

*Moving towards the  
Healing  
New Testament Reality*

2 March, 2003  
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**1. Introduction**

The question of how and if God heals has been widely disputed in our churches. This question has caused quite a lot of hot blood, since it is seen to be connected with the question of the charismatic gifts. The charismatic gifts are viewed with suspicion by many and stories of bad use of these circulate.

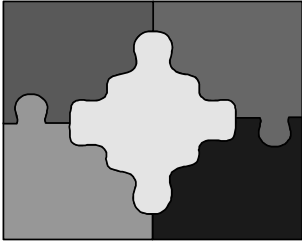
This is also true for my congregation at home in Bremen(Germany). Our church was started in the long tradition of the Lutheran state church. A first turning point came when our pastor became a Christian and saw the necessity of a "conversion." This brought revival to our church and in the following years the congregation grew enormously. There was a long time of focus on evangelization following. Evangelization was restricted to the meaning in the matter of allegiance, it did not include special inward or outward healing. This focus was also favored by our embedding in a larger group of Lutheran churches. We had a large amount of people already in our churches, who were very open to our message, since our culture was largely dominated by Christianity. For years we did larger and smaller evangelistic campaigns in the usually very open context of our Protestant state churches.

But in the process of secularization and the growth of the TV-Culture we have lost a great part of our audience. People are in all sorts of religions. Most have rejected traditional Christianity as powerless and have developed mistrust to all sorts of religions. In the case of an illness they will try whatever promises healing. A large number of "Heilpraktikern" is active using hypnosis, eastern meditation techniques, strange kinds of medicine and so on.

Healing is a way of showing and demonstrating that there is power in God and in being a Christian one is a mediator of this power to others. A church in a neighboring city has developed a ministry in this area and was very successful. This church was largely viewed as something foreign, since strange customs were introduced. When this church finally left the context of the Lutheran state churches it was mostly seen as a confirmation that this was a derivation from the right line, especially since the pastor was the head of a "renewal" movement within the Lutheran churches until shortly before his congregation left.

This paper intends to show a biblical way of doing healing without all the ceremonial ballast of all the Pentecostal and charismatic churches. A method shall be described which is spiritually balanced and can be practiced in the context of our churches.

## 2. The Problem of the Supernatural



The idea that God could intervene in our time is not comfortable to many people especially Christians. We have been used to think "rationally" for so many years, that we cannot think of anything happening outside our "scientifically surveyed" rules. Yet the development of science in the last decades especially in Quantum-Physics has clearly shown that these rules are just empirically correct. The behavior of the basic elements of matter, like electrons, neutrons and so on who compose all kinds of atoms of different elements, are **unpredictable** and this means that any time matter has the freedom to react in an unexpected way *contradicting our fixed set of rules*<sup>1</sup>. Therefore God's intervention in this world does confirm to our scientific knowledge. There is nothing supernatural anymore, since the violation of "natural laws" is natural according to Quantum-Physics.

It is natural that incidents outside the normal happen. The **supernatural** has been scientifically confirmed to be **natural**. Supernatural incidents are not supernatural. Supernatural incidents are natural.

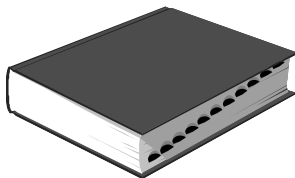
### **2.1. The Paradox of Christianity: Unbelief in God's intervention in the World**

The Holy Scripture of Christianity - Old and New Testament -- clearly testify of God's intervention in human history. His first intervention was the Creation of the world. The origin of the universe has also been scientifically surveyed in the last decades and the result is my many interpreted as creation out of nothing<sup>2</sup> in the common theory of the Big Bang.

God intervenes again and again in biblical history, communicates with his people, heals and gives other signs of his presence.

Do we believe we are so much worse than then that God does not bother about us anymore? Are we anything more special than them? Is our Christianity biblical at all?

### **2.2. Our new self-made God: The Bible**



It has been the custom of man since ancient times to have a tendency to worship created things more than the creator. The Israelites made themselves Calves, the Egyptians had the Sun and the Nile river and so on. Most of the nonsense of this has been too clearly demonstrated by science so we do not do this anymore.

