examine our own past, and find a position in the context of modern meaningfulness.

Dr. John W. V. Smith is professor of Church History and Associate Dean of the School of Theology, Archivist for the Warner Memorial Historical Collection and a member of the Centennial Celebration Committee.

## Divine Healing of Psychosomatic Illness

John M. Vayhinger

There are many kinds of miracles and various types of healing. A miracle may be the conception of a new human being by a husband and wife as an act of love. A miracle may be the healing of a wound after a surgeon has removed a cancerous growth. A miracle may be the "big blue marble" of the earth with its finely balanced chemistry. Healing may be involved in an infection when the body's defenses overcome the virus. Healing may be the growth of a bone after being broken. Healing may be a sin-sick soul finding salvation and becoming whole again.

Healing, here, involves several levels of God's involvement in our ailments, our disease. Psychosomatic illness is that condition, defined by J. A. Winter, M.D., as "one in which changes in function predominant over changes in structure." (p.6) P.S. illness involves an interrelation between the psyche and bodily states, the somatic symptoms being seen as symbolic expression of the "body language" of emotional tension, stress, anxiety and distress.

Changes in organ structure usually follow changes in function, as in an ulcer of the stomach, in which structural changes may be observed by x-ray, the gastroscope or in exploratory surgery and in which stress may be observed before the pitting and bleeding.

H. Flanders Dunbar lists these medical conditions as having a component of P.S. in their sources: the common cold, allergies, hysterical blindness, coronary heart disease, arthritis, peptic ulcer, migraine, colitis, asthma, hay fever, rheumatic heart disease, high blood pressure, all with stress usually in their origin. Franz Alexander would add epilepsy, constipation, painful menstruation, impotence, frigidity, false pregnancy, paroxysmal tachycardia (sudden increase in heart beat), and hives. J. A. Winter would extend the list with Parkinson's Disease, cancer and multiple sclerosis. Note, that in all of these there is a reciprocal relationship to the degree of psychological stress with organic predisposition.

The psychological variables are many, working in mutual correlation in complex ways: anxiety, dependent needs, oedipal constellations, castration fear, competition, envy and jealousy, hostile impulses, hope and disillusionment.

Remember, human beings work as a whole; no one has only a disordered stomach, a headache, a

common cold. The symptom is only the symbol or expression of a complex set of interrelationships, and P.S. is "a non-verbal communication of a bodily state." (Winter, p.123)

Since emotional illness comes from a feelingthinking process growing out of a buried and harmful memory matrix and is an upsetting of the delicate adjustments between and among the organ systems of the body, the equilibrium of these processes must be restored, stress diminished and a positive, hopefilled outlook constructed for the patient-parishioner.

Therapeutic experience shows that patients present their symptoms to their doctors and pastors from deep-seated emotional conflicts. Psychoanalysis, psychotherapy and pastoral counseling believe that verbal communication (power of the "word") relieves anxiety-provoking tensions and thus makes possible both "cures" medically and "healing" spiritually. The recuperative power resides within the patient-parishioner, and, to the Christian this power ultimately comes from the Great Physician, who is the source of all healing, whatever the pattern of help.

The patient-parishioner may be sub-diabetic, or sub-asthmatic or sub-anorectic (lost appetite) or have a quiet ulcer, and under stress and emotional conflict, find the condition passes the critical threshold and flares into a diabetic acidosis, a full-fledged asthmatic attack or become cachetic anorectic.

On the other hand, an hysterical condition results from unconscious ego defense mechanisms seeking to contain an intolerable condition, like conflict between strong goals, or guilt/shame producing thoughts or behavior. Such may be seen in Mark when a man, paralyzed, was let down through a hole in the roof. Jesus points out that the paralysis (hysterical) came about because of his guilt which, when Jesus had brought the guilt to the surface of consciousness and had forgiven it, disappeared to allow the man to give up his symptom and walk away.

One word about "spiritual healing". Many of us believe that healing comes from God, whether through medicine, prayer, healing service or psychoanalysis. All healing thus is miracle and some healing is special recovery when there is no physical explanation for the recovery. But I would encourage every healing pastor to read William A. Nolen, M.D.'s book *Healing*, A Doctor in Search of a Miracle, Random House (1974) so that high faith will be in God's grace and not just in human suggestion.

