



Charismatic Renewal and the Healing Ministry

by Reverend Mike Endicott

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Renewal Arrives..... | 3 |
| 2. Growth and Progress..... | 6 |
| 3. A Specialist Ministry..... | 9 |
| 4. Christian Healing - A New Reformation?..... | 15 |
| 5. Onwards into Kingdom Living..... | 22 |

1. Renewal Arrives

Perhaps the most sought after, most significant and most apparent manifestation of the Holy Spirit over the past fifty years or so has been revealed to us through the more fruitful outcomes of the Christian Healing Ministry. It is here that change to any struggling life is most eagerly sought by the Christian disciple. It is here that we hope for some manifestation of God in changing personal circumstances and mending lives. We believe he can do such things and we know we have access into the divine presence and, thus armed with his ability and his grace, hope in our hearts rings eternal.

The regenerating Wave of the Spirit, often referred to as the 'Charismatic Renewal Movement', has come flooding into thousands of Christian lives with a deluge of revelations of God's love and grace. It continues to open up and rebalance swathes of scripture in the minds of Christian disciples, proving beyond the doubts of the doubting that all things are possible with God. Prophecies are given, words of knowledge abound, healings have begun to occur, deliverance ministry flourishes and the use of the gift of tongues has become much more Christo-socially acceptable. The potential for spiritual expression is huge and the promise is seemingly unlimited. God has begun to be fun.

The Movement was well established across the UK by the time my own conversion to Christianity had taken place, including the somewhat radical idea, still being discussed and tested, of a healing ministry that anyone could be involved in. My conversion was of the Damascus Road variety, a sudden, dazzling, world shattering experience of God which left me in a disturbed and muddling turmoil of emotions, not knowing what had happened to me and not knowing where I was going. The only thing I was sure of was that I knew I was lost for the first time in the will of God, floating on a tide of the unknown that would wash clean the beach of life and start the future all over again.

The gracious Christians who understood what had happened to me gathered around me, collected me up, nurtured me in the faith and set me off on the new and exciting road of Charismatic Renewal.

The first and exciting thing I noticed about this movement of renewal was that the Church was splitting along different lines than I had always previously imagined. Until that happy day of my own Pentecost experience I had seen the Church divided into three main sections; Roman Catholicism, Protestantism and Pentecostalism. The walls between them seemed high and huge. But Charismatic Renewal was manifesting something else, something

truly fascinating and hopeful to any serious God watcher - there arrived a new but movable dividing line that passed right through all three of the old parts at right angles to those traditional divisions- redefining them as the Traditional church and the Renewed. Those affected by this renewal were able to come together in worship with no sense of the previous denominational dividing lines that had laid between them. Unity through the Spirit was apparent, obvious, joyful and brimming over with good prospect.

Having been gathered up from traditional Anglicanism and thrown headlong into the joy of this cross-church, cross-denominational coming together of Christian disciples I found myself lost in the wonder of church services where we sang about Jesus, listened to sermons about Jesus and, in my first sight of the things of healing ministry, seemed to be trying to do Jesus as well. How Exciting it all was! Surely this new Movement of the Spirit (it was so new for me) would transfer the Church into something so enthralling that the whole world would see its witness and rush in through its doors.

As we now stand helplessly watching the steady ,painful yet unstoppable decline of structured Christianity throughout western cultures, it is hard to discern whether the Christian Healing Ministry is slowly dying out at the same time or holding ground. Are the waves of the Spirit still lapping and declining on the church's beaches or is the tide still coming in? Logic dictates that it should be declining as and where the church declines, if only numerically, but hope and grace may suggest otherwise. Once opened to its possibilities, the people begin to believe its validity and are attracted to it more than ever!

Along the way to where we are now, did the Wave of the Charismatic Renewal ever reach its healing potential? Are all our prayers answered as we would wish, now that Jesus has promised that the Father will do anything we ask in the Son's name? Can we even admit to ourselves that it might not have done so? Has anything developed out of all the excitement that could lead us on into a new and deeper world of God-awareness? If healing is indeed the suggested and valid ministry of the Christian Church then should we not be relentlessly pursuing its potential for the good of the people and for the greater glory of God?

Are there any ways that we might take what we have been given and press it again into greater fruitfulness or have we got it all wrong and need to start again? Does the church have the humility to even consider itself in such a light? Where are we with all this and how did we get here and are we learning anything that helps us move forward?

Where have we got to with the healing Ministry? Some of our leaders still deny the whole movement as a mere frivolity, still singing "Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive our foolish ways." Others of us quietly accept that

what we have is probably all there is and still others cry out for more. Many of us have concluded that the kingdom is not yet fully with us, that it is our job to pray and it is up to God to do whatever he wishes with our prayers. Nowhere across the western culture of renewed Christianity is there a real sense of satisfaction to be found. Something is missing.