Now we are living in the time of the written books, almost everybody can

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<sup>1</sup>Gribbin p.369

<sup>2</sup>Gribbin p. 366 "The Moment of Creation". He arguments an basis of the Big-Bang theory that the world is created out of nothing because the positive and negative particles brought together annihilate each other. They were generated (separated and thereby created out of nothing) by "chance" and then led through "chance" to the existence of this universe. Excellent argumentation which leads to just one conclusion that God created the world, but which he cannot see because of his worldview.

read (at least in our Western Hemisphere, although lately there is a rising amount of illiteracy among the high-school graduates in the US). So the most logical thing to do, and the simplest to avoid a confrontation with the Creator of Heaven and Earth is to worship a book. To have a god confined to a book is very practical. One can know exactly how God works. Through different methods of exegesis everybody can have his own god, as he prefers. But has this god anything to do with the Everlasting One?

Some have postulated that the Bible is the perfect and complete witness for God. We do not need more than that. God will not speak anymore to us, just through the words of the Bible. The Bible contains everything we need to know. Some take verses from the Bible and digest one each day. Some people go so far as to see a special blessing for that day if the chosen verse for that day is "good."

This reminds strongly of astrology and the worship of idols, which leads us to the question: Who will save you? The Bible or Jesus? Surely the Bible is God's word and through reading it we hear God speak. But does the Bible have the same view on itself as we have?

The Bible tells about God and about our Savior Jesus Christ. It is a witness for him, to show everyone how to contact him. The Bible is not he himself. He is who he is. Yahweh. That is also his name, "HE IS", in Hebrew.

In a very strange way some have used the Bible to "prove" that we do not experience God any more. They say God had to do wonders until the Bible was available. Since the Bible is the total witness for God, we do not need him anymore, we just have to obey his word. This is proven by the following passage from 1 Corinthians 13:8-10:

*(8)Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.  
(9)For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part;  
(10)but when **the complete** comes, **the partial will come to an end.**  
(11)When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.  
(12)For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but **then** we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; **then** I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

It is said that "the complete" in verse 10 is the Bible. With the advent of the Bible there is no need any more for prophecy and thereby for all the rest of the things that God did. And since we have the perfect witness for God in the form of the Bible we do not need his divine intervention any more. God is effectively replaced by the Bible. This is the passage where they declare their God dead.

Actually this passage is referring to the eschaton. When we will stand before Jesus on the last day, then there will be clarity. Then we will not see dimly any more. Then our knowledge will be full, as Jesus already knows us fully now. Then there will be no need anymore for knowledge. It is only possible to take the passage in the abusive sense, if a part of it is broken out of context.

### **2.3. The Fear of Healing**

The area of Healing is also often surrounded by fear on all sides. Our churches often teach about the danger of healing through the occult methods or charms like crystals, pendulum and so on. Nothing is said about God's healing of people. So often when it comes to healing, people are afraid that there

might be "spirits" involved. Many faith-healers have been depicted like that and the natural conclusion is often that there are evil spirits involved in all healing.

On the part of the minister there is the fear of doing it in the right way. What if it does not work? He might feel as a failure when healing does not almost immediately occur.

Nowadays we like to have everything under control. People ministering to another in healing might be afraid of losing control of the situation. The intend of a healing session is to let God act and therefore one will never know what and how he is going to do it. So better not risk an embarrassment! No one will know if the Holy Spirit will minister to that person at all.

### **3. Healing in the New Testament**

The New Testament is full of stories of healing. How is healing done in the New Testament? In the following part we will look at some interesting passages:

#### **3.1. Methods employed by Jesus**

##### **3.1.1. Speaking / Commanding**

*Matthew 8:1-3 And there was a leper who came to him [Jesus], and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean!" He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

Here leprosy is healed. Nothing is said about Jesus praying for any healing. Jesus heals through his command. He commands the leprosy to go and the man is healed.

*Matthew 12:10+13 A man was there with a withered hand, and they asked him [Jesus], "Is it lawful to cure on the Sabbath?" so that they might accuse him. ....Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your Hand." He stretched it out, and it was restored, as sound as the other.*

Again the same phenomenon. Jesus commands the hand to be healed and it is healed.

