

## CESSATIONISM, "THE GIFTS OF HEALINGS," AND DIVINE HEALING

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A Critical Analysis by Paul Christensen, M.A., Elder of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.

Mr Mayhue's article is in black print. My analysis is written in blue.

*The study of divine healing must include the tragic abundance of false teachers with false teachings and false practices, who claim biblical authority, but upon closer examination are clearly not of God. Do "gifts of healings" mentioned in 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30 still operate today as in NT times? **This sign-gift ceased with the close of the NT canon.***

There is no Scripture that validates this claim. Jesus never taught that the supernatural signs and wonders that accompanied the Gospel would cease after the Apostolic age. In Mark 16, He taught that "these signs shall follow those who believe...they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover..." He did not mention that they were to be temporary. Also, some say that the end of Mark 16 was not part of the original Gospel. This is disproved by the early Church fathers themselves who quoted it on a number of occasions and thereby taught it as part of the original Gospel of Mark. A more plausible reason why it is missing from some manuscripts is that it was probably ripped off accidentally and subsequent copyists and translators copied what was there.

Neither did Paul teach that the supernatural ministry of healing was to cease at the end of the Apostolic age. The concept of a complete canon of the New Testament was totally unknown to Paul and his readers. Paul was quite clear that when he came to the Corinthians he was not coming with the wisdom of men but in demonstration of the Spirit and in power. He was quite clear that supernatural signs and wonders were an integral part of the preaching of the Gospel, and he did not indicate anywhere that it was going to be temporary.

If the supernatural ministry of healing was to be temporary and meant to cease once the Church was established and a future canon of Scripture was to be determined, both Jesus and Paul would have clearly said so. What Mr Mayhue has done is he has merely followed the false theory he was taught during his cessationist training. He cannot provide any Scripture proof to validate his theory, and if it isn't in the Scripture, then it is not true.

There is no point quoting 1 Corinthians 13: 10, that the supernatural gifts of the Spirit will pass away when "that which is perfect is come", because he is building up a significant doctrine on just one isolated verse of Scripture, and has ignored the context of verse in which Paul does not mention healing at all. So Mr Mayhue cannot use that verse to validate his claim and supernatural healing has ceased. Paul was talking about prophecy, tongues and knowledge, not healing. Also, Mr Mayhue has erred in defining "the perfect" as the canon of Scripture. If Paul meant that, he would have defined it as such. Paul does not define his use of the word "perfect" at all, because he assumed that his readers know what he means. Because his readers

would have had absolutely no conception of the canon of Scripture, they could not have defined "perfect" as that. So it had to be something else. So Mr Mayhue's argument about the canon of Scripture signalling the end of the supernatural divine healing ministry is blown out of the water and has to be dismissed through lack of Biblical evidence.

It is surprising that Mr Mayhue, with all his theological and academic qualifications and being the dean of a theological seminary, would make the mistake that a freshman student would make – to make a doctrine out of one verse of Scripture that has been twisted out of its context. I am sure that if one of his seminary students did the same in an essay, he would be given a D minus.

*Does God still heal as He did in both the OT and the NT? An inductive study of the biblical record (including the OT, Gospels, Acts, and NT Epistles) establishes unmistakable characteristics of genuine divine healing. The biblical standards become the measure by which alleged contemporary divine healing claims should be judged, whether of God or not. Next, God's ultimate healing promise of salvation in 1 Peter 2:24 deserves attention. In context, the passage speaks of spiritual healing (salvation), not physical healing.*

*Not correct. It has been proved that the Greek words for healing in 1 Peter 2:24, Matthew 8:16-17, and Isaiah 53, stand for both spiritual and physical healing. Dr. Crossan's book on physical healing in the Atonement deals with this in detail. When Jesus quoted Isaiah 53 in Matthew 8 it was in the context of acts of physical healing and not salvation.*

*Finally, a series of theological observations lead to the practical conclusion that Christians should focus on the spiritual/eternal rather than the physical/temporal.*

*This was a view put forward by the pagan philosophers Plato and Aristotle and had a major influence toward the fading away of the divine healing ministry in the second and third centuries AD. As more of the Church adopted the theories of these pagan philosophers, more emphasis was placed on the saving of the soul than the healing of the body. These theories are not supported by Scripture. Jesus equated the forgiveness of sin and the healing of the body as the same as each other. You see this in a number of occasions when He healed a person by telling them that their sins were forgiven.*

*When God does heal today, it will not be through human agency, and it will be characterized as were His healings recorded in Scripture.*

*Wrong again. Jesus specifically commanded His 12 disciples and the 70 others to "heal the sick". This means that they were to pronounce healing to sick people in the same way that He did, and His power would be present to bring about the healing. The Scripture says that the gifts of healing are part of the indwelling Holy Spirit that was given to the Church on the Day of Pentecost. It makes no sense for those gifts to cease 40 years later when the last Apostle died, or that some sort of canon of Scripture was decided on a hundred or so years later.*

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Regarding the idea of cessationism, a recent publication contained this

remarkable comment. What is your reaction to it?

If you take a new convert, who prior to his conversion knew nothing about the history of Christianity or the New Testament, and you lock him in a room with a Bible for a week, he will come out believing that he is a member of a body that is passionately in love with the Lord Jesus Christ and a body that consistently experiences miracles and works miracles.

This would be because he is concentrating on the Scripture and taking it at face value and not depending on others to interpret it for him.

It would take a clever theologian with no experience of the miraculous to convince this young convert differently.

This is the problem. Theology is man's attempt to try and explain the existence and character of God and how He works with people. Theologians have a way of adjusting their interpretation of Scripture to suit their own experience. If they have never experienced the miraculous, then they would filter out of their theology any teaching that supports the supernatural. Most of contemporary theology is based on the wisdom of men. Something that Paul opposed.

At first glance and without much thought, we might agree. But look at the statement again. For me, this quickly becomes an agree/disagree situation. I agree that a new convert who is totally ignorant of history, who has no experience interpreting the Bible, and who has no study tools might conclude that the church today experiences miracles like the first-century church.

But does the Bible need to be interpreted according to man's wisdom and experience? Most of the New Testament is clearly stated. It is not a matter of how we interpret the New Testament, but seeing what it actually says, or doesn't say. Much of the interpretation of theologians border on the occult, because they read things into the Scripture that are not there, to suit their own premise. When we read the New Testament and take at face value what it actually says, then it is quite obvious that supernatural signs and wonders do validate the preaching of the Gospel. This is quite clearly seen through the teaching and practice of Jesus, the practice of the early Christians in the book of Acts, the teaching of Paul, and the experience of the Church Fathers, saints, and preachers through the subsequent centuries.

But I totally disagree, and I suspect you do, too, that the new convert would be correct. Since when do we ask a new convert with nothing but a Bible for the correct theological expression of a subject so complex as miracles?

Who sets the standard of what is the "correct" theological expression of a subject? Who is so arrogant as to set himself up to give a different meaning to Scripture to what is actually there? The Pharisees had the "correct" orthodox theology in the days of Jesus, but they missed the point and ended up crucifying their Messiah!

Further, why would the theologian have to be "experienced" in the miraculous to be credible if we believe that the Scriptures are sufficient to articulate clear doctrine (2 Tim 3:16-17)? This raises an even bigger question: Why do trained theologians, who do have a knowledge of history and who do have the capabilities to use good Bible study tools, come up with the same immature conclusion as a new believer who

knows nothing? Could it be that they have used a combination of experience and a predetermined theology to override otherwise reasonable conclusions?

The trouble is that most theologians have no experience in the miraculous, and therefore build their theories on their experience. Any Scripture that deals with the miraculous is explained away as not being relevant for today, because that is their experience. Also, most church historians have filtered out the miraculous in church history because it does not fit their theology. Yet, some secular historians, without Christian theology have written how Christianity affected the Roman Empire and have included the supernatural, because they are not influenced by cessationist theology; therefore their histories are more accurate in terms of the evidence that they have uncovered. This is because they are not trying to make their histories fit a theology.

Cessationism involves the belief that the NT miraculous sign gifts (cf. Acts 2:22; 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:3-4) ceased with the apostles' passing and the NT canon's completion.

This view was put forward by John Calvin. But he could not provide any Scriptural vindication for making that statement. John Calvin was one of the most excellent theologians of his time, and his theology has greatly influenced the growth and effectiveness of the Protestant Church, even to this day. But he said some silly things and his cessationist statement is one of them. Calvin states in his commentary on 1 Corinthians 14, that tongues ceased from the church because of the widespread misuse of it. He did not make any comment about the supernatural gifts ceasing at the completion of the canon of Scripture.

In general, noncessationists hold that all NT spiritual gifts have remained operative, even until today.

This essay presents the cessationist perspective. The N T "gifts of healings" (1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30) in particular and biblical healing in general are addressed. The subject of healing is so vast that one article is quite insufficient in doing justice to the topic. Therefore, the reader should refer to this writer's comprehensive work, *The Healing Promise*,<sup>4</sup> for a more thorough coverage of this broad subject and for a background sufficient to understand how the parts relate to the whole.

## **PERSPECTIVE**

With the issue of healing, the discussion and accompanying conclusions go far beyond mere theological debate and doctrinal purity. Whatever one believes on this topic dramatically influences his expectations when serious illness or injury affects a loved one or even oneself. Whatever theological position one takes on the subject, it is imperative that it be strongly substantiated by Scripture, lest he sincerely believe in promises that God never actually made. When this happens, tremendous discouragement, depression, and even disillusionment with Christianity can set in.

This paragraph would be quite true if the cessationist view was actually based on Scripture!

## **False Teacher**

One of the most visible and vocal exponents of non-cessationism and an alleged practitioner of healing is Benny Hinn. His recent books have been bestsellers; he also appears as a regular guest on the Trinity Broadcasting Network. Hinn intimates that he has taken up where Kathryn Kuhlman left off. Because of his unusually widespread influence and because he has attempted to express a theology of healing in *Lord, I Need a Miracle*, it becomes particularly important to examine what Benny Hinn teaches. This brief analysis compares what Hinn believes about healing with what the Scriptures teach. You can then make up your own mind about Hinn's teaching credibility (see Acts 17:11).

1. Benny Hinn does not pray "Lord, Thy will be done."<sup>7</sup> Jesus Christ did (Luke 22:42).
2. Hinn believes that God always intends for believers to be healed.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, the Bible teaches that some of the greatest saints, including Jacob and Paul, had physical infirmities from which they were never healed.
3. Hinn teaches that believers should command God to heal.<sup>9</sup> The Bible teaches them to ask (1 John 5:14-15).
4. Hinn suggests that miraculous healing from God is gradual.<sup>10</sup> Healing by Christ and the apostles occurred instantly.
5. Hinn teaches that faith on the part of the sick person is essential to healing. Lazarus and Jairus' daughter could not have exercised faith.
6. Hinn writes that we must do our part before God can heal.<sup>12</sup> The Bible teaches that God is sovereign.
7. Hinn believes that Christians should not be sick.<sup>13</sup> The Bible teaches that Christians can be sick and will all eventually die.
8. Benny Hinn implies that a person's healing can be lost and that the healed person must do certain things to keep the healing.<sup>14</sup> The Bible nowhere teaches such.

**Benny Hinn's view does not represent standard, traditional Pentecostal theology in the area of divine healing. Mr Hinn should not be used as a defining example of the divine healing ministry.**

Amazingly, Hinn not only contradicts Scripture on the subject of healing, but he also contradicts himself. In 1992 Hinn wrote, This recalls the day years ago when I heard Kathryn Kuhlman prophesy in her own inimitable way that the day would arrive, before the coming of the Lord, when the power of God would be so great that everyone would be healed. "There will not be one sick saint in the body of Christ," she declared. With her customary drama, pointing of finger, and hand on hip, she asked, "Could it be today?" Of course, she never saw it come, but it will come. The Holy Spirit has convinced me of that.

