

Articles and Sermons :: A.B. Simpson : (The Gospel of Healing) 3. POPULAR OBJECTIONS

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Promoting Genuine Biblical Revival.

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We will now refer to some of the most forcible objections to the glad tidings that "He that forgiveth all our iniquities," as truly and as fully also "healeth all our diseases."

THE AGE OF MIRACLES IS PAST: This is commonly assumed as an axiom, and almost quoted as a Bible text. In reply, let us ask, what age are we in?

There have been, and shall be, various Ages and Dispensations, viz, Paradisiacal, Antediluvian, Patriarchal, Mosaic, Christian, Millennial, Eternal. We are not in the Patriarchal or Mosaic, we are not in the Millennial, we must therefore be in the Christian. But perhaps there are two or three Christian Ages; one for Christ and His Apostles, and one for us. And yet Paul says he lived in "these last days." He speaks of the people of his generation as those on whom "the ends of the world are come." And Peter, in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, claims for his day a prophesy of Joel for the latter days. We must then be in the Age of Christ and Christianity, and if that was not the Age of Miracles then what is it?

But perhaps there was to be a great gulf between the first and last periods of this Age. Perhaps it was only to begin with special manifestations of Divine Power and then shade down into sober commonplace. Why then should Joel say that the signal outpouring of the Holy Spirit should be "in the latter days," and the special gifts of the Spirit to the handmaids and servants, and the preternatural signs and wonders both in Earth and Heaven should be specially "before the coming of that great and terrible day of the Lord," that is, toward the close of the Christian Age, and prior to the Advent? Why also should Paul so strongly insist, in 1 Cor. 12, that the Church of Christ is one body, not two, and that the gifts of every part belong to the whole? If there be an essential difference between the Apostolic and later Age, then the Church is not one body but two; then the gifts of those members do not flow into our members; then the glorious figure and powerful reasoning of that chapter are false and delusive. If we are the same body, we have the same life and power.

What made the Apostles more mighty than ordinary men? It was not their companionship with Jesus; it was the gift of the Holy Ghost. Have we not the same? And do we not exalt the men and disparage the Spirit that makes them what they were when we speak of their power as exceptional and transient? Peculiar and exceptional functions they indeed had, as the witnesses of Christ's resurrection, and the organizers of the Church on earth; but to show to men that the miraculous gifts of the Church were not confined to them, these are specially distinguished from the Apostleship in 1 Cor. 12. They were conferred in preeminent degree on Stephen, Philip, and others who were not apostles at all, and they were committed by James to the ordinary and permanent eldership of the Church. Nay, the dear Master never contemplated or proposed any post-apostolic gulf of impotence and failure. Man's unbelief and sin have made it. The Church's own corruption has caused it. But He never desired it nor provided for it. Standing midway between earth and heaven, and looking down to the nineteenth century with a love as tender, and a grace as full and potential, as He exercised to the first, and speaking in the present tense, as though we were all equally near to Him who would never be separated from us, He said, "All power is Given unto Me in HEAVEN AND IN EARTH, and lo, I AM with you ALL THE DAYS, even unto the End of the AGE" (Greek). It was to be one age, not two, and His all power was never withdrawn. He was to be a perpetual AM, and to be as near at the end as at the beginning. In fact; the work we were to do was to be but the complement of His own, nay, His Own work; for Luke says, "He began to do and to teach." He must therefore be finishing His work still. And this is just what He Himself said our work would be, "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also (that is, they shall be Christ's work and ours, in partnership), nor shall they be aught diminished by His seeming absence; for "greater works shall he do because I go to My Father."

And, indeed, so long as the ancient Church retained in even limited measure the faith and holiness of the first days, the same works were uniformly found. In the second, third, and fourth centuries, fathers as famous as Irenaeus and Tertullian, bear testimony to the prevalence of many undoubted miracles of healing, and even the raising of the dead in the name

e of Jesus. And as late as the fifth century supernatural events, in the case of numerous well-known and living men and women, are attested by authorities as high as Procopius and Justinian, on evidence so strong that the sober editor of Mosheim declares that he who would doubt it must be ready to question all the facts of history.

The Age of Miracles is not past. The Word of God never indicated a hint of such a fact. On the contrary, they are to be among the signs of the last day; and the very adversary himself is to counterfeit them, and send forth at last the spirits of devils working miracles, into the kings of the earth. So that the only defense against the false miracles will be the true. We are in the Age of miracles, the Age of Christ, the Age which lies between two Advents, and underneath the eye of a ceaseless Divine Presence, the Age of Power, the Age which above all other ages of time should be intensely alive.