##### **3.1.2. Laying on of Hands**

*Matthew 8:14-15 When Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever; he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him.*

This is another example where Jesus healed a person. This time he does not say anything, but just puts his hands on her and she was healed. Healing seems not to need a special ritual like praying or laying on of hands. Jesus exercises total freedom in choosing his method.

### 3.1.3. Healing from a distance

*Matthew 8:5ff When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress." And he said to him, "I will come and cure him." The centurion answered "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. .... And to the centurion he [Jesus] said, "Go; let it be done for you according to your faith." And the servant was healed in that hour.*

Another example of a command for healing given by Jesus from a distance. It was not necessary that Jesus saw the one to be healed! What is important here is the faith of centurion who believes that Jesus can do it from a distance. He is used to military command structures. Since Jesus seems to be the highest authority for him, he viewed it not to be necessary that Jesus himself should waste to much energy on his servant.

### 3.1.4. Use of a kind of Medicine

*John 9:1ff As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. .... When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam". Then he went and came back able to see.*

This is another example of healing which is for us pretty weird. No laying on of hands, no word of command. Here Jesus makes a kind of medicine to heal the person. He puts his hands on his eyes, perhaps this is a kind of laying on of hands too.

### 3.1.5. Healing without conscious participation on part of the healer

*Mark 5:25 Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years ... She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said "Who touched my clothes?".*

Here Jesus does not even notice that he healed somebody. The woman touched his garments and this resulted in her being healed. There are other examples in Acts when similar things happen to the apostles.

### 3.1.6. Casting out Demons to cause healing

*Matthew 9:32ff After they had gone away, a demoniac who was mute was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the one who had been mute spoke, and the crowds were amazed and ...*

Sometimes demons seem to have something to do with the illness. Here just the casting out of a demon causes the healing giving an indication that demons might cause illnesses.

*Matthew 8:28-32 "When he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demoniacs, coming out of the tombs met him. They were so fierce that no one could pass that way. : Suddenly*

*they shouted, "What have you to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" : Now a large herd of swine was feeding at some distance from them. : The demons begged him, "If you cast us out, send us into the herd of swine." : And he said to them. "Go!" So they came out and entered the swine; and suddenly, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the water.*

Another example of a connection between a demon and what we would nowadays call perhaps a mental illness. Evil forces as demons seem to have something to do with illnesses too.

### **3.2. Who can do healing ministry?**

So far we have only dealt with passages where Jesus healed. Let us see what we can find about other people healing in the New Testament.

*Acts 3:2ff And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple,. he asked them for alms. Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk."*

Here we have the first example of a healing team. John and Peter work together. The healing is done through command in the name of Jesus. Peter and John looked intently at him before they gave the command for him to get healed. It seems that they had to get some clearance from somebody before they could go ahead.

*Acts 6:6ff Stephen ... They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. .... Stephen, full of grace and power did great wonders and signs among the people.*

Here for the first time, we see somebody outside the circle of apostles performing miracles and therefore healing. He is empowered by the apostles to do this through the laying on of hands.

*Acts 8:5ff Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. The crowds with one accord listened eagerly to what was said by Philip hearing and seeing the things that he did, for unclean spirits .... came out of many who were possessed; and many others who were paralyzed or lame were cured.*

Another example of one outside the circle of apostles who went out and used healing to proclaim the gospel. This was a sure method to win their attention.

Let us finish this section with the great commission of Jesus to his disciples:

*Mark 16:15ff And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. ... And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons .... they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." (Slightly censored according to our needs)*

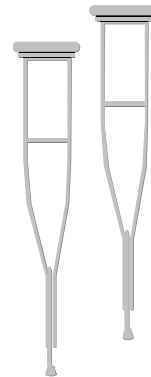
So everybody who believes is called to minister by laying on hands on the sick to heal them!

### 3.3. Which illnesses were healed

I have separated the healed illnesses in two categories. Physical handicaps and Internal illnesses. The main healings in the New Testament are of physical handicaps. I suppose a large number of these healing have been included because of their evident visibility. The following lists are not exhaustive. Evidently the writers of the New Testament were not seeing too much importance in healing. This is especially evident in the epistles where Paul sometimes mentions signs and wonders as something that is naturally there, but does not give the topic "healing" a prominent place in his letters.