**The Scripture records that Jesus healed all those who came to Him. He also said that the works He did, His disciples would do also, even greater works because He was going to the Father. So, supernatural healing is available to all who come to Jesus,**

but not all come to Jesus for healing, in the same way that salvation is available to all, but not all come to Jesus to be saved.

Later, in a 1993 interview, *Charisma* magazine asked Hinn, "You've mentioned some other changes in your theology. Have you changed your view of healing?" Compare his 1993 answer to what the Holy Spirit allegedly told him in 1992: Huldah Buntain, the missionary to India, was in our church recently, and she talked about how her husband, Mark, died. The story broke me up because I realized some of the greatest saints on earth have gotten sick. Jacob walked with a limp. Elisha died a sick man, though the power of God lingered in his bones. Even the apostle Paul had an infirmity—although we're not sure what it was. Why didn't God heal them? You know, my father died of cancer. Sadly, in the past, I stated publicly: Had my father known then what I know now, he wouldn't have died. How cruel! I'm not going to say that about anyone again. Yet I still believe that healing is promised to all of us as children of God. The Word of God is clear on that. Psalm 103 says: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases."

So I believe with all my heart that healing is a part of our inheritance as believers. It's a provision of God's covenant with us. But now I have come to realize that God is sovereign, and there are things I just don't understand." Either the Holy Spirit spoke correctly in 1992 and Hinn has chosen to correct the Spirit in 1993, or the Spirit didn't speak what Hinn alleged in 1992 and he has resorted to damage control in 1993. All the evidence points to the latter

The large proportion of the Evangelical church preaches that God is not willing that any should perish but that all be saved. So, the fact that there are people not being saved and falling in hell, does that mean that the Evangelical church, including Mr Mayhue who presumably preaches salvation for all, is preaching a false Gospel because not all are being saved under its ministry?

conclusion.

### **False Teachings**

False teachings about healing have taken various forms but almost always contain a mixture of truth and error. Half-truths about divine healing fuel the injurious errors of our day. Let me alert you to some of these more frequent half truths so that you can be prepared to reject them.

1. Because God wills that Christians enjoy His blessings, sickness shows that you are out of His will.

This is not supported by sound teachers of Pentecostal theology. It is largely recognised as a fringe teaching.

2. Sin is the root cause of sickness; therefore you must resist sickness as you would sin.

This also not supported by sound teachers of divine healing. Jesus Himself refuted this view when he asked who had sinned that the man was born blind. He quite clearly said that it was not because of anyone's sin, but that the glory of God would be displayed in the man's healing.

3. Since Christ died for your sickness and your sin, you can be freed from both.

This is clearly supported by Scripture in Isaiah 53, Matthew 8, and 1 Peter 2:24. Dr Crossan shows through the original Greek that Jesus dealt with our sin through the shedding of His blood on the cross, and physical sickness through the stripes He received when He was whipped by the Roman soldiers.

4. If you had enough faith, you would be healed.

In the majority of His healings, Jesus did not require faith on behalf of the sick person, although He recognised and celebrated faith when He saw it. The greatest faith that He saw and acknowledged was in two people – the Syrophenian woman and the Roman Centurion, and they were both Gentiles. This was because the Jews already had a covenant with God, but Gentiles were outside of the covenant and had no right to receive what was reserved for the Jews; but they pressed into Jesus through their faith, and Jesus recognised it and acknowledged it as “great faith”, and their petitions were granted.

5. What you confess is what you possess; so talk sickness and you will get sick; talk health and you will get well.

This is viewed as nonsense by sound Pentecostal theologians. This is a view put forward by the Word of Faith movement, which is seen as a branch of the Charismatic movement. This “confession” doctrine is a misuse of the principle of using the Word of God to deal with situations like temptation, where a believer can resist a temptation by saying “Sin shall have no dominion over me”. This is equivalent to Jesus refuting the devil’s advances by saying “It is written...” I can say to a sickness, “By His stripes I have been healed” to acknowledge that healing has already been provided and declared through the Atonement and to put my trust in the Holy Spirit to bring it about. But this does not mean that I go around ignoring any on-going symptoms saying “I am healed”, when I am not. It also does not mean that I stop taking medication, because it is always wise to go back to the person who prescribed the medication to get advice before stopping it. Quoting the Scripture merely acknowledges that I am stating that the part of my body which is affected by the medical condition is to function normally in accordance with the Word of God.

6. All adversity comes from Satan; so sickness, like Satan, should be rebuked.

If you look closely at some of the ways Jesus healed people, He sometimes rebuked a sickness. He rebuked the fever that was afflicting Peter’s mother in law. So, rebuking a sickness was one of the methods that Jesus used to heal people. Sickness does come originally from Satan, because it is the result of the Fall. It was Satan who influenced Adam and Eve to disobey God, so sickness is a work of Satan.

Jesus often treated sickness as a work of Satan. With the woman bent over with a back disability, He viewed it as an oppression of Satan.

7. If you only knew the secret fact of God’s healing power, you could be healed.

There are no secrets surrounding God's healing power. All we have to do is to read the Gospels and we can see that Jesus is able and willing to heal people. As Peter said to those who were marvelling at the healing of the lame man in Acts 3, this man was healed by the Name of Jesus and faith in His Name. They did not heal the man, Jesus did in response to the Apostles using the Name of Jesus to raise the man up.

8. Since Christ and the apostles healed in their day, Christians can heal today.

This is totally supported by Scripture. Jesus gave His command to 82 people: "Heal the sick, cast out demons, ", etc. The Apostles demonstrated this in Acts, and their disciples continue to demonstrate the command right through to the end of the Second Century AD. All through subsequent church history there are repeated documented events of supernatural healing.

9. Since sickness is from Satan, nothing good can come from sickness.

That's right. God does not use the works of satan to do His will. Jesus was quite definite in His view toward those who accused Him of casting out demons through the power of the devil. He viewed this as the highest blasphemy which might never be forgiven. The problem today is that many are viewing the works of the devil as the works of God, and this might be just as blasphemous. There is no support at all in Scripture that sickness was ever viewed as anything else but a work of satan. Jesus said that He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He showed it by healing all kinds of sickness in all who came to Him.

10. Since God wants you well, never pray, "Thy will be done" in regard to healing.

Jesus demonstrated in the healing of a leper who said, "If you want to, you can heal me." Jesus said, "I want to. Be healed." This is an example of Jesus correcting a wrong theology. This sick person said, in effect, "If it is your will...." And Jesus said clearly, "It is My will."

In the guidelines to how we should pray, Jesus told us to pray "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven". Because there is no sickness in heaven, then we can pray that God's will in terms of physical healing can be accomplished on earth, as it is in heaven.

As Dr Crossan has provided beyond doubt that both sin and sickness are dealt with in the Atonement, the Scripture, "It is not God's will that any should perish", applies equally to physical healing as it does to salvation.

11. Since sin is the cause of sickness, if you are sick, then you have a pattern of sin in your life.

It is already been shown that Jesus did not consider that a sick person is necessarily sinful. This is not a teaching that traditional Pentecostals hold to.

12. God has healed you, but the devil is not letting the symptoms leave.

If a person has told that part of his body to come into line with God's Word and will, then the symptoms can persist because the devil is hindering the application of the healing. This is why we are told to ask and keep on asking. The example of the devil hindering the answer to prayer is found in Daniel praying for three weeks over an issue, and the angel coming to him saying that God had heard and answered his prayer on the first day, but there was a fight with the devil and his angels preventing the answer getting back through to Daniel. A person who does not believe that the devil hinders answers to prayer involving something that is clearly shown in Scripture that it is God's will, does not understand Spiritual warfare.

## **False Practices**

Thousands of people could testify how painful these half-truths can be. Dr. C. Everett Koop recalls a particularly brutal episode.

We hired an investigative writer to look into some of the cults and into faith healers specifically. Our investigator traveled to a Southwestern city where a healing campaign had been advertised some weeks in advance....

Among those who applied for healing was an elderly Christian gentleman who lived out on the prairie. His vision was becoming dim, and he most likely was developing cataracts. The only lighting in the little cabin where he lived was a kerosene lamp. He was a devout Christian, read his Bible daily—or tried to—and had all the faith necessary for healing, if faith indeed does secure healing. His major complaint was that his sight had deteriorated to the point where he could no longer read his Bible. On the night of his appearance before the healer, the old man was brought up in the atmosphere of a sideshow. The faith healer said, "Well, Pop, you can't see anymore. You've gotten old, you can't even see with your glasses. Your vision is failing." Then he reached over and took off the old man's spectacles, threw them on the platform, stamped on them, and broke them. He then handed the elderly gentleman a large-print Bible, which, under the lights necessary for television in those days, enabled the gentleman to read John 3:16 out loud, to the astonishment and applause of the audience. The elderly gentleman praised God, the healer praised God, the audience praised God, and the old man went back to his dimly lit cabin and could not *find* his Bible, because his glasses were destroyed. The man went back to the healer but was told the most discouraging thing a godly man like that could possibly hear: "You didn't have enough faith, or the healing would have stuck."

Just because a fringe revivalist misused the healing ministry in this way, does not prove that the ministry of healing in general is false. In fact, the ministry of healing has been ruined by examples like this. It is obvious that this revivalist healer did not have much understanding of Scripture and the way that Jesus healed people. Jesus did not have "healing meetings", and He did not use sick people as a sideshow. This is not a convincing argument that the general divine healing ministry is false. Anyone can tell a horror story. What about all the examples where people were genuinely healed by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, and went back to their doctors to have their healings documented and vindicated? Of course it would not prove the cessationist's point to include those!

Tragically, all of the above examples involve people who are noncessationists. Neither their theology nor their ministries harmonize with what Scripture teaches in general about miraculous sign gifts designed to authenticate Christ and the

apostles or what it teaches in particular about healing.

That was only one example of a lunatic fringe revivalist ministry!!! I thought that Mr Mayhue with all his qualifications would have more intelligence than to be so unbalanced in his examples than that!

## **GIFTS OF HEALINGS**

"Gifts of healings" is the most enigmatic phrase that deals with healing in the entire Bible. Why? Because that phrase occurs only three times in the NT, and all three instances appear in 1 Corinthians 12. The verses provide no further explanation of what the manifestations involved. Nor does the gift appear in other NT gift lists. That means there is very little biblical evidence to draw from.<sup>19</sup> However, several biblical observations may help. First, both words in the expression are plural—"gifts of healings." The plural surely does not require the gift to be manifest on more than one occasion by the same person, for that would mean "word of wisdom" in 1 Cor 12:8 was a one-time occurrence only. One must think further.

It could be that "gifts" refers to: (1) various methods of healing; (2) various occasions of healing; or (3) various bestowals of the gift. Because there are no other NT texts or contexts, no one knows for sure. "Healings" most likely refers to various afflictions.

When Paul says something that he does not clearly define, he is assuming that his readers know exactly what he means. Mr Mayhue's comments here are probably as feasible as any.

The parallel plurals, "effectings of miracles," "distinguishings of spirits," and "kinds of tongues," could very well indicate that the manifestations were temporary (one-time only) and had to be renewed by God at His will,

Unsubstantiated theory. Not enough evidence to make a doctrine out of it.

For instance, Paul healed multitudes (Acts 19:11-12), but couldn't heal himself (Gal 4:13), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25-30), or Trophimus (2 Tim 4:20).

There is no proof at all that Paul had an eye condition as some believe. The statement "give their very eyes" could just as well been a figure of speech as "I would give my eye teeth to have..." for example that new motor vehicle.

Okay, so Paul left a couple of guys sick somewhere. It doesn't mean necessarily that these guys stayed sick. To say that is pure conjecture. Epaphroditus became sick through all the hard work he did for the Gospel. This is quite normal for a person who is a workaholic. This does not mean that his sickness was God's will, but rather a natural consequence of working too hard. A period of rest would have sorted him out. These examples are not sufficient to support a cessationist doctrine.