Some church leaders, anxious to press on into deeper depths of the Spirit, have asked of today's teaching, "Does it take us on from where we are or does it tell us we are wrong and must start again? And if the latter then we won't want to know."

As history repeats itself so hindsight may be an excellent magnifying glass with which to study the map of our journey to this point. Wherever we are today in the development of this ministry, we can safely conclude that we are nowhere near the joyful and exciting missionary state of the early church where, according to Paul, they even considered the healing of a paralysed man to be a mere 'act of kindness'!

2. Growth and Progress

At the beginning of our religion of Christianity the church took, as our example, Jesus' own ministry of healing the sick and delivering others from the power of evil spirits, all of which went hand in hand with the proclaiming of the good news of the kingdom to draw people in.

Jesus made it quite clear that every believer could, and should, do both - proclaim and heal. Scripture and other writings corroborate this in their recording of the activities of the early church.

It was both normal and expected until around 325 AD, that when new disciples were baptized they would manifest signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit, signs such as speaking and singing in tongues, overflowing joyfulness, prophetic words and visions. Gradually, however, this Spirit-way of behaviour became the exception rather than the rule.

In the western church where baptism and confirmation became separated, all expectancy of spiritual change through re-birth vanished. This 'downward' slide was given some impetus as the church became more fashionable and began to change into a temporal power, trying to bring in the Kingdom of God on earth through political, economic and even military means.

As the Dark Ages began across Europe around 476 AD, bitter controversies began to split the church and confusion reigned. Attempts to bring order out of chaos caused a proliferation of rules and regulations which were often carried to extremes. Instead of a family ministry in which everyone joined, anointing with oil became a sacrament administered only by clergy using prescribed, generally vague and abstract wording. It naturally followed on that the people in the pews then began to feel that their own prayers were somehow inadequate, and many still do!

Over several hundred years, anointing became reserved for the dying and only for spiritual, rather than physical, healing.

Eventually, ordinary prayer for healing all but completely disappeared from official church life and the sick were sent by the priests to shrines to ask one or another particular Saint for healing, or at least to intercede for it.

The general slide of the healing ministry of the church into almost nothingness continued until, for another 700 years in England and in France, the only person allowed to pray publicly for healing was the King, who held one annual healing service for the whole kingdom! Then even the monarchs

stopped praying for the sick.

As the Church had grown quickly across the Continent through the Dark Ages and into the Middle Ages it had taken upon itself the assumption of power in all sorts of ways, through extreme wealth, through the threat of exclusion from heaven etc.. As the Church taught the people that it was itself the manifestation of God on earth so the effectiveness of heaven's power reduced as man's power increased. Any simple study of Church history will show the watcher how easy it is to substitute our own wisdom for Gods while still claiming it to be his. The burning anger against the movement to reproduce the Bible in the English language and the European Inquisition may be two of the most obvious examples. Yet there is one thing far greater than our own wisdom, it is the knowledge that we have precious little of it!

We should not be surprised that God's power seems to be less effective as we set out to increase the use of our own human power/wisdom. After all, one major attraction of the 'forbidden fruit to Eve was that it appeared to her to be 'good for gaining wisdom'. The temptation of being in a position to decide things for ourselves, without necessarily referring to the Almighty, was indeed a major catalyst in the process of the fall and may have been a pitfall for the unwary ever since.

Roman Catholicism has always kept its belief in miracles but, down through these centuries, has largely lost her faith expectancy. Finally came the Protestant Reformation, but instead of reviving the ministry of healing, more nails were driven into its coffin by such reformers as John Calvin and, in the 1800s, by the Plymouth Brethren. Various elements in Protestantism began to claim that the age of miracles ended with the last Apostle, and that demons had been banished from earth after the Resurrection.

After the embracing of rationalism in the 1700s, the church then centred its faith in the workings of the brain rather than the heart. By 1900 only the faintest flickering candlelight of life was detectable in the ministry of Christian healing. Some began to claim, as can still be heard amongst some churchgoing Christians today, that the Gospels are simply untrue, that God is dead.

It is in this context that the church still needs to be wary about the way that its healing ministry has been developing over the years. We need to ensure that the ministry does not, in its own wisdom and strength, extend beyond the boundaries dictated by the author and perfecter of our faith.