THE SAME RESULTS AS ARE CLAIMED FOR FAITH IN THE HEALING OF DISEASE ARE ALSO SAID TO FOLLOW THE PRACTICES OF SPIRITUALISM, ANIMAL MAGNETISM, CLAIRVOYANCE, ETC.

We will not deny that while some of the manifestations of Spiritualism are undoubted frauds, there are many that are unquestionably supernatural, and are produced by forces for which Physical Science has no explanation. It is no use to try to meet this terrific monster of SPIRITUALISM in which, as Joseph Cook says, is, perhaps, the great IF of our immediate future in England and America, with the hasty and shallow denial of the facts, of their explanation as tricks of legerdemain. They are often undoubtedly real and superhuman. They are "the spirits of devils working miracles," gathering men for Armageddon. They are the revived forces of the Egyptian magicians, the Grecian oracles, the Roman haruspices, the Indian medicine-men. They are not divine, they are less than omnipotent, but they are more than human.

Our Lord has expressly warned us of them, and told us to test them, not by their power, but by their fruits, their holiness, humility, and homage to the name of Jesus and the Word of God; and their very existence renders it the more imperative that we should be able to present against them--like the rod of Moses which swallowed the magicians, and at last silenced their limited power--the living forces of a holy Christianity in the physical as well as the spiritual world.

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES WERE DESIGNED TO ESTABLISH THE FACTS AND DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY; WE DO NOT NEED THEIR CONTINUANCE.

Why, then, do the critics call in question the existence of these facts and the credibility of these writings? How are the inhabitants of new countries to know the divinity of these oracles? What access have they, or indeed the great masses of men everywhere, to the archives of learning, or the manuscripts of the Bible? Nay, every generation needs a living Christ, and every new community needs "these signs following," to confirm the word. And we have sometimes seen the plausible and persistent Agnostic, whom no reason could satisfy, silenced and confounded when brought face-to-face with some humble, illiterate woman, as she told him with glowing honesty, which he felt in the depths of his heart, that she had been raised up from lifelong helplessness by the word and name of Jesus only. Until he comes again the world will never cease to need the touch of His Power and Presence, "God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will."

There is also a current misapprehension about the full design of Christ's miracles which takes away one-half their beauty and value. They are looked upon solely and mainly as special testimonies to Christ's power and divinity. But if this had been all, a few special and marked cases would have been sufficient. He would not then have healed the thousands who daily thronged Him. But we are told, on the contrary, that they were not isolated and occasional, but numerous and almost universal. "He healed all that had need of healing, and all that were sick and, not so much as a proof of His power, as to show that which He now wished them to know--His boundless love--to fulfill the ancient prophetic picture of the blessed Christ, and that it might be fulfilled that was spoken by the prophet Esaias, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

But if it was necessary for Him to fulfill that character then, it is as much so still; as necessary yet that He should never cease to be true to the picture God drew of Him, which He drew of Himself. If this be not true still for us, then "Jesus Christ is" NOT "the Same, yesterday, today, and forever." If this be not still true for us, then, perhaps, the other promises of the Scripture are not also true for us, and He has not borne our sins any more than our sickness and suffering. Nay, "His heart is still the same:

Kinsman, Friend and Elder Brother,
Is His everlasting name;
Thou art All in All to me,
Living One of Bethany."

A common objection is urged in this way: Christ's last promise in Mark embraces much more than healing; but if you claim one, you must claim all. If you expect the healing of the sick, you must also include the gift of tongues and the power to overcome malignant poisons; and if the gift of tongues has ceased, so in the same way has the power over disease. We cheerfully accept the severe logic, we cannot afford to give up one of the promises. We admit our belief in the presence of the Healer in all the charismata of the Pentecostal Church. We see no reason why an humble servant of Christ, engaged in the Master's work, may not claim in simple faith the power to resist malaria and other poisons and malignant dangers; and we believe the gift of tongues was only withdrawn from the early Church as it was abused for vain display, or as it became unnecessary for practical use, through the rapid evangelization of the world; and it will be repeated as soon as the Church will humbly claim it for the universal diffusion of the Gospel. Indeed, instances are not wanting now of its apparent restoration in missionary labors, both in India and Africa.

Perhaps no objection is more strongly urged than the glory that redounds to God from our submission to His will in sickness, and the happy results of sanctified affliction. Well, if those who urge and claim to practice this suggestion would really accept their sickness, and lie passive under it, they would at least be consistent. But do they not send for a doctor, and do their best to get out of this sweet will of God? Is this meekly submitting to the affliction, and does not the submission usually come when the result is known to be inevitable?