That would also explain why Paul did not direct Timothy (1 Tim 5:23) to a person with this gift. Someone who had exercised it on one occasion would have no reason to suspect that it would be manifested again.

It was a fact that in many places, the water supply was contaminated and could cause dysentery in those who drank it. It was well known that the inclusion of a bit of fermented wine in water killed bacteria and made it suitable for drinking. There is no proof that Timothy had a stomach complaint, and it would be just as feasible to say that in order to prevent stomach upsets through drinking contaminated water, to put a bit of wine with it to purify it. Mr Mayhue's last sentence is pure speculation and not based on anything written in the Scripture.

James 5:13-18 can be similarly understood; this early epistle (about A.D. 50) exhorted sick individuals to call for the elders rather than for a person who manifested "gifts of healings."

The elders' ministry of healing was for Christian believers. The gifts of healings were part of the endowment of power through the Holy Spirit as a vindication of the preaching of the Gospel to unconverted sinners. This is where I partly agree with Mr Mayhue.

Other than their association with the apostles, the "gifts of healings" appear rarely.

Speculation. No support in Scripture for this.

Only Philip is mentioned specifically (Acts 8:6-7). Stephen (Acts 6:8) and Barnabas (Acts 14:3) might also have exercised this sign gift. That would explain why Barnabas, who may have healed others with Paul in Iconium (Acts 14:3), did not himself heal Paul when he was nearly stoned to death in Lystra (Acts 14:19-20).

We must remember that Luke is selective in what he reports. The book of Acts is his diary of the events that he witnessed as he accompanied Paul. We must also remember that there were a number of other apostles operating around the known world at the time. The Scripture says that the apostles went everywhere preaching the Gospel and the Spirit confirmed their preaching with signs and wonders. So the healings were not limited to those whom Mr Mayhue mentions. To limit the spread of the healing ministry to Luke's account is to say that the only people who got saved at that time were the ones whom Luke observed and no one else. Of course, that is absurd, because there were twelve Apostles working, of whom we know little about. For example, we don't know where Peter went most of the time, and what about the others? We know nothing about where they went and what they did. Is Mr Mayhue saying that no one got healed through the eleven Apostles who went preaching the Gospel in other regions? Of course, no intelligent person would believe that!

The "gifts of healings" seems to be a sign that was given to authenticate the apostles (Heb 2:4).

This is true. But remember that there were many more apostles than just the original twelve and all the preachers of the Gospel had the same vindication, as, according to church history through the succeeding centuries preaches of the genuine Gospel were also vindicated by supernatural healings.

Therefore, it is not surprising to discover its absence from the gifts list of Romans 12, which was written later than 1 Corinthians.

That doesn't prove anything. Romans was written to show that we are justified by faith in Christ, and have received His righteousness to stand before God without guilt or fear of punishment. Paul goes on to prove this right through the book of Romans. Because the Book of Corinthians was already in circulation throughout the churches, there is no reason for him to repeat what He has already taught to the church.

Once the apostles were authenticated and the early church established, the apostolic signs gradually disappeared, for they had served their God-intended purpose.

Speculation not supported by any Scriptural teaching. The supernatural gifts gradually disappeared as the church became an institution ruled by a central authority and pastors and ministries were appointed politically and through academic ability instead of giftings coming through the Holy Spirit. Also, in the Third Century AD, the emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire, and his sons outlawed paganism. This meant that the church became full of pagans mixing with genuine believers, and pagan influences and ideas corrupted the church to the point where the Holy Spirit no longer worked with the church in the same way. When a pastor or preacher is appointed through an institution instead of being appointed through his gifting in the Spirit, he is not appointed through the will of God but instead through the will of man; therefore, there is no guarantee that the Spirit will work through him supernaturally. This means that his ministry will be on the basis of the wisdom of man instead of the power of God. This is why the supernatural gifts of the Spirit disappeared from the mainline church.

Neither are we surprised to see the absence of sign gifts from the Pastoral Epistles written by Paul to Timothy and Titus. If those gifts were to be perpetuated, certainly Paul would have mentioned it, especially since Timothy suffered from stomach problems and other frequent afflictions (1 Tim 5:23).

Paul instructed Timothy to stir up the gift that was within him through the laying on of the hands of the elders. It is well known that the gift of the Holy Spirit was conferred through the laying on of hands, and therefore the supernatural gifts were a part of that.

It has already been shown that Timothy did not have a stomach complaint. Paul did not clearly say that Timothy had a stomach illness, and was most probably giving Timothy some tips on keeping himself in a healthy condition.

If God intended "gifts of healings" to function as something other than a miraculous sign gift, we would expect to see it manifested in the lives of Paul's numerous associates. But there is not the slightest hint of its appearance after A.D. 59. An argument from silence alone is not conclusive, but it is one more piece of evidence that needs to be seriously considered, because it is consistent with the other indications mentioned above.

Luke's diary finishes with Paul being in Rome. But there is much more evidence of supernatural healing events through the writings of the church fathers from the First Century onwards. Reports of regular supernatural healings persisted right through to

the Fourth Century, and Augustine himself reported supernatural healings. This blows away the erroneous belief that supernatural healings ceased after Apostolic era, Also, the canon of Scripture was set during the Second Century, but reports of supernatural healings went on through the Church Fathers for at least two hundred years after that. That refuted, without a doubt, the theory that the supernatural gifts cease when the canon of Scripture was established.

It is a matter of history that St Patrick won the whole of Ireland for Christ from paganism through the supernatural signs and wonders that occurred during his ministry. This was well after the Apostolic era. St Benedict, who built the Benedictine monastery on Monte Cassino in the Fifth Century, reported many supernatural healings, including a worker crushed to death by a falling wall, raised from the dead. The early monastic movement (a reaction against the institutionalism and paganism of the established church) reported supernatural healings. Martin Luther and his associates reported supernatural healings. John Wesley had 250 documented supernatural healings occur during his ministry in the 1700s, including his horse instantly healed of lameness as the result of prayer. The Methodist Holiness preachers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century reported supernatural healings as well.

Most likely, "gifts of healings" involved a temporary sign gift which was used by God to authenticate the apostles, was evidenced sparingly apart from Peter and Paul, was bestowed on a one-time-only basis, and was to be renewed by God's sovereign will. Therefore, the "gifts of healings" in 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30 were not intended by God to be operative today.

Church history blows this theory right out of the water. It is clear to me that Mr Mayhue either has read only cessationist historians or is ignorant of many areas of church history and the movements through the centuries that reported genuine supernatural healings.

The temporary nature of the "gifts of healings" does not mean that God is not healing today. This essay distinguishes between the actual human "divine healing" of the OT and the NT, as compared to the possibility of God's direct "divine healing" today.

This agrees with the view of the Roman Catholic Church that acknowledges that healings do happen today, but are limited to God's providence rather than through human ministry. But Francis McNutt, in his studies on healing, shows that supernatural healing does happen through human ministry. He writes an excellent book called "Nearly the Perfect Crime", in which he shows that it was the Church and not God, that caused supernatural healing to nearly disappear.

Because the sparse number of healings in the OT and the innumerable healings of Christ did not depend on the "gifts of healings," neither would divine healing be dependent on that sign gift today.

Jesus said in John 10, that if supernatural signs and wonders did not follow His teaching, do not believe His teaching. And if people had problems believing His teaching, then believe the signs and wonders. This shows that Jesus put a lot of importance on supernatural signs and wonders vindicating the preaching of the Gospel. He also said, "As I was in the world, so are you." This shows that the

ministry of Jesus, including healing, is the same with all His disciples and ministries, right to the present day.

Because the term "gifts of healings" and its context remain so ambiguous, a person should not build a theological superstructure on this paper-thin foundation.

Neither should Mr Mayhue build his cessationist teaching on the paper-thin examples he has given in this essay. Up to this point, he has not been able to convincingly prove his theories.

Those who develop their healing theology for the church today from this passage do so by reading their conclusions into the text rather than by finding any clear direction from other N T letters.

This is an ironic statement, because this is just what Mr Mayhue is doing!

First Corinthians 12 appears to be a haven of rescue for healing advocates who understand how perilous their case would be if it rested alone on the healing pattern of Christ and the apostles. J. Sidlow Baxter correctly concludes that the healing miracles of neither Christ nor the apostles continued past the apostolic age.

He cannot have proved that from Scripture. Unless he could have quoted actual teaching from Jesus or Paul that the healing pattern of Christ and the Apostles would not continue past the apostolic age, then he is proposing an unsubstantiated theory.

Neither from our Lord's miracle healings nor from those of the apostles can we safely deduce that such are meant to continue today, nor should we presume so. If such healings were divinely intended to continue in the same way today, then all who come for healing today would be healed without exception, as was the case in the days of our Lord and the apostles. But thousands who come for healing today are not healed.

If the same rule was applied to people being saved, then the preaching of the Gospel has to be false as well, because not all who hear the Gospel are saved, even though the Scripture is quite clear that it is not God's will that any should perish.

Mr Mayhue's statement that the thousands who come for healing today not being healed is just his own speculation. He has no way of knowing within his own frame of reference which his statement is true or not. It is amazing that a learned man like Mr Mayhue can make such sweeping statements without any evidence to justify it.

It is quite possible that many people do not get healed because of the incorrect way that the healing ministry is taught and applied. The insistence of faith on the part of the sick person is a major hindrance to healing. Also, asking God to heal people when He has already declared it as His will is tantamount to saying that although He has given a promise we doubt that He really means it. That is more of an insult to God and is actually a prayer of unbelief. Also, praying "if it be thy will..." is also a prayer of unbelief when it is clearly shown through Scripture that it is God's will to heal sick people. Praying that prayer is insinuating that God is lying when He declares that it is His will to heal sick people. (Dr Crossan, in his book on healing in the Atonement proves beyond doubt that it is God's will to heal sick people in the same way that it is His will to save sinners).

Genuine, documented supernatural healings have occurred when people have read the Gospels and followed how Jesus dealt with sickness. Jesus never asked the Father to heal anyone, nor did He say, "Father if it be thy will..." Nor did He require faith on the part of the sick person. Most often He said, "Take up your bed and walk", or "Go your way, you are healed." Jesus was very simple in His approach to healing. He was as simple as saying, "You are healed", and the person was healed. This is because He is the only Person anointed to heal people. When we minister healing, we are acknowledging that He is the only Person who heals, and so we declare healing for the person in His Name, and it is through faith in the Name of Jesus on the part of the person ministering healing to the sick person, that healing comes.

Therefore, by that simple, practical text we know that healings today are not on the same basis as in those days of long ago. However, Baxter then turns to the NT epistles and develops the idea—primarily from Rom 8:11, 1 Corinthians 12, and Jas 5:13-16—that bodily healing has been promised by Scripture for today. He does it, however, with this honest caveat: Those seem to be all there is in the Epistles by way of clear promise or statement concerning divine healing or renewal of the human body in this present age. What is the first thought which leaps to mind? Is it not the *very small space* given to physical healing? In a way, it seems disappointingly small. Let it tell us the comparatively small importance which *God* puts upon it. Let it indicate its comparatively minor place over against the major emphases of the New Testament letters to Christian believers.

It looks like Mr Baxter has a more realistic view of Scripture than Mr Mayhue. It seems to me that Mr Baxter cannot see any reason through Scripture that healing could not happen today, but does not know how to make it work. To say that physical healing has a relatively minor place in the New Testament letters is a speculation, because in the early church, physical healing was so commonplace that not much needed to be said about it. There is not much teaching in the epistles concerning divine healing because the practice of it was so familiar that teaching was not needed.