Through the Old Testament to the present day God has always graciously allowed this assumption of power, decision making through our own human and worldly wisdom; he has always allowed us to get on with 'it' as best we

humans see fit while still wanting to hold close to himself those guardians of his real and true and original message. He has always taken the view expressed here that his priests may well carry on their ministries with 'dreamed up' derivations of the original ways of doing things but such practitioners do not comfortably belong in the most intimate parts of the sanctuary. This prophecy is directed to 'gone astray' ministers such as these:

“The Levites who went far from me when Israel went astray and who wandered from me after their idols must bear the consequences of their sin. They may serve in my sanctuary, having charge of the gates of the temple and serving in it; they may slaughter the burnt offerings and sacrifices for the people and stand before the people and serve them.

But because they served them in the presence of their idols and made the people of Israel fall into sin, therefore I have sworn with uplifted hand that they must bear the consequences of their sin, declares the Sovereign Lord. They are not to come near to serve me as priests or come near any of my holy things or my most holy offerings; they must bear the shame of their detestable practices.

And I will appoint them to guard the temple for all the work that is to be done in it.

“But the Levitical priests, who are descendants of Zadok and who guarded my sanctuary when the Israelites went astray from me, are to come near to minister before me; they are to stand before me to offer sacrifices of fat and blood, declares the Sovereign Lord.

They alone are to enter my sanctuary; they alone are to come near my table to minister before me and serve me as guards.

Ezekiel 44:10-16 (NIV)

Could it possibly be that our struggling to reach the New Testament levels of reliability and consistency in miracle working, one promise of Charismatic Renewal, might be the consequences of our going astray somewhere down the line? Could it be that the healing ministry is not advancing into New Testament proportions simply because we are not towing the God designed line of approach?

Could we be covering over our own mistaken wanderings around the healing ministry by claiming the only partial arrival of the kingdom on earth?

Despite mankind's takeover, God has in fact been active all along. Many such ministries, and a wide variety of them, have devotedly continued in Convents and Monasteries around Europe, and it is this very variety that excuses the kaleidoscope ministry of today through our assumption that history breeds holiness..

3. A Specialist Ministry

The Christian Church began with Christ, with his example and with his demands on our discipleship. These were very simple; proclaim the kingdom and heal the sick.

Some of the already described journeys then taken by the medieval church are plotted in history and outlined in this chapter and are interesting to watch as they may offer hints today and show us the crossroads we have reached.

At Pentecost the church was launched into the world with a message of only three things, separate messages yet bound together as one; the knowledge of his crucifixion, his Ascension and the ongoing manifestation of God's kingdom on earth which is often seen today as the impartation of the divine character. Armed only with these three principles in one, at this point not yet written down, the church grew rapidly across Europe and, eventually, beyond it.

So, after Pentecost, the church began with a simple understanding of these three now arguably largely forgotten, his crucifixion, Ascension and his consequent in-dwelling, the vital and inseparable component parts of the message of the cross in which lies the power of God (see 1 Corinthians 1:18). This is the good news of the kingdom of God to be proclaimed. All three together make the whole message and without one part the whole is a holy but weakened, broken thing. It is with the whole message that the church moved out into the world and persuaded it towards the religion and faith of Christ. Unhappily, anything we can do to break the links between these three, any theological development, any popularising of the Spirit life that separates these three into their component parts in everyday use, any splitting asunder of such components only serves to weaken the whole.

To help us to understand the consequences of this kind of separation, usually sought after for the sake of specialisation we can observe, in much the same way, another subject altogether. Family, as we generally understand the subject, is constructed out of three main and interlinked functions; those of marriage, sex and children. One major outworking of 'The Great Disobedience', the sad slipping sideways of society through the 1960's, is that we learned to put these three things one from another, and deal with each of them individually from the others when it suits us to do so. We have learned to do this to satisfy our own base needs and, in the doing, are fast losing our solid foundations of family loyalties, support and security. What was a holy thing may now easily become a holy yet broken thing without its God designed strengths.

In a similar way, there is a danger that the early Church's ministry of healing through the message of the cross is being split up by a longing for specialisation into its component parts in order that each part be easier to understand, easier to use, easier to feel called to, easier to ignore when dealing with the others. The modern 'Spirit led' church is in real danger of breaking the message of cross and kingdom apart, allowing the power of God to seep out through the cracks. If so, then would this be proper guardianship?

It is here that we begin to learn one great history lesson in the life of the church. We sinful human beings have some sort of desperate need to impregnate the work of God with our own wisdom. This is how we can and do infect the divine will with our own influence, our attempt to grow our own cleverness, persuasiveness, power. Ever since those early days of Christianity there have been many hotspots, waves of the spirit leaving differing residues behind them, each one eventually being dampened down and squeezed out by our insisting on influencing such movements with our own wisdom, our own power. Could this have happened within the healing ministry circles of Charismatic Renewal over the last fifty years or so? The answer is surely, "Yes!"