We do not deny the happy results of many a case of painful sickness in turning the soul from some forbidden path and leading it into deeper experiences of God; nor do we question the deep and fervent piety, and spiritual advancement of many an invalid who cannot trust God for healing; but we are sure there is an immense amount of vague and unscriptural misunderstanding with respect to the principles of Christian discipline. We do not believe that God chastens an obedient child simply to make it good.

"FOR THIS CAUSE MANY ARE WEAK AND SICKLY AMONG YOU, AND MANY SLEEP; FOR IF WE WOULD JUDGE OURSELVES WE SHOULD NOT BE JUDGED."

Here is a definite and unchangeable law of God's dealings with His dear children. When we are judging ourselves we shall not be judged. While we hearken and obey, He "will put none of these diseases upon us which He brought upon the Egyptians." His normal state for His faithful children is soundness of body, soul and spirit (1 Thess. 5: 23). His own prayer for them is that they may be in health and prosper even as their souls prosper. His will for them is to act in these things according to His word. It is ever "the good pleasure of His goodness," and "that good and perfect and acceptable will of God." "Many," it is true, "are the afflictions of the righteous;" but it is also true that "the Lord delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."

And between "affliction" and sickness it must be well remembered there is a very clear distinction. At Marah, the children of Israel had to drink of bitter water, and it was only sweetened, not removed; as many a trial is sanctified and blessed. But it was right there that He made a statute and an ordinance of healing, and told them that if they would obey Him, they should not be sick, and He would be their constant Healer, thus showing them that Marah was not sickness. And in exact parallel, James says to us, 5: 13, "is any afflicted? let him pray;" that is, for grace and strength. But, "Is any sick? let him call for the elders of the Church," and be healed. Affliction is "suffering with Christ;" and He was not sick. "In the world ye shall have tribulation;" but all the more we need a sound, strong heart, to bear and overcome.

It is objected that it is presumptuous to claim the healing of disease absolutely, and that the model of all true prayer is Christ's language in the garden: "If it be possible, let this cup pass: nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done." Yes, but they have forgotten that He knew it was not possible that this cup should pass, that in this case He was asking something which, to say the very least, He had no promise or warrant to, and which He repudiated instantly, saying, "Save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy Name."

Certainly, in any such circumstances, when prompted by extreme distress to ask for something for which we have no clear warrant, promise or favorable intimation of the Divine will, we ought ever to refer the matter to the arbitration of that unknown will. But when we know from His own word to us that a blessing is in accordance with His will, that it is provided for, purchased and promised, is it not really evasive, uncandid, disingenuous, and really an affectation to come to Him in doubt and uncertainty, or couching our requests in the language of ambiguity? Is it not very much the same as if a son at college should still keep writing and asking your permission for things wherein you had already written the fullest directions in your first letter? Did Christ thus pray, when He asked for things He knew to be consistent with God's will? Is it not as lawful for us to imitate Him in one prayer as another, at Bethany equally with Gethsemane? And there, what did He say? "Father, I know Thou hearest Me always," and again, "Father, I will that they be with Me." In His name may we not pray even as He, where His will is clearly made known? "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what Ye

E WILL, and it shall be done unto you." Do we pray in indefiniteness when we ask for forgiveness? We take it and claim it, and being strong in faith, we thus most effectually glorify God.

WE ARE TOLD THAT THERE ARE MANY CASES OF FAILURE; and Paul and his companions are first enumerated. Paul's inevitable thorn is kept as a precious relic to torment doubting Christians; and Trophimus and Epaphroditus are dragged forward on their couches to encourage the willing patient in the hospital of Doubting Castle. With regard to Paul's thorn we must say,

FIRST: It is very uncertain if it was DISEASE; it was a messenger of Satan to BUFFET him, i.e., some humiliation--perhaps stammering.

SECONDLY: It was so far healed and more than healed, whatever it was, that it brought the power of Christ to rest upon him so mightily that he was abundantly enabled for all his labors and duties, and longed for more such provocations of blessing. And he who can see in this a feeble invalid laid aside from work, is afflicted with spiritual cross eyes.

THIRDLY: Before people can claim that their sickness is a heavenly visitation like Paul's to keep them from being exalted above measure, they would need to have been up in the third heaven with him and heard things unlawful for a man to utter! And

FOURTHLY: Paul does give us elsewhere the account of his healing (2. Cor. 1: 10); and it was unmistakably by believing prayer and mighty faith even in God that raises the dead. As to Epaphroditus, he was healed through God's mercy. Trophimus, doubtless, was also, although it must have been delayed. Healing, even by faith, is not always instantaneous. There are "miracles" and "gifts of healing," the one sudden and stupendous, the other simple and probably gradual. That Trophimus should have been himself to blame for his illness or slowness of faith is not wonderful, and that there should be only two such cases in all these inspired personal sketches is most wonderful.