The major doctrines of justification by faith aside from the works of the Law, sanctification, perseverance of believers, etc., are emphasised in the epistles because even during the apostolic period, large sections of the church were having problems with those doctrines. Already, heresies were invading the church, and Paul, John, and Peter wrote to ensure that the major doctrines of orthodox Christianity be preserved.

Jack Deere also looks to 1 Corinthians 12 as a major biblical text to explain healing for today. He reasons that since (1) the apostles were the most gifted of all people in the church, (2) spiritual gifts range in strength and intensity, and (3) miraculous gifts were not limited to the apostles but distributed throughout the church, then (1) there is a distinction between signs/wonders and "gifts of healings," and (2) it is wrong to insist that apostolic miracles set the standard by which to measure today's healings. He concludes: (1) that healings today will not be as spectacular as Paul's or Peter's, (2) that healings might not be as abundant as in the apostolic era, and (3) that this allows for some failure in attempted healings. My response would be that Dr. Deere has developed a theory more from what Scripture *doesn't* say than what it *clearly* says. His theory fails, in my opinion, for several reasons.

1. The phrase "gifts of healings" is so ambiguous in its contexts that no one can really know for sure what it means. Certainly something as important as a theology of physical healing should not be built on such a shallow foundation.

As I have said previously, divine healing was so commonplace that when Paul said "gifts of healing" his readers knew exactly what he was meaning, so he did not need to elaborate. The problem today is that the teaching on divine healing has been so corrupted by different theologies, theories and speculations both in the cessationist and non-cessationist camps, that the concept has become ambiguous as a result. This is why it is important that any teaching on divine healing is based on what the Scripture actually teaches rather on speculations based on what the Scripture either does not teach or is insufficiently defined.

2. His theory does not explain the decline in quality and quantity of even the apostolic healings as the apostolic age drew to a conclusion.

Other knowledgeable and respected authors have shown why this has happened. Francis McNutt in his book "Nearly the Perfect Crime" gives very clear reasons supported by church history.

3. His theory does not adequately account for "gifts of healings" appearing only in the 1 Corinthians 12 gift list.

This has already been explained by the fact that Paul has already written a document that gives teaching on healing. Because that document was already in wide circulation among the churches he was subsequently writing to, there is no purpose in repeating the teaching. Also, the other churches seemed not to be having problems with the exercising the spiritual gifts, and so Paul's letter to the Corinthians served as corrective teaching to ensure that they got back on the right track. He remarks at the beginning of Corinthians that they had regressed so far as to having to be treated as babes in Christ. This means that the whole of 1 Corinthians is written to the equivalent of a new Christians class, novices who could only take milk instead of meat. Presumably the other churches were more spiritually advanced, and therefore did not require to be reacquainted with foundational teaching.

4. His theory does not anticipate the total lack of instruction in the epistles on the matter of healing (with the exception of what is found in James 5). I would suggest that James 5 and 1 Corinthians 12 are not connected.

James was not an Apostle. He was an elder of the church at Jerusalem. He would have been looking at healing from a pastoral perspective. He would have seen the church elders as overseers who were experienced believers well versed in the Scripture and having the appropriate level of faith to minister to sick people. Paul, on the other hand was an Apostle with responsibility over a number of churches. He would have left those matters to the elders of those churches. The letter of James would have been circulated quite quickly around the churches and it would have provided the basis for ministering healing to Christian believers in them. Paul would have been familiar with the letter and would not have repeated or taught anything different.

5. His theory assumes throughout that if Scripture does not prohibit healing or does not speak directly about the cessation of apostolic healing, then implicitly the Scriptures teach healing for today

There is more support in Scripture that the ministry of healing is to continue from the Day of Pentecost right up until the Second Coming of Christ when the pure, glorified Church (the bride of Christ) is manifested to the world. This is what Paul means by "when the perfect is come". The perfect is the perfected bride of Christ revealed to the world. It fits in with the feminine gender of the Greek word for "perfect", because the Greek word for "the Church" is also feminine. There is no such concept in Greek for "the canon of Scripture". This is a Roman Catholic term coined for the purpose, so Paul could not be referring to it in 1 Corinthians 13:10.

There are many Scriptures through the New Testament, along with writing produced by the Church Fathers that show that the divine healing ministry was not meant to cease after the Apostolic age. There is also no mention of a canon of Scripture in the writing of the Early Church Fathers before the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD. Therefore, in the mind of the Apostles, the disciples of the Apostles, their disciples and the Early Church Fathers, right through to the 4<sup>th</sup> Century AD, that divine healing ministry was a going concern. In fact, there are mentions of the Fathers that a general decline of spirituality in the Church is a reason why the supernatural healing ministry and the other gifts of the Spirit were declining during the 4<sup>th</sup> Century.

Of course, cessationist historians would want to exclude and filter out anything that was written in that vein, because it would not have fitted in with their theology. Of course, Roman Catholic theologians would not want to admit that the supernatural ministry of the Spirit declined through the apostasy of their own church, would they?

6. Dr. Deere seems to contradict his own theory when he writes, "I believe that God is doing NT-quality miracles in the church today, and I believe He has done them throughout the history of the church." The only quality of miracles we know of from Acts are those done by the apostles. Yet Dr. Deere elsewhere theorized that the miracles of the church were substandard compared to those of the apostles. Both cannot be true.

Yes. Both statements can be true. The quality of the miracles through the Apostles was such because they had to Christianise a pagan world by showing that Jesus Christ is more powerful than their pagan gods.

There have been recorded instances where powerful miracles have happened in Third World countries where paganism is widespread and powerful. The trouble with Western society is that we are influenced by Plato, Aristotle, Darwin, which have made it difficult for Western Christians to have the level of faith to see the same quality of miracles happen in their societies. Because the Western church has failed to show the power of Jesus Christ and has depended on the wisdom of man to preach the Gospel, there has been a major rise in the occult in Western countries, and through this, believers in the occult have seen greater supernatural power through demon activity than what the Church has been able to show through the message it has been preaching.

If a missionary in a Third World country, with all its paganism, read Mr Mayhue's article, they would safely ignore it, because these missionaries are confronted with

demonic supernatural power every day, and they know that they do have access to God's supernatural power through the Holy Spirit to heal the sick and cast out demons to successfully defeat the paganism and win people to Christ.

Where we in our Western countries have doctors and hospitals to cut out, deaden the pain of, and otherwise treat sicknesses, people in Third World countries don't have general access to doctors and hospitals, and either have to believe in Christ for supernatural healing or die. There is no alternative for them. So they would take Mr Mayhue's cessationist articles and use them for toilet tissue because that would be the only use they could make of them.

## **THE BIBLICAL RECORD**

Since "gifts of healing" are not operative today, as they were in N T times,

This speculation is not proved.

how is the church to distinguish between the true and the false of alleged divine healing?

By studying the Gospels to see how Jesus went about healing people, because His ministry is the model for ours.

What follows is an inductive study of healings in both the OT and NT, which will help to answer the above question. What characterized divine healing then would validate divine healing today, if the nature of the healing was of the same biblical quality.

True.

The Christian community must come to grips with the fact that it is extremely rare when a reported healing begins to match up with the biblical model. When God miraculously healed through the prophets, Christ, or the apostles, these qualities, among others, characterized the healing:

1. It was immediate.

Not necessarily. There are instances in the Gospels where people were healed as they went. The Centurion's servant began to recover from the moment that Jesus said he was healed. The Mark 16 reference, "They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover" does not imply immediate healing, otherwise it would have said, "immediately healed." The use of the word "recover" suggests a progressive recovery over time. Instant healing is in the realm of the working of miracles, rather than the use of the gifts of healing.

2. It was public.

Not always. The healing of Peter's mother in law was in a private home. There have been numerous, documented instances of supernatural healing that have taken place in private homes where church elders have gone and ministered healing to sick people. The reference in James where the sick person calls for the elders, the healing ministry would have taken place in the sick person's private home and not in public.

### 3. It took place on ordinary, unplanned occasions.

Many of the healings that Jesus performed were of this nature. Yet, people brought sick people out so that the shadow of Peter fell on them and they were healed. They were planned occasions. The healing of the man who came through the roof to Jesus was a planned occasion. The raising of Lazarus from the dead was a planned occasion.

### 4. It included illnesses that were untreatable by the medical community.

Leprosy, blindness, lameness, the woman's issue of blood, epilepsy, all were untreatable by the medical community. Many of the healings that took place in Kathryn Kuhlman's meetings were the same. I don't think that the Gospel writers would have recorded people being healed of headaches, colds or influenza, because they would have recorded the most notable miracles that could not be explained away by the natural process of a person getting well. This does not mean that Jesus did not heal people of the more commonplace, treatable ailments. As John says in John 21, if all the healings and miracles that Jesus performed were written down, there would not be room in the world for all the books that would be written.

### 5. It was complete and irreversible.

Not necessarily. People got sick again, but it was a different sickness. Also, Jesus told the man at the pool of Bethesda to go and sin no more lest a worse thing come upon him. So it is possible for a person who continues in sin after being healed to become sick with a more serious complaint. A person who is healed of cancer can get cancer again, but it will be a new cancer and not a reoccurrence of the original cancer that was healed. A person can be healed of influenza but can pick up another infection later on and require ministry again. Therefore, divine healing is not an immunisation against sickness.

### 6. It was undeniable, even to detractors.

This is true. Even the Pharisees had to acknowledge that miracles were taking place. It was the raising of Lazarus that caused the Sadducee priests to make a greater effort to have Jesus eliminated, because it showed their anti-resurrection doctrine as being a load of hogwash and they did not want to lose their influence in the community.

Taking contemporary healing a step further, most of today's reported healings look little different than reported healings from the cults and other world religions. The following biblical pattern separates the true from the false.

Does Mr Mayhue have documented examples of supernatural healing achieved by false cults and other world religions?

It is quite true that the occult spiritual healing practitioners can cause supernatural healing. But there is a price to pay. Those who are healed through that are very difficult to reach through the Gospel. It is as if they are extra blinded to God's truth. There are documented instances where a person healed through the occult has lost

the healing when they have accepted Christ as Saviour and renounced the works of the occult in their lives.

It is also true that the occult healings have had the same nature as those reported through Christian healing ministries. Healing is healing wherever it comes from. But there are differences. Occult healing does not glorify Christ, and there is no acknowledgement of the Name of Jesus being involved in the healing. And as I said before, a person being healed through something other than the Name of Jesus will lose the healing when they become converted to Christ and renounce the works of that false religion or occult practice. Healing that is done through the Name of Christ will always glorify Christ and will acknowledge that it is Jesus who has healed the person through the power of the Holy Spirit. If they renounce the works of the occult, their healing will remain.

## **THE OLD TESTAMENT'S HEALING RECORD**

The OT bridges time from creation to Christ. It would be naïve to assume that every instance of illness or healing has been recorded. However, it does seem reasonable that God included the majority of special cases in the divine record.

Moses wrote the central statement on divine healing in Deut 32:39 (cf. Job 5:18): See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; it is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded, and it is I who heal; and there is no one who can deliver from My hand.

The testimony rings clear: *God shoulders ultimate responsibility for life or death and health or sickness.*

### **God Afflicted**

God physically afflicted more people, more often than He physically healed. For example,

Gen 12:17 – The household of Pharaoh

This was to show that Pharaoh was going to do something against the will of God in the belief that Sarah was Abraham's sister and not his wife. The affliction was lifted when he realised the truth and didn't go through with it.

Gen 16:2 – Sarah

Not necessarily true. It was what Sarah believed. Many people blame the providence of God for bad things that happen to them when it was just the law of cause and effect. Remember that Sarah miraculously had a child later on.

Gen 20:18 – The household of Abimelech

This was to show that Abimelech was about to do something against the will of God. Notice that the affliction was lifted when Abimelech got things right.

Gen 30:2 – Rachel

This again is what Rachel believed. It does not necessarily mean that what she believed was true.