Can we say, hand on heart, that we have been good guards of Christ's own simple and proclaiming healing ministry? The answer may not, in all humility, be the same.

Now we have both vertical and horizontal splits back and forth through the denominational structure of the church, so that teachings for and against the healing ministry abound, but these are not always to be found where they might be expected! So many of our theological beliefs and our understandings are shaped by our leaders and they have a great responsibility to ensure our growth.

Even more than fifty years ago we can catch an unhappy glimpse of divided leadership influence on God's manifestations through a note credited to the writings of John Wesley (1703-1791).

"The grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn was not only that faith and holiness were well-nigh lost, but that dry, formal, orthodox men began then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves, and to cry them all [down] as evil madness or imposture."

Looking across the western church, at the level of both individual congregations and denominations, we can still see today, despite the great guiding gift of Charismatic Renewal, the sway of such false doctrines as salvation through membership and attendance, and divine help and healing

being available only at our death.

Whilst there have been since then a number of well publicised occasions when individual front men' in Charismatic Renewal, no doubt influenced by the joy and fulfilment of using their own power and position, have been seen to have 'gone off the rails'. Behind the only too visible glow of these falling stars there remains a great galaxy of encouraging leadership, sustaining hope in the ongoing works of the Holy Spirit. What has happened to their healing ministry over those years? Is it still fruitful? Is it fulfilling the promise of the gospels? We must use our hindsight again to determine the answers — we can only find the route ahead if we know where we are setting out from!

It would seem that a very neat pattern against which we could measure the current position of the church's healing ministry today might be the way in which the medical profession has been developing, perhaps since its very beginnings. It has become more and more specialised as time has gone on.

The Nursing Profession, as an example of this, began its life with only nurses. Nowadays we have nurses and nursing auxiliaries, midwives and sisters, Practice Nurses and Nurse Practitioners, theatre, trauma nurses, psychiatric nurses, alcoholism and addiction nurses, end-of-life nurses and, to be sure, many others.

This diversification into so many nursing specialisms is only to be applauded. It has allowed many more people to greatly deepen their knowledge of particular areas of medical science and to channel their skills and their calling into ever greater care for those who need them. In this instance such specialisation has produced the most wonderful fruit for all of us. The implications of specialising are clear to see; they allow individuals to grow in their personal skills and abilities for the benefit of those they serve. They allow nurses to expand their own input of knowledge and power/wisdom to the undoubted benefit of us all.

The Wave of Charismatic Renewal has done much to give the healing ministry a well-needed rocket boost for which all of us should be most grateful. Unhappily, Christian mankind has been subjecting it to specialisation, for all the worst reasons, without realising that such applications to spiritual things have quite the opposite effect than they achieve in the scientific. We have been specialising in order to maximise the effect of our own ministry. We have been applying our own gifts, wisdom, influences, talents and powers to find the easiest routes to direct God's interest into the particular parts of people's damage. Perhaps too many of us are convinced that our healing ministry is of God because we are Christians without checking it back against the original, Christ introduced kingdom way of doing things.

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from (God’s) wisdom. But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.”

James 3:13-18(NIV)

We honestly believe that we have been doing all this out of the best wills of our hearts but we are walking blindly in the ways of the world with no one to warn us of the consequences. We have dismissed and forgotten the ways of Jesus in healing ministry to promote our own ingenuities, our own spiritualities. Just like the whole medieval church history, we are moving towards the injecting of our own skills and powers and talents into the work of God and increasing specialisms to facilitate the move. In doing so we weaken it, achieving exactly the opposite effect to that being sought.

If we cast a glance across the whole gamut of healing styles and methods in use today we will see something so different from the purity of the early church ministry that it is almost unrecognisable. We have specialised where they never did. We may claim that this fact is only development, but development of what? This specialisation cannot be a development of God for he cannot be developed by us. It is only a development of our own skills, talents and such interests we deem to be callings. It is a development of our own evolvment, in our own powers.

One might be forgiven for thinking that the number of differing styles and methods of ministry available today are as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore. Nearly every church and every group of Christians working inside and outside its walls have now developed something recognisably different than anyone else. Some styles have been around for a thousand years or more, some a very recent and serve to match the changing needs of society. Some borrow a taste of skills from differing branches of the medical profession while others see everything in the context of a massive cosmic battle between good and evil.

If ministries of healing can be divided into those involved in emotional issues, spiritual and physical issues, than the physical does not figure anywhere near as much as it possibly should in the church’s ministry today. This may be because the movement has not yet had the courage to stand up for what it

believes in; it feels the need to be acceptable to everyone else. Many church leaders spiritual-ise physical healing so that our faith in a God who does such things does not need testing and so many others demand medical proof of miracles of physical healing though not, interestingly enough, of any other type.

