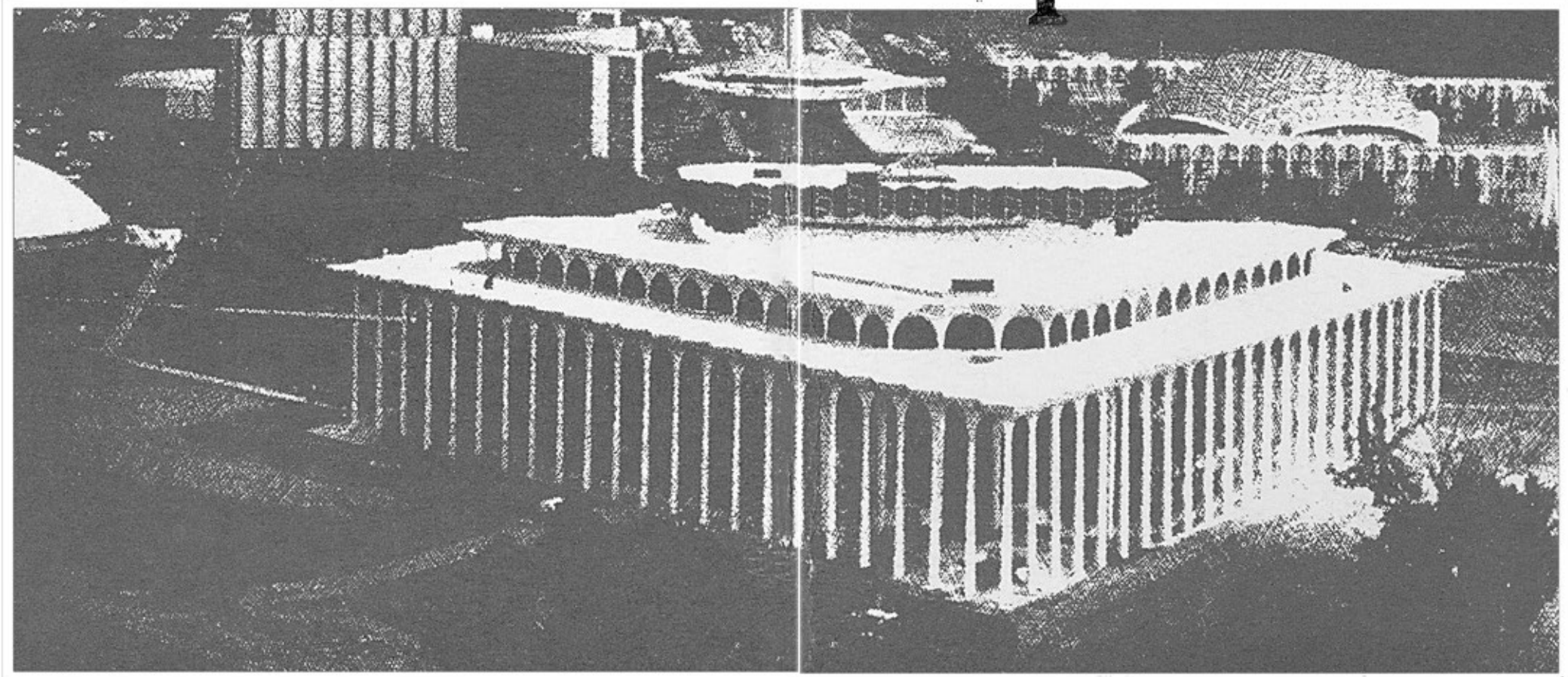




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Origins of the Divine Healing Movement in America

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The American divine healing movement was born and nourished during a period in which the nation wrenched its soul over the moral evil of slavery. The birth and nourishment of the movement was also during a time when the spiritual stabilities of life were being tampered with by the forces of modern science and biblical criticism. With a vigorous expectation on the part of the people, this new manifestation of the supernatural began.