Gen 32:22-32 – Jacob

This was a significant and isolated event that happened to one person for a particular reason.

Exod 4:6-7 – Moses

This was a miracle to show Pharaoh the power of God.

Exod 12:29-30 – Firstborn of Egypt

This was to show that God will not stop at anything to show Pharaoh that He intends for His people to be set free from slavery.

Lev 10:1-2 – Abihu and Nadab

These were people wilfully disobeying God by doing something expressly forbidden by God.

Num 12:1-15 – Miriam

This was because she was rebelling against the leadership of Moses

Num 16:41-50 – Israel

Num 21:4-9 – Israel

Num 25:1-9 – Israel

In all these cases it was because of rebellion against Moses and against God.

1 Sam 1:5-6 – Hannah

1 Sam 5:6,9,12 – Philistines

2 Sam 12:1-23 – Infant son of David

2 Sam 24:1-17 – Israel

1 Kgs 13:4 – Jeroboam

1 Kgs 14:12,17 – Jeroboam's son

2 Kgs 5:20-27 – Gehazi

2 Kgs 19:35 – Sennacherib's army

2 Chr 21:16-20 – Jehoram

2 Chr 26:16-21 – Uzziah

Ezek 24:16 – Ezekiel's wife

Dan 4:28-37 – Nebuchadnezzar

I have indicated clearly that all these are particular occasions for a set purpose. In the case of Hannah, she did have children afterwards. We cannot base a doctrine that God generally afflicts people with sickness just for the sake of it. Notice that Mr Mayhue omits Job, where it was clear that he was afflicted by Satan for the particular purpose of trying to prove to God that Job was not as righteous as he was made out to be.

## Healing Methods Varied

God honored and, at times, personally used various techniques to heal physically.

### 1. Prayer

Gen 20:1-18 – Abraham

Num 12:1-15 – Moses

1 Sam 1:19-20 – Hannah

1 Kgs 13:6 – A man of God

1 Kgs 17:17-24 – Elijah

### 2. Hand into his bosom

Exod 4:6-7 – Moses

**3. God's predetermined time limit**

Dan 4:28-37 – Seven years

**4. Dipping seven times in the Jordan River**

2 Kgs 5:1-14 – Naaman

**5. Unexplained actions**

1 Kgs 17:17-24 – Elijah

2 Kgs 4:18-37 – Elisha

**6. Without anything**

Gen 21:1-2 – Sarah

Gen 29:31 – Leah

Gen 30:22 – Rachel

**7. Combination of events**

1 Kgs 17:17-24 – Prayer and unexplained actions

2 Kgs 4:18-37 – Prayer and unexplained actions

2 Kgs 20:1-11 – Prayer and medicine

**8. Looking at an elevated serpent**

Num 21:4-9 – Israel

**9. Plague checked, but no physical healing**

Num 16:41-50 – Incense offered

Num 25:1-9 – Two people killed

1 Sam 5:6,9,12 – Obedience

2 Sam 24:1-17 – Predetermined time limit

**10. Unknown means**

Job 42:1-17 – Job

**Sin-related Sickness**

God directly caused physical affliction at times because of personal sin, although the person physically affected was not always the sinner.

This would not be applicable to born-again believers because the guilt and punishment for personal sin has been completely removed through the Atonement and the Justification that was conferred through faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore there would be no way that a born again believer could be punished for his sin by sickness. This would totally deny the Atonement that Christ made on the cross.

**1. The sinner went unpunished**

Exod 32:22-32 – Aaron

Num 12:1-15 – Aaron

**2. The sinner was punished**

Lev 10:1-2 – Nadab and Abihu

Num 12:1-15 – Miriam

Num 16:1-50 – Korah

1 Kgs 13:4 – Jeroboam

Dan 4:28-37 – Nebuchadnezzar

**3. Someone other than the sinner was punished**

Gen 12:17 – Household of Pharaoh

Gen 20:1-18 – Household of Abimelech

2 Sam 12:1-23 – Child of David and Bathsheba

2 Sam 24:1-17 – House of Israel

1 Kgs 14:12,17 – Jeroboam's son

**Unexplainable Sickness**

Gen 27:1 – Isaac

Gen 32:22-32 – Jacob  
2 Sam 4:4 – Mephibosheth  
1 Kgs 17:17-24 – Widow’s son  
2 Kgs 4:18-37 – Shunammite’s son  
Dan 7:28; 8:27 – Daniel

### **God Healed Unbelievers**

Gen 12:10-20 – Pharaoh’s household  
Gen 20:1-18 – Abimelech’s household  
1 Kgs 13:6 – Jeroboam  
2 Kgs 5:1-14 – Naaman  
2 Chr 30:20 – Israel  
Dan 4:34-37 – Nebuchadnezzar

Every person that Jesus healed in the Gospels was an unconverted Jew and therefore not a Christian believer.

### **God Restored Life**

In the OT, only three people experienced resuscitation.

1 Kgs 17:17-24 – Son of the Zarephath widow  
2 Kgs 4:18-37 – Son of the Shunammite woman  
2 Kgs 13:21 – Unnamed man whose body touched the bones of Elisha

### **Satan Caused Sickness**

God used Satan as an agent for sickness *only once*.

Job 1-2

### **Saints Were Sick**

Some of the greatest OT saints were ill, but not directly because of personal sin.

Gen 27:1 – Isaac (uncured)  
Gen 32:25 – Jacob (uncured)  
Gen 48:1 – Jacob (uncured)  
Exod 4:6-7 – Moses (cured)  
1 Kgs 14:4 – Ahijah (uncured)  
2 Kgs 13:14 – Elisha (uncured)  
Job 1-2; 42:10 – Job (cured)  
Dan 8:27 – Daniel (cured)

Though this might seem like a large number of healing incidents, remember that they occurred over a period of time that exceeds two thousand years. Significantly, far fewer healings occurred over thousands of years in the OT than were experienced during just a few decades in the NT.

### **THE GOSPELS’ HEALING RECORD**

Never in human history have so many people been healed from such a multitude of diseases in so short a time as during Christ’s three-year public ministry. This outburst of healings has never been repeated. Christ’s healing ministry stands truly unique because it remains unequalled.

When Jesus told His disciples that the same works He did they would do also, even greater works, He implied that His ministry was not meant to be unique and that He expected His disciples to emulate it. We know that Peter and Paul did emulate it and there is every reason to believe that their ministries of healing and miracles equalled the ministry of Jesus.

### **Purposes For Healing**

Christ's healing ministry served various purposes; all of them primarily contributed to authenticate the person of Jesus as the true Messiah.

That's what He said to the disciples of John when they came and asked if He was the true Messiah. But was only partly true. Jesus had a healing ministry because it was His character to heal people.

The healing miracles were never performed *merely* for their physical benefit.

Jesus did not heal to prove anything at all. He was anointed (given authority, commission and licence) to ...set the captives free. He was here to show the nature and character of God. He did not have to prove Himself to anyone. He just went about doing what is in the nature and character of God to do.

Matt 8:17 – A fulfillment of the messianic prophecy in Isa 53:4

Matt 9:6 (also Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24) – So people would know that Christ had the authority to forgive sins

Matt 11:2-19 (also Luke 7:18-23) – To authenticate the messianic ministry for the imprisoned John

Matt 12:15-21 – To fulfill the messianic prophecy in Isa 42:1-4

John 9:3 – That the works of God might be displayed in Christ

John 20:30-31 – That men might believe that Jesus is Christ

Acts 2:22 – God's authentication of Christ

Don't we think that the world needs this today? Especially when our Western society is so infected with the occult with its supernatural events, Darwinism, false religions and cults, and general secularism. Our western society is just as paganised as the Roman Empire and is getting worse because of the powerlessness of the Church brought about by its divisiveness and cessationist doctrines. Outside of the supernatural, the church has no answer to the problems facing the world.

### **Healing Had Direction**

Although Jesus' miracles abounded, He did not perform them indiscriminately, nor did He always heal everyone who needed healing (see John 5:3-5);

He healed all those who came to Him for healing. Not all who needed healing came to Him. Also the Gospel writers did not record all the healings that Jesus did. There were too many of them to record them all.

neither did He perform signs upon request (see Matt 12:38-40);

The signs requested were not in the area of healing. The religious leaders were looking for special signs in the sky that the Messiah was here. Jesus refused to give them that sort of sign. Herod wanted Jesus to perform some miracle in front of him as a circus act, but Jesus refused to do that as well. Mr Mayhue cannot use this example to refute the divine healing ministry.

nor would He use His powers to avoid the cross (see Matt 26:52-53).

It is amazing that a learned gentleman like Mr Mayhue would not know the reason for this! Jesus laid aside His divine powers and became as a normal human being dependent on the Holy Spirit. Surely Mr Mayhue must know this!

God always directed miracles toward the purposes previously documented.

Matt 4:1-11 Matt 16:1-4 Matt 27:40 Luke 11:16

Matt 12:38-40 Matt 26:52-53 Mark 6:5 John 5:3-5

I have already stated that this is not strictly true. Jesus healed people because of his compassionate nature as well as for other reasons. Matthew records on a number of occasions how that Jesus was moved with compassion and healed people as a result.

### **Immediate Healing**

With three exceptions, all of Jesus' healings occurred instantaneously.

They required absolutely no recuperative period because the afflicted immediately returned to complete health. No relapses or misunderstandings about being healed marked Christ's healings.

Matt 8:3 Matt 9:22 Matt 17:18 Luke 13:13

Matt 8:13 Matt 9:29-30 Matt 20:34 John 4:53

Matt 8:15 Matt 15:28 Mark 3:1-6 John 5:8-9

Matt 9:6-7 Matt 15:30-31 Mark 7:33-35

It is accepted that Jesus healed people more effectively than what others could do. This is because He knew his relationship with the Father and had absolute confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit to support Him. He did not heal people of Himself because He had made a covenant with the Father that while He was on earth He was to be as a true human being. It was the Holy Spirit who did the healing through Him. If Jesus was not a genuine human being with all the associated limitations (yet without sin), He could not have been our substitutional sacrifice because it had to be a real human being who had to go to the cross to die for the sins of the world.

### **Several Healings Time-Delayed**

The only three delays in total healing involved mere *minutes* and no longer.

The men involved received total healing.

Mark 8:22-26 Luke 17:11-19 John 9:1-7

We don't know how many other healings there were that were not recorded, where a time lapse might have occurred.

### **Abundant Healings**

Jesus' miracles abounded; He healed in unlimited number and scope.

Matt 4:23-25 Matt 14:35-36 Luke 6:17-19 John 7:31

Matt 8:16 Matt 15:30-31 Luke 7:21 John 12:37

Matt 9:35 Mark 1:32-34 Luke 9:11 John 20:30

Matt 12:15 Mark 3:7-11 John 6:2 John 21:25

### **Healing In Absentia**

Healing occurred without Jesus' physical presence.

Matt 8:5-13 Matt 15:21-28 Luke 7:1-10 John 4:46-54

### **Healing Methods Varied**

As with OT healings, Jesus used a variety of methods to heal. Remember, the power of God healed! Nothing magical or cure-producing in the method caused the healing.

#### **1. Christ touched**

Matt 8:15 Matt 20:34 Luke 13:13

#### **2. Christ spoke**

Matt 9:6-7 Mark 10:52 John 5:8-9

### **3. The afflicted touched Christ's cloak**

Matt 9:20-22 Matt 14:36 Luke 8:44

### **4. Christ used spittle**

Mark 8:22-26

### **5. Christ plugged a man's ears with His fingers and placed spittle on his tongue.**

Mark 7:33-35

### **6. Christ anointed with clay**

John 9:6

This shows that there is no prescribed method for healing. The method that works is the correct method.

## **Christ Approved Doctors**

Jesus recognized the normal means of physical healing—a doctor and medicine.

Matt 9:12 – “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are ill.”