We remember that 'being acceptable' to everyone else carries its own great dangers. King Saul was regularly admonished by Prophet Samuel for disobeying God's will in order to 'be sensible' and do everything right by other people (1 Samuel 15). God took the kingdom from Saul as a direct result!

Jesus has a similar warning for his disciples. He tells us that we are the salt of the earth, as far as he is concerned, and that we will be fit for nothing if we loses its saltiness. And there is only one way to make grains of salt lose their saltiness - dilute them. Could this be what we are doing with the healing ministry through continuous diversification?

But whatever the practice, many of today's styles and methods of Christian Healing employ techniques which are not used by Christ or by his disciples although we still call ourselves Christ-centred Christians. Again, many of our techniques cannot even be found in the Bible.

The specialising situation of the healing ministry within Charismatic Renewal is made even more difficult by the common and usual addition of skills and talents and callings of our own. Because, as we have attempted to explain, our taste is to exercise our own human gifts and powers within this ministry, then every one of these styles has within it a degree of loopholes through which abuse might flow. This is the nature of any man-made process — it has within it opportunities for expressions of man-made sin. This should not be surprising; they are all, to one extent or another, man-made. As a direct result, the Movement flows with war stories of abuse that have damaged lives more than they have brought healing. If the ministry remained in the God designed format this would not be so.

If we then add all this together we have something in our hands that cannot be closely defined. It is impossible to say to the unrenewed church, "This is Christian Healing" as no definition exists or can exist against such a kaleidoscopic background. How can we grow a ministry we cannot yet define?

And what is it that the Church herself is thinking about and talking about in public? How much real influence does she have on the way we run things; the handling of domestic and international politics, the whole way in which we educate our kids, our rules on marriage and abortion, divorce, sex, drugs and alcohol, on how we settle things like legal wrangles and industrial disputes,

on how we carry on our trade and our business activities? This is the noise made by a church that knows only its own wisdom.

In most western cultures these days, after fifty years of Charismatic Renewal, Christianity may only be generally tolerated as a quirky pastime for those who indulge in occasional spiritual exercises. Public opinion rates this business of religion as being reasonably acceptable, as long as what we do and think remains strictly private.

Christianity is deemed to be tolerable, so long as it stays where it is, in an increasingly close-knit and socially secret society. In other words, it is tolerated as it is something which does not particularly count in the world.

But are these really the most important kind of messages we should be putting out into the world? Some of us might think so, much of the church might secretly think so, but would Jesus have thought so?

is all lost or is there a real and vibrantly exciting future ahead for Charismatic Renewal?

4. Christian Healing - A New Reformation?

This would be a good place to ask again the questions about healing within Charismatic Renewal. The initial thrill of its introduction has calmed down in that centres of healing ministry have been established, organisations of prayer are putting plenty of experience under their belts and church ministries are becoming normal where they are practised. Courses have come and gone, old styles of ministry forgotten and new ones invented. The ministry slowly and steadily metamorphosis's rather than grows in any particular direction. Its leaders plod faithfully onwards, ever concerned with issues of finance and ageing support bases of trustees and volunteers alike.

All our expanding experiences and expertise has led us into the development of a massive variety of styles of ministry that suit the emotionally and spiritually dented. Few skills have yet to be developed by the ministry that are designed to help those with physical damage caused by disease or by injury. For these the only generally acceptable style of straightforward prayer is something like..."help!"

A significant degree of formal church training in matters appertaining to the healing ministry are to do with structures of authority, record keeping and supervision. all these being very understandable within organisations using non-Christ approaches to ministry which are, by definition, open to abuse and needing guards in place to protect the vulnerable.

Unhappily, much diagnosis within the church's healing ministry is left to the discernment of the minister, a system which would be foolproof if every minister had only the mind of Christ. Without that advantage, or with only a proportion of it at our disposal, it is easy to make mistakes which themselves can cause more harm than healing.

Nowhere can this be seen more easily than in the more formal courses and training schemes for those wishing to advance within the ministry of deliverance. The standard teaching offered to enthusiastic students is that we should, first of all, determine by our discernment what kinds of spirits are causing the supplicant's difficulties, to name them in addressing them, to spiritually press down the majority so that they might be approached in ministry one at a time, then called up and tossed abroad by the use of our Lord's name. Having all been dismissed in like manner, the supplicant must then be filled with the Holy Spirit by invocation so that any such spirits cannot re-enter.