One of the notably significant, yet controversial, phenomena to develop in the modern history and theology of the American church has been the doctrine and ministry of divine healing. Since the latter half of the nineteenth century there has existed in America a discernible divine healing movement, a movement fully endowed with its own doctrine, leaders, and popular following.¹ The significance of the movement lies in its uniqueness as the first to popularize a concept of salvation that includes health and healing as an integral part. By the early twentieth century, the renowned R. A. Torrey was reporting that "a most extraordinary interest" in the subject was being awakened throughout the nation. This heightened interest has continued until currently millions of Americans positively affirm Torrey's proclamation, "I know God performs miracles of healing today."²

Regrettably, this movement has been one of the few significant developments in the American church that has remained almost completely unexamined by church historians. This article is a brief exploration of the origins of the American divine healing movement.³

Foundations of a Movement

In the years immediately preceding the Civil War, one of America's leading theologians, Horace Bushnell,⁴ noted that Christianity was being disempowered and overshadowed by the advent of the modern era of science. He concluded that Christianity was being subjugated to the bondage of the "method of science — as if nothing could be true, save as

it is proved by the scientific method." Christianity, Bushnell maintained, was imperceptibly being removed from the realm of faith and restricted to the domain of man's understanding. The legitimate place of the supernatural in the system of God as a necessary part of the divine system was being discredited. God himself was being restricted and imprisoned by the imposition of physical laws and scientific methods. The church and its leadership so disclaimed and discredited miraculous and supernatural demonstrations, insisted Bushnell, that the common man was beginning to expect little from his God, and man's religious experiences seemed to be under "a doom of suppression."⁵

He observed that as the natural takes priority over the supernatural

Christian souls [fall] into a kind of dumb-bell exercise, good as exercise, but never to be answered. The word is good to be exegetically handled, but there is no light of interpretation in souls, more immediate; all truth is to be second hand truth, never a vital beam of God's own light Expectation is gone — God is too far off, too much imprisoned by laws, to allow expectation from Him. The Christian world has been gravitating, visibly, more and more, toward this vanishing point of faith, for whole centuries, and especially since the modern era of science began to shape the thoughts of men by only scientific methods. Religion has fallen into the domain of the mere understanding, and so it has become a kind of wisdom not to believe much, therefore to expect as little.⁶

Bushnell, however, did sense a longing within the church for the deposition of such a religious system composed of mere rational reason and the complacency of a secondhand faith. Within a segment of the church, an expectation for a livelier, more apostolic faith seemed to be developing. The people, Bushnell observed, were "tired, beyond bearing of the mere school forms and defined notions; they want some kind of faith that shows God in living commerce with men, such as He vouchsafed them in the former times."⁷ A small number of other ministers such as Smith H. Platt, a Methodist preacher, echoed this opinion by concurring that the occasion had now arisen "for a fresh display of signs and wonders to keep the Church and the world alive and open to the realities of God's immediate visitation."⁸

Bushnell predicted that the most widely attested dispensation of miracles and supernatural demonstrations to occur in centuries was about to commence. He joined his voice with other expectant believers:

Let Him [God] now break forth in miracle and holy gifts, let it be seen that He is still the living God, in the midst of His dead people. . . . He can hear prayers. . . . [A]ll His promises in the Scripture He can fulfill, and they go to Him with great expectations. They see, in these gifts, that the Scripture stands, that the graces and works, and holy fruits of the apostolic ages, are also for them. It is as if they had now a proof experimental of the resources embodied in the Christian plan. The living God, immediately revealed, and not historically only, begets a feeling of present life and power, and religion is no more a tradition, a secondhand light, but a grace of God unto salvation, operative now.⁹

The latter part of the nineteenth century was to prove Bushnell's prophecy of a new dispensation of the supernatural to be true. The most common manifestations of the miraculous and supernatural were to be realized in demonstrations of divine healing. By the early 1870's a leading churchman in Boston would boast that if all the numerous instances of healing through faith that were constantly occurring could be collected together, the church would be astonished at such a great body of testimony.¹⁰

Early European Influences

Most nineteenth-century Europeans, as well as Americans, believed the age of miracles had ceased with the apostolic period of the church.¹¹ Yet, in the middle of the century a healing ministry was to develop in Europe that would provide the American movement with an inspirational example of God's present supernatural working and a practical pattern for implementing a divine healing ministry. The most immediate and inspirational European influences centered on the ministries of Johann Blumhardt, Dorothea Trudel, and Otto Stockmayer.