Luke 10:30-37 – The Samaritan used oil, wine, and bandages to help the abandoned Jew.

Irrelevant. Jesus was not teaching about divine healing in these references. The Matthew reference is to do not with sickness but with sinners. If a person was able to keep the whole law to be justified, they would not have needed Jesus to die on the cross for them. Jesus used the physician example to show this. It was not to support that He ever sent a sick person away to see a doctor instead of healing him.

The Luke reference was also not about divine healing. It was a parable to explain who is our neighbour. Furthermore, the injured person was not sick. He was injured though being “mugged”. The Samaritan was administering first aid, as anyone would do in a situation like that.

If Mr Mayhue mentioned that Luke, being a physician, accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys, I would accept that Paul would have taken advantage of Luke's training and expertise where it was needed. But Jesus did not have a doctor accompanying Him because He did not need the doctor to assist when He had the Holy Spirit to heal people supernaturally.

## **Healing For God's Glory**

Although sickness can result directly from personal sin, as evidenced in the OT, nowhere in the Gospel accounts does Jesus attribute sickness directly to personal sin. However, Scripture states twice that sickness occurred in order that God could be glorified.

John 9:1-41 – Man with congenital blindness

John 11:1-53 – Lazarus

## **Christ's Healing Ministry Is Unique**

Another healing ministry like Christ's ministry has never happened.

Matt 9:32-33 Mark 2:12 Luke 10:24 John 9:32

As I said before, Jesus was not to plan it that way. It was the failure of the church to keep the faith that caused the healing ministry to be of lower quality. It is clear that Peter and Paul did emulate the healing ministry of Jesus.

## **Christ Shunned Acclaim**

Jesus went out of His way to avoid public approval or reward for His healing miracles. In Luke 10:20, Jesus explicitly told the disciples not to rejoice in the power they had been given, but rather to rejoice over the fact that their names were recorded in heaven.

Matt 8:4 Mark 1:44 Mark 8:26

Matt 9:30 Mark 5:43 Luke 5:14

Matt 12:16 Mark 7:36 Luke 8:56

It does not say that they should not trust the Holy Spirit to support their divine healing ministries. He was reminding them that the purpose for supernatural healing was to support the preaching of the Gospel to get souls saved and be true disciples of Christ.

I accept that many "revivalist" divine healing ministries attract more attention to themselves rather than to Christ. This is a major hindrance to today's divine healing ministry, because these ministries do not follow the guidelines or the example of Christ. The fact that some of these ministries achieve genuine supernatural healings is that although they are messed up in their heads, their hearts are right with God and He acknowledges what He sees in their hearts.

So it is quite possible that Mr Mayhue's heart might be right with God, even though his head is messed up about contemporary divine healing ministry.

## **Undeniable Healings**

Christ's healings generated phenomenal spectator reaction. Everyone, including His enemies, walked away amazed, astounded, and unable to deny or discredit the miracles.

Matt 9:1-8 Mark 3:6 Luke 18:43

Matt 9:33 Mark 3:10 John 9:1-41

Matt 12:23 Mark 5:20 John 11:47-48

Matt 15:31 Mark 7:37

Mark 2:12 Luke 11:14

## **National Reactions**

The geographic range of personal reaction reached nationwide proportions.

Mark 1:45 describes the fact that the news of Christ's healing ministry spread to such an extent that He could no longer enter a city. Even though He remained in unpopulated areas, people came to Him from everywhere.

Matt 4:23-25 Matt 9:31 Matt 15:30 Mark 1:45

Matt 9:26 Matt 14:35 Matt 19:2 Mark 6:2

## **Healing Did Not Save**

While Christ's miracles could not be denied, they did not necessarily lead to faith.

This is correct. It is believing that God raised Jesus from the dead and that Jesus died on the cross for his or her sins that brings a person to salvation. It is knowing that by believing on Christ, he is totally justified by faith, apart from the works of the Law, that saves him. Supernatural acts of healing arrests his attention that Jesus is alive and that the Gospel is really true. The next logical step is for the sinner to realise that he has sinned and come short of God's standards as expressed through the Law and that he is condemned to Hell. As a result, He reaches out to Christ to

receive grace and mercy, and therefore is saved and made a new creature in Him, clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Then the sanctification process starts by the new believer paying attention to the Law to enable him to walk worthy of the calling in Christ that he has received.

### **1. They were undeniable**

John 3:2 John 7:25-46 John 11:47-48

### **2. They did not lead to faith**

Matt 11:21-23 Luke 10:12-15 John 12:37-43

Matt 12:38-45 John 6:26-36

They had the result of the people paying extra attention to the teaching of the Gospel. That's what happened with Phillip and the Samaritans.

The point is, that what do cessationists have to arrest the attention of Western sinners, immersed in the occult, Darwinism, and Secularism, where they do not believe what the Bible says? Is this why most of the preaching of Evangelical churches fall on deaf ears when they try preaching the Gospel to sinners?

### **Christ Healed Unbelievers**

Wherever He healed the multitudes, it can be assumed that most, if not all, were unbelievers.

Matt 8:1-4 – A leper

Luke 17:11-19 – Ten lepers

John 5:1-9 – A lame man by the pool

True. This is why the divine healing ministry is far more effective when directed toward unbelieving sinners. I wonder if most of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches have missed that, because most of their healing ministry is toward Christian believers in churches?

### **Faith Not Necessary**

Jesus did not require personal faith to be healed. In addition to the following examples, it is obvious that Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, and the widow's son were incapable of displaying faith. Yet, they all were resuscitated from the dead.

Matt 8:14 Matt 12:22 Mark 8:22 Luke 22:51

Matt 9:32 Matt 20:30 Luke 14:4 John 5:8

Matt 12:13 Mark 7:35 Luke 17:14 John 9:1

Absolutely true! Faith is required of the person ministering healing to the sick person.

### **Another's Faith Honored**

At times, Christ healed when faith was displayed by someone other than the one afflicted. Note especially Matt 17:19-20. The disciples had been unable to cast out a demon and came to Jesus privately for further instruction. He informed them that it was because of their lack of faith. The parallel passage in Mark adds that prayer would have provided success (9:29). Those who claim that a person is not healed because of his or her own lack of faith need to be alerted and corrected.

Matt 8:10-11 Matt 15:28 Mark 9:23-24 John 4:50

Matt 9:2 Mark 2:1-5 Luke 8:50

### **Faith Of The Afflicted Honored**

Occasionally, Christ commended the faith of the afflicted one.

Matt 9:22 Matt 9:29 Mark 10:52

## Healings Were Not Prearranged

1. He healed from the beginning of His ministry (Matt 4:23 -25) to the end.  
John 11:1-44
2. Often Jesus approached the person.  
Luke 13:10-17 John 5:1-9
3. Jesus always healed during the normal course of His ministry.  
Matt 9:27-31 Matt 12:10-14 Luke 13:10-17 John 5:1-9

## Satan And Demons Caused Sickness

Not all sickness is directly caused by Satan or demons, but people possessed by demons were liable to have physical infirmities. Luke 13:10-17 serves as the classic example—where a lady bound by Satan (most likely through a demon) had been doubled over for eighteen years.

Matt 4:24 Matt 12:22 Mark 1:32-34 Luke 13:10-17  
Matt 8:16-17 Matt 15:21-28 Mark 9:25 Acts 10:38  
Matt 9:32-33 Matt 17:14-18 Luke 8:2

I agree to all this.

## Heavenly Healing Power

Because Christ had temporarily and voluntarily set aside the *independent* exercise of His divine attributes, His healing power came from God the Father.

Matt 12:28 – He cast out demons by the Spirit of God.

Luke 5:17 – “And the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing.”

Luke 11:20 – He cast out demons by the finger of God.

John 5:19 – “... the Son can do nothing of Himself...”

Acts 2:22 – “...signs which God performed through Him...”

Acts 10:38 – Christ healed because God was with Him.

As I have previously stated, Jesus was totally dependent on the Holy Spirit. That is shown by His reading of the Isaiah Scripture, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because he has anointed me...” This shows that He is anointed, which means that He has the approval of the Father, and the Holy Spirit is upon Him to give Him the ability to heal people. So the Father and the Holy Spirit are working together to enable Jesus to perform His healing ministry. With us, we don’t have the anointing transferred to us. Jesus always remains the anointed One and we perform a healing ministry in His Name. But we are filled with the Holy Spirit to give us the ability to see the healings take place.

## Healing By The Disciples

People other than Christ healed in the Gospel accounts.

Matt 10:1-15 – Going only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (see 10:6), all the disciples’ needs were to be met supernaturally by God. They were to take nothing on their preaching and healing excursions.

Luke 10:1-16 – Seventy others were commissioned similarly to the twelve.

As spectacular as the early chapters in Acts read with regard to healing, they seem like nothing when compared to the endless healings by Jesus. The Gospel healing record unquestionably stands in a league all its own. Christ’s healings far outdistanced, in quantity, all the other healings in the Bible put together.

This was an example of Jesus equipping His disciples for a future healing ministry by giving them a season of practical experience. It’s like a trainee school teacher going

out to a school and doing a practicum before they graduate. The “graduation” of the 120 disciples was the filling of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

## **THE ACTS’ HEALING RECORD**

The healing ministry in Acts reads with far less intensity when compared to that of Christ, although Acts covers about thirty years. However, on a time comparison basis, Acts had far more healings than the entire OT. The NT epistles seem almost barren of healing when compared to Acts.

As I have said previously, Luke’s journal is only a small slice of what was going on in the early Church. Remember that there were many thousands of people converted by the time Paul started his ministry because it was at least 14 years after his conversion at Damascus that Barnabas brought him to Antioch. And we don’t know how long they were at Antioch before they were commissioned by the elders there to go out on their missionary journeys. The ministry of healing was so common place and familiar in the early church, that they didn’t need to mention it much. Once I learned to drive a motor vehicle, I didn’t have to be continually taught how to drive. So, if a whole crowd of people know how to drive motor vehicles and driving is common place and familiar to them, there is no need to have teaching or even discuss the techniques for driving motor vehicles. So, because they had the example of Jesus in the Gospels, which were widely distributed around the churches, concerning the way that healing should be administered, there was no need to repeat that teaching in the epistles. There were other more important matters to be dealt with that concerned the future of the church if it was to survive in the pagan world.

## **Healing Techniques Varied**

The healing techniques varied in Acts, as they also did in the OT and the Gospels.

### **1. By command**

Acts 3:6 Acts 9:32-35 Acts 14:8-10

### **2. By being in the healer’s shadow**

Acts 5:15

### **3. By touching a cloth from the healer’s body**

Acts 19:11-12

### **4. By prayer and laying on of hands**

Acts 28:8-9

### **5. By speaking**

Acts 9:17-18

## **Immediate Healing**

All the healings in Acts occurred instantaneously; they required no recuperative period. The afflicted experienced immediate restoration to full health.

Acts 3:7-8 Acts 14:8-10 Acts 14:19-20 Acts 20:9-12

Luke’s journal was his diary of events. It was not a comprehensive log of everything that happened. He recorded only what was necessary to show that the risen Christ was working through the Church, and through the ministry of Paul.

## **Unbelievers Healed**

Acts 5:16 Acts 8:6-7 Acts 19:11-12 Acts 28:8-9

## **Faith Of The Afflicted Honored**

At times the faith of the afflicted was commended.

Acts 3:16 Acts 14:8-10

## **Faith Not Necessary**

Apostolic healers did not necessarily require personal faith of the afflicted.

Acts 5:16 Acts 19:11-12 Acts 28:8-9

Acts 9:36-43 Acts 20:9-12

### **Healings Undeniable**

The miracles of healing could not be denied—even by the Sanhedrin.

Acts 2:43 Acts 4:15-17 Acts 14:3

### **Demons Caused Sickness**

Acts 8:7 Acts 10:38

### **Sin-Related Sickness**

Sometimes God afflicted because of personal sin.