There are still cases of failure, but they may be accounted for, perhaps through defective knowledge or unbelief, disobedience to God in some way, failure to follow consistently the teachings of the Word and the Spirit or for a deeper spiritual discipline. And there are failures in the spiritual life--from the same or similar causes--which in no way disprove the reality of the Divine promises or the sufficiency of Christ's grace.

"LET GOD THEN BE TRUE," EVEN IF "EVERY MAN" BE "A LIAR."

But we are told, if these things be so, people should never die. Why not? Why should faith go farther than the Word? Anything beyond that is presumption. The Word places a limit to human life, and all that Scriptural faith can claim is sufficiency of health and strength for our life-work and within its fair limits. It may be longer or shorter, but it need not, like the wicked, fail to live out half its days. It should be complete, satisfying, and as long as the work of life is yet undone. And then, when the close comes, why need it be with painful and depressing sickness, as the rotten apple falls in June from disease, and with a worm at the root? Why may it not be rather as that ripe apple would drop in September, mature, mellow, and ready to fall without a struggle into the gardener's hand? So Job pictures the close of a good man's life as the full maturity of "the shock of corn that cometh in its season."

RESORT TO THE DOCTORS

We are asked by some, did not God make all these means, and does He not want us to use them? And, indeed, is it not presumption for us to expect Him to do anything unless we do all we can for ourselves? We answer, first: God has nowhere prescribed medical means, and we have no right to infer that drugs are ordinarily His means. They are not, as food, again and again referred to as necessary or enjoined for our use.

It is a most singular and unanswerable fact that in the whole history of the patriarchs no reference is made to the use of such means. In the story of Job, so full of vivid details, everybody else is described but the doctor, and everything in the universe but drugs. There is no physician in attendance, or surely we should have caught a glimpse of him in that chamber and when Job recovers, it is wholly from God's direct hand, and when he himself gets down in his true place of humility to God and love to man. In the still more elaborate prescriptions, prohibitions and enactments of the Book of Leviticus about all the details of human life, even including the disease of leprosy, there is no remote intimation of a doctor or a drug store. And it is not until after the time of Solomon, and the importation, no doubt, of Egypt's godless culture and science, that we find the first definite case of medical treatment; and there the patient dies, and dies under the stigma of unbelief and declension from God.

In the New Testament such "means" are referred to in hardly more complimentary terms, when the woman who touched the hem of His garment is described. If Luke were a physician, he abandoned his practice for evangelistic work, as may be strongly inferred from his itinerant life; for no practice could be maintained in such circumstances. Without going further, this much at least is clear:

FIRST, that God has not prescribed medicine.

SECONDLY, He has prescribed another way in the Name of Jesus, and provided for it in the atonement, appointed an ordinance to signalize it, and actually commanded and enjoined it.

And THIRDLY, all the provisions of grace are by FAITH, not by works. The use of remedies, if successful, usually gives the glory to man, and God will not do so. If the healing of sickness is one of the purchases of Christ's atonement, and one of His prerogatives as our Redeemer, then He is jealous for it, and we will also be jealous. If it be part of the scheme of salvation, then we know that the whole scheme is framed according to the "law of faith" if the language of James be a command, then it excludes the treatment of disease by human remedies as much as the employment of one physician would exclude the treatment of another at the same time and for the same case. If it be God's way of healing, then other methods must be man's ways, and there must be some risk in deliberately repudiating the former for the latter.

We do not imply by this that the medical profession is sinful, or the use of means always wrong. There may be, there always will be, innumerable cases where faith is not exercised; and if natural means have, as they do have, a limited value, there is ample room for their exercise in these. But for the trusting and obedient child of God there is the more excellent way which His Word has clearly prescribed, and by which His name will be ever glorified afresh, and our spiritual life continually renewed.

The age is one of increasing rationalism, and unbelief is constantly endeavoring to eliminate all traces of direct supernatural working from the universe, and explain everything by second causes and natural development; and God, for this very reason, wants to show his immediate working wherever our faith will afford Him an opportunity. The Higher Criticism is industriously taking the miraculous from our Bibles, and a lower standard of Christian life is busy taking all that is divine out of our life. Let all who believe in a living God be willing to prove to a scoffing generation that "the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary," for "in Him we live and move and have our being," and that still there is "nothing too hard for the Lord."