### The Pastor's Part in the Treatment of Psychosomatic Disease

Physicians are the treaters of organic disease; psychologists (behavioral or medical) treat emotional discomfort, but pastors bring the deepest and strongest "medicine" in their offer of God's grace and forgiveness. With gastric or duodenal ulcers, a common psychosomatic disease, psychiatric treatment may change the life-style-disease-stress-producing habits. Physicians may prevent perforation of the ulcer into canal hemorrhage, or the transition of the ulcer into cancer, but Dr. Hyder insists that "this type of personality problem can be significantly mitigated as a result of a spiritual experience in which the patient can come to yield himself and his ambitions to the will of God and thereby achieve the serenity and inner peace which comes from accepting Christ as Lord of his life." (p.144)

Note the process, stress from guilt and lack of trust, tension in the bodily organ systems, and breakdown of systemic function. To reverse the process, one must care first for the organ malfunction, then examine the causes of the stress, especially sin and resultant guilt along with the early experiences of childhood and finally developing trust and faith in the providence in God. Meanwhile, involvement in the congregation of concerning and learning, changes the rigid, untrusting driving life style, and develops a confidence, even in one's apprehensions of death and failure, to go beyond the wrath (righteousness and justice to a God who is never vindictive).

Pastors are key spiritual physicians here. First in helping find a physician who can treat the immediate dangerous condition, psychiatric-psychologic persons to work through the stress, provide a helping congregation of friends for support, and then personally share the walk through the "valley of the shadow of death" and offer God's grace through Jesus Christ for personal acceptance. Loring T. Swaim describes the way in which he worked with patients, listening, praying, sharing, interpreting. Prayers were

answered in simple, natural ways, not always as we expected but eventually in the most constructive way. It seemed as if God's plan was always to build faith in Him at every opportunity. He became a reality, not just a Power—a Personal Father who was interested in the individual and was a vital part of daily living. (Swaim, p. 131) For every pastor as well as psychologist and medical healer, Dr. Swaim then pointed out that "in order to be whole-hearted and sincere in decisions and prayers, the conscious mind and the unconscious had to be in complete agreement."

Note, that an honest belief on the part of the pastor is foundational. To lead his congregation in the Christian's creed, saying "you believe in God the Father Almighty..." is hypocritical and destroys the pastor's influence and effectiveness. "Physician, heal thyself" is always the beginning of treatment in psychoneurotic therapy. The pastor's first prayer is always "create in ME a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." (Psalm 51:10)

Second the pastor must have great patience, never hurrying the psychosomatic patient. The pastor will always keep concern, hope and the desire to improve alive and working in the patient. Third, through reading, continuing education, workshops, supervision, he/she learns about techniques and skills and the causes of P.S. There is no substitute for knowing what to do, diagnostically and treatment-wise. Four, cooperation with medical and psychological professionals maximizes everyone's skills with the patient-parishioner. And, finally, trust in God for the healing, giving Him credit for the change, leaving to Him responsibility, especially when the condition doesn't improve.

For some patients, the symptoms are the only defense they have against catastrophic impulses or fears, and to give up the symptoms is to destroy themselves. Sometimes headaches are the lesser of the two symptoms, when suicide or psychosis is the alternative. Even Paul's thorn in the flesh, if it did have a psychosomatic component to it, was never taken away until his life ended in Rome while he was yet a comparatively young man.

The Christian healer brings three important emotional factors to the patient, trust and dependence on the one hand, forgiveness for the past and a new life for the present with hope for the future on the other. If a person has truly "sought first the kingdom of God" and finds that "all these needful things are supplied", (Mat-

thew 6:33, Luke 12:31) then he/she can as Quentin Hyder writes, "remember that forgiveness removes guilt and that committing your worries and fears to God and leaving your burdens at the foot of the cross brings peace to the mind and soul." (p. 143) And one might add, the body also.

The healing of the psychosomatic patient is no less real and his healing no less of a miracle than the healing of the surgical patient or the cripple.

Dr. John M. Vayhinger is professor of psychology and pastoral care in the Anderson School of Theology, and widely known throughout the nation for his outstanding leadership in conferences dealing with many aspects of pastoral care.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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