There are two concerns here which might lead the student in more reliable and fruitful ways; firstly we need a degree of wariness that such a ministry method is dependant on the minister's discernment which may or may not be entirely Spirit led. Secondly, this is hardly the way that Jesus did deliverance ministry, the master who we are being trusted to follow. He is not recorded as having discerned any demon in advance. His coming near the sufferer was quite sufficient to excite the demon into self revealing and into a fast and submissive retreat.

In modern terms, in terms of the ministry of the kingdom growing up amongst the people of the church, the answer is the same; to bring near the kingdom and stand out of the way! And it comes near the supplicant through its being proclaimed in exactly the same way that it would if the supplicant were suffering from any other disarray. That was the Christ solution - bring near the kingdom and sickness (demonic or otherwise) flees.

With no discernment two things are happening; all opportunities for 'getting it wrong' are excluded and God (most importantly) is glorified by the proclamation of his kingdom.

There is another place the modern Charismatic healing ministry has reached which actually denies the attitude of God to those in trouble. It is the insistence that some sin or other, usually unforgiveness, prevents healing from taking place. Of course unforgiveness is a bad thing but, like any other so called blockage, is not used by Jesus as an excuse or a reason for withholding healing. For declining the use of God's grace. Nowhere in the four gospels, or anywhere else in the New Testament, is there listed any pre-requisite for healing.

There are, doubtless, many things that prevent the supplicant from receiving grace but there is absolutely nothing that can come between us and the love of God.

So how might we sum up our situation today and consider the way on from here?

One fact is most noticeable. As the formal structure shrinks so there is something growing in its place, not another rival organisation but an ideal. It is rising up amongst the deterioration, causing attention, lifting spirits, a relatively anthropological simplicity of understanding that is bringing real hope to the pews. In its wake comes a very different way of praying for the sick, be they emotionally, spiritually or physically troubled. Equally applying to all three areas of disarray, the physically injured are gaining real practical access to a personal God through the direction of the Holy Spirit. And this is nothing new. It is the church's new attempt to copy Jesus, the bringer of the kingdom.

It is a Christian lifestyle of obedience very different to the norm. Despite the common claim within healing ministry that we are all copying Jesus, we may all be guilty of not taking sufficient time and humility to check this out, not seeking justification for what we do but actually checking our ministry out against the usual, normal practice of the Lord.

This is not a question of being called to a style and following it, this is a question of walking in and working in the kingdom, harnessed to the living Christ through the Holy Spirit, mind to mind and will to will, proclaiming his kingdom and watching it move forwards into the lives of those who need it. This is not defined by our common understanding of church, this is kingdom and those two nouns are not, despite the church's historical teaching, synonymous .

Church and Kingdom — what happens when we loosely compare the two?
Jesus taught about the kingdom; we know all about the church.
Jesus trained his followers in kingdom mission; we teach the congregation pulpit theology and encourage good works.
Jesus healed the sick easily; we find it quite difficult.
Jesus centred on proclaiming the kingdom; we think that's an optional plug-in, an add-on extra.
Jesus belonged to the church and tried to influence it towards the kingdom; we belong to the church and resist change.
Jesus trusted the way God does things; we usually only trust the way the church currently does it.
Jesus gave away the riches of heaven to all; we know only what we know and dearly hang on to it.
Jesus held up the kingdom; we have swallowed it whole.
Jesus put the Father first; we often put 'us' first, then church.
Jesus spoke about the kingdom and healed the sick; we don't like to speak about it and don't see much healing, either.
Jesus obviously saw healing as a major demonstration and natural outworking of kingdom mission: we see it as a small, optional possibility which can easily be ignored.
Jesus used kingdom healing as a significant part of pastoral care; we pride ourselves on our Christian pastoral care and largely ignore his healing ministry to the world.

Below is a real bit of Scripture on this that is commonly missed. Could we be on the cusp of its fulfilment?

“The word of the Lord came to me: “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says:

Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not

shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock.

You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.

So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.

“Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.

“For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.”

Ezekiel 34:1-16 (NIV)

Now let's raise our sights a bit above the horizon of the local church and see again the importance of what's happening..... The western church is dwindling, numerically. Some individual organisations are growing but the overall numbers decline. In some parts of the UK attendance is falling by as much as one third every ten years. That's an uncontrollable suicidal crash dive. Congregations grow older and older, nomination to church offices, both salaried and voluntary, show a steady decline. The healing ministry splits, divides and specialises in vain attempts to be more powerful, more effective and become less so in the doing.

We are run off our feet organising ways and means of attracting the general public's attention. A few schemes seem to work well in the short term but, seen overall, the church is dying the death of a thousand initiatives. All we can do is rearrange the deck chairs another way on the Titanic, often as close to the lifeboats as possible, and pray for God's blessing on all our ventures.