Acts 5:1-11 Acts 9:8 Acts 12:23 Acts 13:4-12

Not for genuine born again believers. Ananias and Saphira had lied to the Holy Spirit and paid with their lives. This was a “one off” and does not support a doctrine that God afflicts born again believers with sickness as a punishment for sin. In Saul’s case, this was also a specific event and it happened before he was converted to Christ. Herod was an unconverted sinner. The person afflicted here was someone who was hindering Paul’s ministry toward an important dignitary who, being converted, could have a major influence for Christ in his region.

These references cannot be used to form a doctrine that God punishes Christian believers through personal sin. To do so would be to deny the Atonement that His own Son made on the cross. It would make all the work of Christ ineffective, and we would still be in our sins, without hope.

### **Life Restored**

Two resuscitations occurred.

Acts 9:36-43 – Dorcas (by Peter) Acts 20:9-12 – Eutychus (by Paul)

### **Illness Prevented**

Acts 28:1-6

### **Heavenly Healing Power**

Acts 4:30

### **Saints Were Ill**

Acts 9:36-43 – Dorcas Acts 14:19 – Paul

Dorcas did not remain ill. She was raised from the dead by Paul!

Paul was not sick. He was fatally injured after being attacked and beaten.

### **Healing In Absentia**

Acts 19:11-12

### **Everyone Was Healed**

Acts 28:9

As expected, the quality characteristics of these healings matched those of Christ. However, the quantity did not even begin to approximate the too-numerous-to-count healings by Jesus.

Mr Mayhue is guessing at the quantity of people who were healed in Acts as compared to those by Jesus.

## **THE EPISTLES’ HEALING RECORD**

God used signs, miracles, and wonders to authenticate the apostles and their ministry (Rom 15:18-19; 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:4). Certification of the apostles primarily explains the miraculous actions of men, not the mere healing of the saints. Spectacular supernatural healings were among the signs displayed by the

apostles and those with whom they personally ministered. Whether the apostles themselves or those with whom they ministered did the signs, the signs were designed to attest the authority of the apostles as revealers of truth (see Acts 2:42-43).

If all Christians are supposed to perform such deeds, those deeds could not have served as signs of apostleship (see 2 Cor 12:12). The signs attested the apostles' words as of equal authority with those of Jesus Himself, for He had chosen them as His spokesmen (see Matt 10:11-15, 20, 40; 1 Cor 14:37).

Mr Mayhue ignores Mark 16, where it says that "these signs shall follow all those who **believe** (not limited to the Apostles)...they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover". The supernatural divine healing ministry was for the church to show that Jesus was alive and the Gospel was true. In many cases, it showed the pagans that Jesus was more powerful than the demons they worshipped, and multitudes came to Christ as a result. This not only happened in the book of Acts through the Apostles, but went on into church history, as evidenced by the writings of the church Fathers. There have been many cases in the Second and Third Centuries, even later, when the power of the Holy Spirit was manifested through healing and casting out of demons which convinced the pagans in a region and multitudes came to Christ as a result. So to say that the signs and wonders were just to authenticate the work of the Apostles is denied by historical records of the significant church Fathers who came after the Apostles.

### **Medicine Approved**

Paul recognized and recommended medicine.

1 Tim 5:23

Wine was not a medicine. People used wine to purify contaminated water. Paul recognised that Timothy's ailments may have been caused by drinking contaminated water and recommended using a little wine to purify the water that he drank, to minimise dysentery and other related illnesses.

Mr Mayhue uses **one verse** to make an assertion that Paul sent people to the doctor instead of ministering divine healing. Notice that he cannot supply other corroborating evidence to prove his point. Even a baby Christian knows not to form a doctrine out of one isolated verse, out of its normal context!

### **Sin-Related Sickness**

James 5:14-20 outlines the biblical response to severe or untimely physical infirmities that probably, but not necessarily, have their source in God's chastisement for personal sin.

It does not mean that God punishes born again Christians with sickness because of personal sin just because James includes forgiveness of sin in the healing ministry. James is showing that forgiveness of sin and divine healing are connected in the same way that Jesus said to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven", and, "Is it easier to say your sins are forgiven, or to say take up your bed and walk?" This shows that forgiveness of sin and physical healing are part of the same Atonement.

Although the Scripture records that God does chastise those whom He loves, and the context is about persecution and fiery trials, not sickness. Sickness is not mentioned at all in the context, so there is no evidence that God chastises people with sickness.

## Healing Declined

Paul's frequency of healing declined with the passing of time.

Gal 4:13-15 – Paul was ill

No evidence that the Galatians saying that they would offer their very eyes is suggesting that Paul had an eye complaint. It could just as well be explained as a figure of speech in the same manner as us saying that something cost us an arm and a leg.

Phil 2:25-30 – Epaphroditus was ill

Not through sickness but through stress because of over exertion. There is no evidence that he remained sick.

1 Tim 5:23 – Timothy was ill

I have already explained this. No need to repeat myself.

2 Tim 4:20 – Trophimus was ill

No evidence that he remained ill.

Neither John nor Peter mention historical instances of first-century healing in their epistles and Revelation.

They would not have needed to mention divine healing if it was common place in the churches. Why teach something that people already knew and regularly practiced?

Healing is noticeable in the OT (over 4,000 years), overwhelming in the Gospels (about three years), occasional in Acts (about thirty years), and negligible in the epistles (about forty years). The apostolic age ended, and miraculous healing by direct human intervention ceased. The subsequent alleged healings recorded by early church historians do not match the biblical record in regard to the miraculous quality of instant, total, and undeniable healing.

Speculation. Not supported by any teaching from Jesus, Paul, or Peter.

Disproved by many recorded accounts of supernatural healing throughout Church history. Many of these accounts are not legend but are records made of observances by intelligent, honest men and women of God with integrity. Some of the greatest minds in the Church have recorded genuine instances of divine healing:

Polycarp

Eusibius

Origen

Augustine

St Benedict

Martin of Tours

St Francis of Assisi

St Patrick

St Benedict

St Ambrose

Martin Luther (in later life)

George Fox

John Wesley

Charles Spurgeon (in writings not filtered by cessationist biographers)

Guy Bevington (Methodist Holiness evangelist)

Andrew Murray

FF Boswell

Maria Woodworth-etter (she started with Gospel preaching and healings started to happen spontaneously)

John G Lake (before he became a Pentecostal). Healings that happened during his ministry have been confirmed and recorded in the medical notes of the doctors of these patients.

Smith Wigglesworth – The Evening Post newspaper in Wellington NZ has recorded genuine healing testimonies in its archives from 1922 and 1927 when he was in New Zealand.

All these cannot be mistakes or lies. Some of the most brilliant medical experts around the world have examined these healings and have attested them to be absolutely genuine, and are of conditions that could not be cured by medical means.

I worked for some years with a church pastor who was sent home in his mid forties to die with an enlarged heart because medicine could no longer help him. He was totally healed, and this was attested to by his doctor. He lived on to his late 70s, and died with pneumonia as a complication of a stroke, and not of a heart complaint. That testimony alone blows Mr Mayhue's cessationist doctrine right out of the water!

## **PROPHETIC EXPECTATIONS OF HEALING**

When John the Baptist questioned whether Jesus truly was the Messiah or whether he should look to someone else, John sent his disciples to Jesus for an answer (Matt 11:2-19; Luke 7:18-23). In reply, Christ first healed, and then he told John's men to report these miraculous events back to John, remembering Isa 35:5-6. On another occasion, Jesus healed in order to fulfill Isa 42:1-4 (Matt 12:15-21). Healing in Mark 7:31-37 alludes to Isa 35:5-6. On those occasions, Jesus healed to preview His kingdom power as an appropriate credential in order to be rightly recognized as the King of Israel.

These brief bursts of power in the Gospels pointed to something yet future which the OT (especially Isaiah) had predicted. The Bible anticipates two future periods when human health will be dramatically improved— The Millennium and Eternity Future.

### **The Millennium**

Isa 29:18-19 Isa 33:24 Isa 42:7-16 Mic 4:6-7

Isa 32 :3-4 Isa 35 :5-6 Isa 65:19-20, 22 Zeph 3:19

### **Eternity Future**

Isa 25 :8 1 Cor 15:54 Rev 21:4 Rev 22:2

## **GOD'S HEALING PROMISE**

While this study might not decide every issue conclusively, there is one thing for certain—the Bible does contain a healing promise. Many have misunderstood it. Look at 1 Pet 2:24 carefully:

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

Can you see it? "*By His wounds you were healed.*"<sup>28</sup> What does Peter mean? How does this apply to you and me in this life? If it applies physically, then why aren't all Christians healed? Has God's Word failed? Has God lost His healing

touch? Are the Scriptures mistaken?

The Greek word for "healed" means salvation and healing. If the shedding of the blood of Jesus brought total forgiveness of sin to us, what was the body of Jesus broken for? Physical healing. This is why so many people are sickly and weak in our churches and some are dying prematurely. It is because they do not discern the body of Christ – that it is for physical healing. The word "damnation" in the KJV is not accurate. The Greek word means "judgment". This shows that discerning of the body of Christ has nothing to do with personal holiness or forgiveness of others, because there are people in our churches who are perfectly holy through the righteousness of Christ. To say that a born again Christian is not perfectly holy is to say that believers are not the righteousness of God in Christ as stated in Scripture. So holiness is not an issue. Judgment cannot come upon a born again believer because of personal sin because the righteousness of Christ covers it completely insulating the believer from guilt or punishment. Otherwise the righteousness of Christ is imperfect and ineffective. So to say that people come under judgment for taking communion while having personal sin is to say that the righteousness of Christ clothing believers is a lie, making God out to be a liar.

Also, there are many believers who have forgiven everyone, and yet they are still sick. So unforgiveness is not the reason for believers not discerning the body of Christ, because those who are totally forgiving should not be under the judgment that would cause them to be sick, weakly, or dying prematurely, and yet many of them do.

No. the judgment happens because people do not believe that physical healing comes through the broken body of Jesus, and therefore do not enter into it by faith. That is why every church we know of is full of sick and weakened believers, some of whom are dying before their time. Peter's quote "by His stripes we were healed", shows that physical healing has already been provided by God in the Atonement, and as people take the bread of communion, they can believe for personal healing and trust the Holy Spirit to bring it about.

It is not God who has failed. He is waiting for people to believe His Word. It is the Church that has failed through its acceptance of pagan influences (ornate church buildings, pagan festivals changed to Christian observances, the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle), and its formalism with church leaders exercising authority over other believers that Christ never gave them. The majority of ministers and pastors appointed to churches were not appointed by the Holy Spirit. They were appointed because they jumped through a series of academic hoops. Some are just in their early twenties, just graduated from seminaries and quite inept at really pastoring churches in the power of the Holy Spirit. Where Paul said that he did not go to the Corinthians with the wisdom of men but with the demonstration of the Spirit and in power, most pastors can only preach the wisdom of man and then wonder why their churches are declining and not growing.

Two foundational truths help get us off to a right start in understanding Peter and divine healing. First, every human being, when conceived, possesses a congenital spiritual defect—a sin disability that needs to be healed.

Sin is more than a disability. It is a complete alienation from God, making the sinner an enemy of God, totally unable to understand or accept the Gospel unless the Holy

Spirit, through the grace and mercy of God, reveals it to him. Sin is a total corruption of the nature of man, total depravity through which the sinner deserves to be punished with eternity in Hell, continually immersed in the fiery wrath of God. The sinner requires more than healing. He needs to be resurrected in his spirit and made a whole new creature in Christ. Unless the Holy Spirit initiates the work in the sinner, he is helpless, under condemnation and totally unable to avoid an eternity under God's wrath in Hell.

Second, Peter

addresses our need for spiritual restoration in 1 Pet 2:24 with his discussion of Christ's provision of salvation's healing.