#### 3.3.1. Physical handicaps

Lameness	Acts 3:1; 14:8
Palsy	Matt 9:2
Withered Hand	Matt 12:9-14
Deafness and Dumbness	Mark 7:31-37
Dumb demoniac	Matt 9:32
Blindness	Mark 8:22-26
Bartimaeus	Matt 20:29-
Two blind	Matt 9:27-31
Born Blind	John 9
Cut-off ear healed	Luke 22:49-51



#### 3.3.2. Internal illnesses

Peters mother-in-law with an unspecified fever	Matt 8:14-15
Lepers	Matt 8:2-4
Bleeding Woman	Matt 9:20-22
Dropsy	Matt 14:1-4



### 3.4. Final words of Jesus to his disciples

This was just intended to be a beginning as the following verse clearly states:

John 14:12 *I am telling you the truth: whoever believes in me will do what I do- yes, he will do even **greater** things, because I am going to the Father.*

We his disciples are to walk in his works and are to do as he did. We are called to liberate the ones in bondage, be it of bondage in their souls or their bodies.

## 4. Healing: The Biblical perspective

Healing is widely attested for in the New Testament. Healing was used to authenticate the preaching. It was a proof that here was the highest power, the might of the one who created the world at work. What should our attitude to healing be today?

### 4.1. Openness to healing

Of utmost necessity is to open our minds to the possibility of healing. In what way could healing affect our ministry and make it more effective? Secular Medicine often is at its limits today and can barely offer cures for widespread illnesses like allergies, skin diseases and so on. Shall our church members try to use all sorts of "magical" cures that are offered on the market today? Is God not able to better heal them than all the quacks?

Could a healing ministry revive the interest of outsiders into our faith?

#### **4.2. Developing a balanced view to healing**

While being open to healing, we should develop a balanced view of healing. Many weird "faith-healers" have been around and we should not fall into the traps they fell in.

One should feel free to experiment in this area and minister to different people. Most people look positive to ministry in this area even if it does not give the desired results. One should not let the expectation come up that God "must" heal now through this ministry and neither demand a faith in this.

#### **4.3. God is no healing machine**

One of the characteristics of pagan religions is that they try to entice their gods to perform healing. Use the right ritual and you have gotten it.

The living God does not work like that. God is a person and he will heal when he chooses to heal and the way he wants to heal. The biblical passages we looked at demonstrated a great diversity in the ways in which God healed. In doing healing ministry to a person we should open our minds to God what he wants to do for that person, not primarily what the person wants from God. Any ritual is helpful only as a petition towards God. No ritual will automatically result in healing.

One common misuse here is the belief that you need to have enough "faith" or "belief" in God to be healed. It is true that there needs to be a basic trust towards God and a relationship to God is surely beneficial for the healing process. Having enough "faith" is another kind of ritual. This in effect is bringing something to God to be rewarded for. God heals by grace and not by something we bring to him. Are we back to paganism where we have to trade with God?

One very extreme example here is the blind man in John 9. He is healed although he does not know Jesus and therefore cannot have faith in him. Moreover he does not ask for the healing. Healing is totally at the free will of God.

#### **4.4. There is no guarantee for healing**

It is not possible for us to guarantee that our ministry will necessarily lead to a complete healing of the person. Only if the person who is doing the ministry is hearing God say that he will heal that person can there be any promise of a healing. I suppose this is the way Peter and John healed the lame man at the gate of the temple.

If God does not heal, we usually do not know the reason for it. It is unloving if we leave the person who was ministered to in the impression this must be because some guilt in him, may it be sin or lack of faith.

#### **4.5. Authority**

We are used to pray and ask God for something. In the situation of healing this often seems not to be appropriate. Jesus used words of command to do healings as demonstrated before in the section about New Testament passages. His apostles did the same. In Luke 9:1 Jesus gives his disciples authority:

*Luke 9:1 Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases.*

We need to learn to use this authority. But before we use it we have to listen to God if this is really his will. Therefore a prayer to seek God's will is in place before trying to take authority<sup>3</sup>.