The healing ministry of Johann Blumhardt, a Lutheran pastor, began in 1843 in the small village of Möllingen in the heart of Germany's Black Forest.¹² In praying for a dying young girl, Katarina Dittus, he discovered that the testamentary words of Christ, "They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover," were not outdated. The supernatural healing of the girl at his hands created a marked sensation. Revival broke out in the local parish. Reminiscent of the earlier religious awakenings in both Europe and America, people with tears and lamentations flocked to the churches confessing their sins and seeking deliverance from the wrath of God.¹³

As newspapers spread the news of these events across Europe, multitudes of the sick from throughout the continent migrated toward Möllingen seeking the healing prayers of Blumhardt. To assist these masses, he established a faith home (which eventually accommodated over 150 invalids at a time) as the center of his healing operations. Here the sick were instructed in the biblical message of healing within a faith-building atmosphere so as to enable them to obtain spiritual power over their sickness. So successful was the faith home concept that R. Kelso Carter reported in 1887 that more than 30 such healing centers operated in America.¹⁴

A second notable healing ministry in Europe that inspired the American scene was that of a young florist, Dorothea Trudel. In 1851 several of her coworkers in the Swiss village of Mannedorf fell ill and steadily grew worse as their disease resisted all medical treatment. Reflecting on James 5:14,15, Dorothea anointed her sick coworkers with oil and prayed for them. Instantaneously they were healed. Shortly afterward, an epidemic broke out and many were healed through her prayers. These two events projected Trudel into the forefront of the public and brought people throughout Europe seeking her prayers.¹⁵

In 1856, owing to her praying for the sick, she was charged with "practicing the healing art without a license." (This is the first recorded

instance of such a formal charge being leveled against a faith healer in modern history.) In her trial before the Zurich tribunal of justice she was acquitted of all charges. However, the massive publicity from the trial attracted such large multitudes to her faith homes that most had to be turned away. To reach these multitudes, Trudel began the use of written correspondence to pray for the sick. This instrumentality was also to become normative in America, for by this means the faith healing practitioners were able to extend their ministries far beyond their local environs.¹⁶

If Blumhardt and Trudel were inspirational examples and patterns to be imitated in regard to their faith homes and methodology, Otto Stockmayer was to provide the most systematic presentation of the theology undergirding the movement.¹⁷ A. J. Gordon, one of the leading American advocates of divine healing, referred to Stockmayer as the "theologian of the doctrine of healing by faith."¹⁸

The basic presupposition of the healing movement was articulated by Stockmayer in his thesis that deliverance from sickness could not be separated from the whole work of redemption. He found justification for this thesis in what he considered the important connection between Matthew 8:16,17, and Isaiah 53:4. Using the Matthean scripture to interpret Isaiah 53:4, he concluded that Christ had borne man's physical as well as his spiritual sufferings on the cross. The connection between these two scriptures "clearly and unquestionably" shows, according to Stockmayer, that it cannot be God's final will for man to suffer physical infirmities and diseases since Christ had borne them on the cross for all mankind.¹⁹

Once understanding that it is not the will of God that his children should be sick (James 5:14-18), and that Christ has redeemed us from our sickness as from our sins, (Matt. 7:16,17), we can no longer look upon healing as a right which it would be lawful for us to renounce. It is no longer a question whether we wish to be healed, God's will must be fulfilled in our bodies as well as in our souls. Our beloved Lord must not be robbed of a part of the heritage of his agony.

It is by virtue of a divine will that the offering of the body of Jesus Christ has sanctified us (Heb. 10:10), which means that Christ by his death has withdrawn the members of our body, with our entire being, from every sacrilegious end or use. He has regained and consecrated them for his own exclusive and direct use.

Wrested by Christ's ransom from all foreign power, from the power of sin or sickness or of the devil, our members must remain intact, surrendered to him who has redeemed them.²⁰

Stockmayer insisted along with Blumhardt that "the promises of God are not self-fulfilling, their realization depends upon man." Thus, in order for man to receive deliverance from sickness he must do so by faith just as he receives his freedom from sin.²¹

In addition, Stockmayer emphasized that a sick believer is not directed to the gifts of healing or working of miracles which are gifts deposited with the church. Rather, from the beginning Christ gave the power to heal the

sick in connection with the work of evangelism, i.e., the work of extending the Kingdom of God. This power was first given to the apostles, who in turn appointed elders who received the same power. According to Stockmayer, James 5:16 made healing no longer dependent upon the prayer of the elders, but rested it with the effectual and fervent prayer of a righteous man. Thus the circle widened and all the children of God were exhorted to pray one for another in the case of sickness. This development reveals the acute need for persons to be cleansed of their sin (sanctified) since it is the prayer of a "righteous person that is answered."²²