But something else is stirring. The good news of the kingdom is rising up again between the churches. As these latter fade away, congregations and buildings alike, so the word 'KINGDOM' is being said louder and louder across the world of Christian media. More speakers are speaking about it; more and more are declaring despair at the inadequacy of 'usual' church ministry and mission. More and more are trying it the 'Jesus' way! What's that, when it's at home?

He absolutely knew one thing which the church has largely forgotten. Wouldn't it be just heart stopping if we could try and learn about it again and do it according to his example? It may or may not regrow the church but at least we would be being more obedient, much more in harmony with him, much more working with the mind of Christ.

He knew one thing, and taught it, too. He knew that church formats and ministry styles and ways and means of doing things are all probably very good and yet utterly subservient to the message of the good news of the kingdom. If only we could understand this! We are only expected to share the good news of the kingdom. That's all God expects us to do. Everything else is designed to fall off the back of that particular wagon.

We are quite at liberty to hang on to all our systems and methods of doing everything, organising, encouraging involvement in programmes of social justice, ministering. By all means we can keep it all but we should not expect these things to be effective without first majoring on kingdom. That's majoring on the telling of the good news of the kingdom.

So here we are, coming out of our churches, in the gaps between our churches, faced with those in trouble in the world below and our God above who waits to be glorified by his people. God has not first told us to be do-gooders. There are many more good people doing good outside the church than there within its walls. Being good might bring a deal of self-satisfaction but it is not a witness to God any more. We have been clearly told to seek first the kingdom and then all the things we need, healing included, will follow.

So here, in front of our eyes, rises again a new but very ancient and simple ministry, designed and implemented by Christ and largely forgotten by the church today. It is a ministry of partnership where his ministers share the

good news of cross and kingdom and then stand back, keeping all their own skills and gifts to themselves, allowing God to work his reliable and constant will to regenerate creation, free of human interference.

There seems to be quite a level of concern, brought to us by some aficionados in Charismatic Renewal and spreading among those seeking healing through prayer and those who minister it, that there may be within supplicants some blockages that would prevent God's work in them from coming to fruition.

What such a blockage might actually be in practice is probably a choice of one or two out of a million possibilities. So, unless we are absolutely correct in our diagnosis, this could be a bit of a hit and miss thing?

To make diagnosis even more difficult, the range of likely blockages in any one individual may be limited to the range of problems discussed during the minister's training. All this means that the minister will have to rely on his or her gift of discernment to pinpoint the difficulty. We may clap our hands with joy at the very thought of all this, but we ought to allow the truth that human intervention may sometimes detract from the holy expanding of the kingdom.

Let's consider, for a moment, our human frailty in all this business of blockage discernment. It goes something like this — on a good day I shall be 80% correct and 20% wrong. On a bad day I shall be 20% correct and 80% in error. Now here's the big question; what sort of a day am I having?

You see, when we get it wrong we can cause great harm to other people. I once met a lady who has suffered from back pain for many years. She visited a Christian who had quite a reputation for working in the Deliverance ministry who, this should not surprise you, discerned a 'spirit of backache' from which he delivered her.

Unhappily nothing improved, so now she has double trouble; she not only has persistent backache but she also believes she is somehow dirty inside, having a demon that no one can get rid of for her. That might be a mild case of abuse but it is abuse, nevertheless. The war stories get more horrific from there.

So, is there any other option here for the minister that truly wants to help a sufferer receive divine healing? Is there any form of ministry which emphatically excludes any form of abuse? Yes, indeed there is. It is something very different than modern ministry techniques of any kind. It is the divine ministry style that Jesus used, the ministry method he taught his followers, the one that climaxed on Calvary. What is it?

Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom and people were healed. The work of atonement on the cross means that God longs to give everything to be with us. Jesus said of Pentecost that on that day we would know that he is in the father and the father is in him and he is in us. We have melted into each other! So the Bible claims loudly that there is power in the message of the cross.

Putting all that together we are all called, every one of us, to proclaim the good news of the kingdom with the message of the cross at its heart, and then stand well clear so that God can do his work uninterrupted by us.

Proclamation like this raises the sufferer's expectations of God and thus gives the kingdom elbow room to move forwards.

So here we have discussed two groups of ministry types; the man-made forms that act as a sinful filter through which grace is expected to find its way, allowing for human interference, and the God-made ministry that doesn't. With the divine method we have been given something far easier to work with, far simpler to understand and without any loopholes through which any abuse can leech.