We will only refer in conclusion to the objection that these views of the truth **UNDULY EXALT THE BODILY LIFE**, and direct the minds of men from the transcendent interest of the immortal soul, promoting fanaticism, besides leading to other evils. The same objection might be brought against the earlier years of our Lord's ministry, when the healing of the body was made an avenue to reach men's souls, and a testimony of His spiritual teachings.

The doctrine of Christ's healing power is so closely linked with the necessity of holiness, and the deeper truths and experiences of the spiritual life, that it tends, in a preeminent degree, to promote purity and earnestness. The power which heals the body usually imparts a much richer baptism of the Holy Ghost to the heart, and the retaining of this Divine life and health requires such constant fellowship with God, and such consecrated service for the Master, that the spiritual results far outweigh the temporal; and it is one of the most powerful checks and impulses in the lives of those that have truly received it.

The abuses complained of will usually be found connected with false teaching and unscriptural perversions of those things which rash or ambitious persons disseminate for their own ungodly ends. The true doctrine of healing through the Lord Jesus Christ is most humbling, holy, and practical; it exalts no man, it spares no sin, it offers no promises to the disobedient, it gives no strength for selfish indulgence or worldly ends, but it exalts the name of Jesus, glorifies God, inspires the soul with faith and power, summons to a life of self-denial and holy service, and awakens a slumbering Church and an unbelieving world with the solemn signals of a living God and a returning Master.

Extravagances, perversions, and counterfeits, we know there are; unauthorized and self-constituted healers, mercenary impostors, who give out that they are "some great one," rash and indiscriminate anointings of persons who only bring discredit on the truth by their ignorance and inconsistency, and wolves in sheep's clothing, who claim the name of Jesus for the passes of clairvoyance, the sorcery of spiritualism, and the performances of animal magnetism. But the truth of God is not chargeable with human error, and the counterfeit is often the best testimonial to the genuine. Let the ministers of the Lord Jesus answer and set aside these evils by claiming and exercising, in the power of the Holy Ghost, the gifts and

offices once delivered to them, and let the people of God, in these perilous times, "discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not."

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Re: A.B. Simpson : (The Gospel of Healing) 3. POPULAR OBJECTIONS - posted by Platy, on: 2021/2/4 18:51

As I was reading this I remembered that I had read something from George Mueller that also speaks on this subject. I copied and pasted it below:

THE UNCHANGEABLE POWER OF GOD.

But can He do miraculous things in the latter part of the nineteenth century? Yes, as well as He could in the middle of the first century. Let us never say this was in the days of the Apostles, and we cannot expect such things now. Quite true, that God does not commonly work miracles; but He can if He will, and let us give glory to His name, that if He does not work miracles it is because He can and does do His will by ordinary means. He can accomplish His ends in many ways. Let us never lose heart in such circumstances; He has the same power as ever He had. Many think if they were living in the days of Elijah, or in the days of Elisha, or in the days of the Apostles, they would expect these things; but because they do not live in those days, but in the latter part of the nineteenth century, therefore they cannot expect to have such answers to prayer. This is wrong; remember, that God has the same power as in the days of the prophets of old, or of the Apostles of old; therefore let us only look for great blessings, and great blessings will be bestowed on us, my beloved friends in Christ. They passed through one street, and forthwith the angel departed from him. This contains an important spiritual truth—it is this, that God does not work miracles when they are not needed. The angel was sent to deliver Peter from prison; but Peter was now in the streets, and he knew very well the streets of Jerusalem. He had been living there, and he knew all about them; and it was not, therefore, necessary that the angel should lead him through the streets, and bring him to the house where he was going. Therefore as soon as he was outside the prison, and no more supernatural help was required, the angel departed from him.

Source:

Page 79. <https://www.georgemuller.org/uploads/4/8/6/5/48652749/counsel-to-chrisitans.pdf>

One emphasizes supernatural workings of God the other providential workings of God but its the same God working and both require faith. Almost all of God's dealings with George Mueller were done providentially and not supernaturally. Not that I disagree with the overall message of A.B. Simpson but I think that distinction should be made.

Re: - posted by Platy, on: 2021/2/4 19:00

Here is an excellent article about what providence is. It goes along with what Mueller is saying.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/divine-providence.html>

Re: - posted by Platy, on: 2021/2/4 19:33

Also this came to my mind:

https://ia801601.us.archive.org/25/items/SERMONINDEX_SID26345/SID26345.mp3

Keith Daniel is speaking about a boy's arm getting cut off and he was taken to a hospital and there happened to be surgeons there who were able to reconnect the arm. I'm assuming they were not normally there. Listen to the first 7-10 minutes.

This is an example of an providential working of God.