## **5. Healing: How to practice it**

In the following a simple procedure is given and should be especially helpful for the beginner in ministry. This scheme is no fixed way of doing things, it is just an orientation that has been found helpful in practice. After some times of ministry one should be able to vary this according to the needs of the situation. The model here is taken from the book "*Christianity with Power*" by Kraft<sup>4</sup>.

The whole process is utterly dependent on interaction with the Holy Spirit. Therefore be careful to listen to him. Often it is necessary to move back a few steps when something new comes up.

### **5.1. Invitation of the Holy Spirit to teach us his will for and work in this ministry.**

We cannot do anything without the Holy Spirit in ministry. We are utterly dependent on him. If we are trying to minister in our own power, we will not be able to accomplish more than a psychologist. We need to listen to what the Holy Spirit brings to our minds throughout the ministry. This may involve times of just waiting what the Lord will show us to do.

This step is usually a prayer inviting the Lord to come and lead this session. An example prayer would be:

*Lord, please be present and take charge of this ministry. Open our minds to hear and see what you want us to do. Help us to accomplish what you want to have accomplished.*

### **5.2. Blessing the one ministered to**

This is the first step where one takes authority. We bless the one ministered too in the authority of Jesus that we have through his spirit. We are his outposts here.

Usually it is advisable to bless with peace and comfort. Persons coming for ministry are frequently anxious and do not know what to expect. Blessing helps to relax both parties and develops trust to the counselor and to God. One should be free to bless the one ministered with whatever the Lord shows would be important.

Repeat blessings in further steps as it feels to be necessary. Keep your eyes open so you can see what effect the blessing has on the one ministered to.

### **5.3. Interview**

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<sup>3</sup>Kraft p. 149

<sup>4</sup>Kraft p.150-155, Wimber p.208-220

In doing ministry one needs to find out what exactly is the problem and for which area ministry is desired. It is important to cover the area and get all important information like the circumstances when the symptoms first occurred, because this information may give hints for the root of this problem.

One should be careful not to stretch out this step too long especially when time is limited. Time spent here cannot be used for prayer and further ministry.

#### **5.4. Diagnosis**

Here we ask the question what is the real problem. This may also happen during the interview as we listen to God in connection what information we get. This may also result in a partial understanding or a misunderstanding of the problem. Be sure to get feedback to confirm the diagnosis.

#### **5.5. Coming to a Prayer Strategy**

This step should result in decisions to what needs to be prayed for and what should be taken authority over. In this step one needs to ask God for guidance in decision making and for the authority to deal with the issues. Authority can be taken over physical or emotional conditions that appear and should be taken over any interference by evil spirits (Needs to be further explained before this can be digested by audience, but this is another large topic).

#### **5.6. Taking the situation before God**

Here the real action begins. This time should not be pushed back to far, because it might be necessary to go back some stages when new issues arise. The laying on of hands is often useful in this context. In case of a physical problem hands should be laid on the hurting part of the body, except when this is a "private" part. During this prayer it is also advisable to hold the eyes open to see what is going on with the one prayed for. There may be some reaction as a result of praying and taking authority. Do not hesitate to interrupt the prayer to get more information as needed or do something else that appears to be necessary.

#### **5.7. Post-prayer counseling**

This is a very important step. Counseling should be given for problems that may appear after ministry. One should commit oneself to help if further help is necessary. If there was a deliverance from demonization, counseling is especially important since demons are often attached to some weakness in the person. If the weakness is not dealt with the demon might return.

Counseling is also important to those that were not healed. Encouragement, love and our availability for another session can be demonstrated. It is very important if the session did not have the desired results not to leave the person in the impression that he can be the only reason for this.

It is important that the one ministered to becomes part of a small group of caring Christians if not already part of one. Our modern individualism often leads people to try to live their life on their own.

### **6. Conclusion**

Let us return to the New Testament Reality of Healing and practice it in our congregations. Many people are hurting and desiring to be ministered to. Should we not demonstrate our love to them by at least trying to minister to them? The great commission as cited before clearly gives us the command to do just this!

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