The regenerating and rising message to those in ministry, and to those seeking ministry, is this - the work of the cross is sufficient. Proclaim it, and do it with thanksgiving! Do this persistently and blockages harmlessly melt away.

the church's healing ministry has split and sub-divided over the years into a myriad of differing approaches. These are all built by mankind and invested with mankind's ideas of what is good and wise. But in the process of all this 'development' we have largely lost the message of the cross. And when we lose that, we are lost!

But seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto you.

5. Onwards into Kingdom Living

Many Christians within the healing ministry of Charismatic Renewal will record miracles, but two things need elevation: the number of such miracles per day should be exponentially increased and, secondly, that God is publicly glorified by the consequent growth of his kingdom.

In proclaiming the kingdom in the presence of any disarrayed supplicants we describe:

The garden of Eden is the blueprint for the kingdom of God, In that garden there is found no evidence of the supplicant's need. When finished, God examined his work of creation and called it 'very good'. Thus the supplicant's condition is unwanted in the kingdom by God. Now came Jesus, the perfect image of the invisible God and he healed everyone who came to him and asked him with at least a mustard seed of expectation.

There were no prerequisites for giving grace. There is nothing coming between us and God's love.

As a member of the Holy Trinity, totally in accord with the Godhead, Jesus said a resounding 'Yes!' to everyone who asked for healing. Therefore it must certainly be God's will to see everyone healed who comes to Jesus for it. Despite all our earthly experiences to the contrary, God doesn't change. The kingdom is the place where his will is done absolutely and his will is obviously to see all healed.

We may perceive his will to be somewhat different out of our own experiences, but there is a great difference between healing being given to us and our being able to receive it. His will to restore the 'Eden' kingdom life is constant and constantly pouring, whether we can receive it or not is a different matter.

Jesus paid the price for us on the cross. We are quite used to knowing that this means we can at last get to God, but it also means that God can at last get to us.

At the moment of his death a fountain of blood and water flowed from his side, the blood of forgiveness and the water of healing. These two are the two sides of the same coin and flow today, they are inseparable.

Here is the good news of the kingdom, that God's restoring will is flowing constantly, irrespective of we individuals or our sinful pasts, and the finished work of the cross has done everything to make sure that grace flows over and into all of us who seek it.

So, joyfully, there is evidence that many in the healing ministry regenerated through Charismatic Renewal are turning towards this re-emerging ministry

that is a copy of Christ's. These are the divine foundations of Healing Ministry.

Some of those who listen to teaching on kingdom issues are quite liable to take the more comfortable parts of what is said and try to add them into their own current library of ministry or prayer skills. They do this in the hope that one or two things that strike them as being interesting, might come in handy one day.

"That could be useful!" they say.

But the re-arising interest in the Christ-teaching on healing in the kingdom is foundational. That is to say that it is the foundation of ministry to the world and well worth revisiting.

The church began with some basic knowledge of God through studying Jesus and they understood he was still alive and working still. That's about all they had. Armed with this alone, they went out and proclaimed the kingdom and the good news message of the cross and God worked with them with signs and wonders of the kingdom they were talking about. That's a picture of a different, unworldly world.

For all sorts of reasons the church has spent nearly 2000 years growing away from this. We call it 'development'. It has been called 'sophistication' but it is quite the opposite. We have spent the intervening centuries expanding, complicating, specialising and generally introducing our own wisdom, good or bad, into the mix. We now have a healing ministry which is terribly watered down.

As our deeper sub conscience warns us of what we are doing with Christ's ministry we attempt to overcome this watering down by specialising, by getting down our focus on problems narrower and narrower as if we are likening it to a shaft of sunlight falling onto paper through a hand-held magnifying glass. By focusing tighter we hope to set the paper ablaze.

But we have been told by God that we are the salt of the earth and, if that salt loses its flavour, then it is only good to be thrown out and trampled on.

How do you make salt lose its saltiness? You dilute it. The healing ministry of the church, as a generalisation, has grown so diluted that's its only good now for making the odd person feel a bit better about themselves. That's a shocking statement given two aspects: we miss the simplest practical truth that a problem shared is a problem halved, with or without God's intervention, and that the Bible calls for the inner person to die off, not to be strengthened and feel better about itself. There's food for thought!

So today the church's healing ministry deals mostly with the inner person, relationships, memories unwholesome trends etc. But these things of restoration were supposed to be signs and wonders of the kingdom and yet are so private they cannot usually be widely shared. Result - little or no witness.

Even more, in this diluting, this specialising, this variety of ministry methods, we might keep coming across occasions where Christians, supposing they are acting as disciples of Christ, are using techniques which Jesus never used and, in some cases, even techniques that are nowhere in the whole of the Bible!

And the church is in decline.

Dear souls, I beg the church to go back to doing things the way that Jesus organised them before we started down this road. We can get salty again!