As I have said, salvation requires much more than a "restoration". The whole sinner, spirit, soul and body is totally depraved and condemned to judgment and hell. We have the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead. Sinners need a spiritual resurrection. The scripture says that if the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead lives in us, He will make our mortal bodies alive through that same Spirit. The Holy Spirit, through conversion to Christ, makes our spirit alive and transforms us into totally new creatures in Christ. This is what being born again is all about.

So it is more than just healing. So it is obvious that Peter is meaning something else when he speaks of healing.

With those two thoughts in mind, look closely at the parts of 1 Pet 2:24-25. Then, when reassembled, you will be able to understand the whole because the parts have been identified. Our text explains five elements of salvation:

1. The *fact* of salvation (verse 24a):

"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross... ."

2. The *purposes* of salvation (verse 24b):

"...that we might die to sin and live to righteousness... ."

3. The *means* of salvation (verse 24c):

"...for by His wounds you were healed."

4. The *need* for salvation (verse 25a):

"For you were continually straying like sheep...."

5. The *result* of salvation (verse 25b):

"...but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."

First Pet 2:24 has everything to do with spiritual healing, which the Bible calls salvation.

As I have already said, the Greek words involved mean both salvation and physical healing. All Mr Mayhue is doing is to repeat the old cessationist doctrine that purposely ignores the original Greek meanings to fit in with its theology, rather than to allow the true meaning of the words determine the theology.

In fact, 1 Pet 2:18-25 means just the opposite of what most healing advocates teach. Peter argues that since Christ physically and spiritually suffered for our spiritual healing (vv. 21-24), then we should be willing to suffer physically in this life at the hands of men (vv. 18-21), because we have already received God's healing promise for eternal salvation (vv. 24 -25). *Peter actually validates the divine purpose in human suffering rather than eliminating it.*

The suffering that Peter talks about is to do with persecution for our faith. He does not teach that God causes us to suffer through sickness. That doctrine was dreamed up by a Roman Catholic theologian sometime in the Middle Ages to try and explain why Christian believers are sick. It has no basis in Scripture at all.

Anyway, if sickness is part of Christian suffering, how come cessationist church members and probably people in Mr Mayhue's seminary go running off to the doctor to get medical treatment for their illnesses. Or do they remain in their rooms, suffering away because it is God's will for them to suffer. Under the doctrine that Mr Mayhue is proposing, going to the doctor for medical help for sickness would be sinning by trying to avoid the work of God in them to produce spiritual benefit by suffering sickness.

Mr Mayhue is intelligent enough to know that his seminary has medical facilities to help sick faculty members and students, so his doctrine of suffering through sickness falls over on its side just by making medical assistance available! If he really believed that God's will is that we have to suffer through sickness, he would not support calling for medical help for any person under his jurisdiction who becomes sick, would he?

Unless we begin with this eternal perspective [it is not an eternal perspective at all. It is cessationist doctrine], we will never understand biblically how God works in the physical affairs of mankind in this life. The good news is that true Christians are securely saved. The other important-to-know news is that not all of salvation's benefits will be received until our bodies have been raised from the grave (1 Cor 15:42-44, 52-54). After God initiates our salvation, all Christians still sin, still suffer ill health, and eventually will die. However, in the end, divinely perfected believers will dwell forever in the presence of a holy God (Rev 21:1-8).

## CONCLUSION

After all has been studied and written, I believe the Bible teaches that God can sovereignly choose to heal whomever and whenever, *but it will not be a frequent occurrence nor will it be done through human healers*

It doesn't happen through human healers. The concept of human healers is not supported by Scripture. It is and always has been, Jesus who heals people through believers who apply the Word of God to sick people by laying hands on them in obedience to the Word of God. The Scripture totally supports believers laying hands on sick people and expecting them to recover. If Mr Mayhue does not believe that, then he is accusing the Holy Spirit of lying when He wrote that verse in Mark 16.

because:

1. The gospel is good news about our sin problem, not our sicknesses (Rom 3:23; 6:23).

Nonsense. There are many Scriptures that refute that.

2. Christ's atonement focuses primarily on our sins (iniquities), not our

sicknesses (Lev 16:1-34; Isa 53:5-6, 11-12; 1 Pet 2:24).

This also nonsense, because the original Greek meanings of the words "bore our griefs and sorrows", means "bore our sicknesses and pains". This speaks clearly of physical healing. Matthew 8:16-17, where he repeats it in the context of Jesus healing people physically, and where Peter uses the original Greek to mean both salvation and healing. Actually just the Scripture in Matthew totally refutes cessationist doctrine that Isaiah 53 deals only with spiritual healing. It is interesting that Mr Mayhue avoids Matthew 8:16-17 because it is so obvious that Matthew is using the Isaiah quotation in the context of Jesus healing people physically.

3. Christ died for our sins, not our sicknesses (1 Cor 15:3).

The context does not even deal with sickness. Mr Mayhue's quote does not prove his point.

4. Christ was made sin, not sickness (2 Cor 5:21).

The context of this verse does not mention sickness at all. It is speaking of something quite different.

5. Christ forgave our sins, not our sicknesses (1 John 2:12).

This one is not talking about sickness either. It is talking about different stages in the Christian journey.

6. Christ gave Himself for our sins, not our sicknesses (Gal 1:4).

There is no mention of sickness here either.

7. Our bodies are corruptible and, thus, subject to sickness (1 Cor 15:42-44).

The context of this Scripture is the comparison between our natural bodies and our glorified bodies. There is no teaching on sickness or healing here.

8. We will all die physically (Heb 9:27).

Of course that is true but it does not prove cessationist doctrine.

9. The NT "healing promise" refers to salvation, not physical healing (1 Pet 2:24).

Mr Mayhue is repeating himself. This point has already been refuted.

9. Our hope while on earth is heaven, not healing (Rom 8:24-25).

Here is another reference used out of its natural context to try and prove the cessationist doctrine. Paul is not talking about healing here at all. He is talking about the creation groaning in expectation of the manifestation of the glorified Bride of Christ.

Though the NT sign/authenticating "gifts of healings" have ceased, [Not proved at all!] the possibility of God healing without human healers is certainly possible today. However, when He does heal, it will be characterized in a manner similar to His healings recorded in Scripture. Yes, and God's healings in Scripture are modelled through the healings of Jesus in the Gospels, which He instructed His disciples to continue to the end of the age, which will happen when the glorified Bride of Christ is revealed. Because that has not happened yet, the supernatural healing ministry of the Church is still expected to continue.

My conclusion is that any competent Bible scholar who is prepared to read the Bible for what it actually says and not to try and interpret it according to any particular theology, will be able to shoot Richard Mayhue's cessationist view of the healing ministry down in flames.

Mr Mayhue is a dean of a theological seminary. He is involved in teaching prospective pastors and church workers and to equip them with the skills to pastor and teach in churches. This is a very responsible position and must involve an accurate rendering of Scripture to achieve that successfully and to equip young pastors to minister the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit to win sinners to Christ and to cause congregation members to be effective representatives of Christ in this world.

From what I have studied in this article. I have grave concerns that Mr Mayhue is more committed to his cessationist theology than what the Scripture is actually saying about the on-going ministry of the Holy Spirit in today's Church. I am not advocating Pentecostal or Charismatic practice, nor am I saying that prominent divine healing revivalist ministries are necessarily correct in their theology or practice. But what I am concerned about is that the Scripture is seen for what it actually says and not interpreted for any deeper meanings, which could border on occultic practice when people seek for these deeper meanings in preference to what the Scripture actually states when viewed at face value.

Both Jesus and Paul were straight talkers. They meant what they said, and said what they meant. Most of what Jesus and the Apostles said was meant to be read literally. Everything that was said had a context which needs to be understood as well as what is said in individual verses of Scripture. Therefore, if a statement is made in a verse, then we must look at the 10 verses before and after that verse to determine why the statement was made and to whom it was made.

Let's look at the main passage of Scripture that cessationists rely on:

8Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. 11When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 12Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known (1 Corinthians 13:8-12).

Now, the first observation is that the chapter is all about love. It is not just about any type of love, it is the attribute or fruit of the Spirit. It is a reflection of the love of God that is shed aboard in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Verse 8 speaks about the last attribute of love mentioned in the chapter – that love never fails. Then Paul goes on to compare other attributes of the ministry of the Holy Spirit with the unfailing quality of love.

He says that prophecies will cease, and tongues will be stilled, and knowledge will pass away. Here he is talking about the gift of prophecy, and of tongues, and the gifts of the word of knowledge and wisdom. He is saying that love is permanent but the three gifts of the Spirit mentioned are temporary.

In verse 9 Paul is saying that the operation of the gifts of the Spirit do not express completeness but only cause us to progress part of the way toward perfection.

In verse 10 he says that when perfection comes, the imperfect will disappear. In this he is saying that there is a perfection that will come in the future, which will mean that the gifts of the Spirit, which are imperfect, will disappear.

In verse 11, he says that our imperfect gifts of the Spirit are like the toys of a child, but when that child comes to full maturity, the toys of childhood are laid aside.

In verse 12, Paul says that our present perception of spiritual things is like a person looking at a poor image in a mirror. In Paul's day, mirrors were made of polished metal and gave imperfect images of people. But in the time when perfection comes, we will see clearly as if we are facing someone face to face. He then says that now we have only a partial perception, but in the day that perfection comes we will know as we are known.

Notice that Paul mentions only prophecy, which gives other believers a short snapshot of the heart of God toward them; and tongues, which is a prayer language which we don't understand when we use it to communicate with God; and knowledge which we can receive from God through revelation in His Word. He does not mention healing, so this reference is not about physical healing at all.

What is Paul's definition of "perfection"? The cessationist definition is the complete canon of Scripture. But this is not mentioned in the context. Paul would have had no perception of a completed canon of Scripture, so he could not have been meaning that. It could not be the end of the Apostolic age when the Church is established, because the Church was not fully established at the time the last Apostle died. It was going through a time of divisiveness and doctrinal heresy. The Church as a whole is not fully established even at our present time! If Paul meant either of those two things, he would have stated it plainly. By not defining "perfection" in so many words, Paul assumes that his readers know exactly what he means. Because his readers also would not have any conception of a canon of Scripture nor of an established Church, they would not have interpreted "perfection" as such.

Paul gives us clues about what is going to happen when perfection comes. He says it in verse 12. He says that we will have a clear perception of spiritual truths and we will see all the realities of the new creation and the glory of God clearly as if we are seeing ourselves in a totally clear mirror as if we were seeing ourselves face to face instead of seeing a distorted image. Also, we will know concerning spiritual truths as we are known. Who knows us perfectly? Jesus. This means that we will know Jesus and all His glory as clearly as He knows us.

The reality is that we have not arrived at that point yet. We still do not perceive spiritual realities other than what is revealed to us in the Scriptures. We do not know Jesus as He knows us. Therefore we cannot say that perfection has come yet.

Actually, what Paul is talking about is perfection being the manifesting of the glorified Bride of Christ to the unsaved world. This is when the Church is transformed from the divisive, confused state that it is now in, to that glorified Church which is the true reflection of the grace, mercy, and beauty of the risen and glorified Christ.

Until that day comes, the gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge are still to be currently used to build up the body of Christ, and will continue to be used until we all reach perfection in Christ as the glorified Bride of Christ.

Because there is absolutely no mention of or teaching on healing in this chapter, there is no way that anyone can say that the ministry of supernatural healing ceased at the end of the Apostolic age, or when the canon of Scripture was defined. To teach this is to wrest "when perfection comes" out of its proper context and make it mean something that Paul never intended.

Because cessationist doctrine relies on this passage so much, and as the very wording and context of the passage refutes the doctrine, cessationist doctrine can only be false. When Scripture is viewed honestly and without prejudice, this is the only conclusion that can be drawn.