American Holiness Influence

The most significant theological influence upon the divine healing movement came from the nineteenth-century American holiness movement. With its emphasis upon purification from sin and the power of the Holy Spirit in individual lives, the holiness movement provided the theological environment for faith healing in America. In teaching the doctrine of Christian perfection the holiness advocates emphasized certain characteristics that were of utmost importance for the divine healing movement. First, most holiness advocates insisted that the experience of perfection or entire sanctification was a second and separate work of grace that was realized instantaneously by the supernatural intervention of God.²³ Wesley did regard this as a definite experience, but he taught it as a point in a process of growth and gradualism.²⁴ In the 1830's, however, under the teachings of Finney and Phoebe Palmer, the instantaneous emphasis virtually eclipsed the gradual aspect of the experience. Part of the divine healing movement reflected this position by declaring that healing always occurred instantaneously, and if it did not, it was owing to a lack of faith or existing sin on the part of the sick person.

On the other hand, the Keswickian branch of the holiness movement allowed for the progressive aspect of the experience by teaching a practical deliverance from continuance in known sin by an "instant abandonment of sin, and of every known weight which prevents or hinders progress." Those practitioners of divine healing who reflected the Keswickian view of sanctification believed that when God is petitioned in faith for healing He immediately confers it, although the actual manifestation of the healing may occur gradually.²⁵

In addition to being an instantaneous experience, the holiness movement emphasized that entire sanctification is "immediate salvation."²⁶ Palmer insisted that man must "venture now" to receive the experience of perfection, for God stands waiting to bestow this experience upon every believer.²⁷ When asked how soon a person could expect to experience this state of perfection, she replied: "Just so soon as you come believingly . . . come complying with the conditions and claim it . . . it is already yours. If you do not now receive it, the delay will not be on the part of God, but wholly with yourself."²⁸ The entire faith healing movement echoed these views by emphasizing that a person could receive his healing now, immediately.

Finally, in the 1850's, Palmer began to refer to Christian perfection variously as "the baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire," "an enduement with power," "the baptism of fire," and as a "Pentecostal baptism."²⁹ She was one of the first to adopt and popularize the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" terminology. Feeling the holiness movement was in the midst of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, she asked, "If the ushering of the dispensation of the spirit (at Pentecost) was so glorious, what ought we to expect now? — Surely not a decrease in power."³⁰ She concluded that now, as in the earliest days of the Spirit's dispensation, pentecostal blessing brings pentecostal power.

Asa Mahan, who also supported the use of the terminology "baptism of the Holy Ghost" to identify the perfectionist experience, noted that power was one of the most striking characteristics of this baptismal experience and that it was clearly the privilege of all believers to receive and exercise (this assumption was based upon Acts 1:8, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you"). Included within this realm of common heritage for every believer were the gifts of the Spirit, such as prophecy and divine healing.³¹

By propagating the doctrine of Christian perfection or the baptism of the Holy Spirit as purification from sin, the enduement with power, and the living of a consecrated life of holiness, the nineteenth-century holiness movement provided the basic theological milieu in which the supernatural gifts of God, and in particular, divine healing would flourish. After acknowledging that the pentecostal power of Acts was still available today for all believers, it was a logical step to allow for the accompanying supernatural signs. When one accepts the basic presupposition of the faith healing movement that all sickness is ultimately related to sin and Satan, and the presupposition of the holiness movement that the believer is endued with the pentecostal power of Acts, then the sanctified believer, who through God has power over sin and Satan, also has power over sickness. This thesis provided the fundamental basis for the intimate connection between perfectionism and divine healing. As the holiness scholar Melvin Dieter has observed, with this renewed activity of the Holy Spirit working in the believer's life, "many holiness adherents saw the increased incidence of miraculous physical healing as another demonstration of the new dispensation of the Spirit. The belief in and the witness to miraculous divine healings attended the holiness movement at every turn."³²

Beginnings of a Movement

The pioneers of divine healing in America candidly demonstrate the interwoven connection between the holiness and divine healing movements, and between the European and American healing movements. These pioneers were among the foremost proponents of Christian perfection. In fact, the man commonly referred to by his contemporaries as the father of the divine healing movement in America, Ethan O. Allen, in 1846 became the first member of the American healing movement to associate officially the doctrine of Christian perfection with

divine healing.³³ Like the founder of Methodism, Allen believed that Christ's atonement provided not only for justification but also for purification of the human nature from sin. Agreeing with Stockmayer that sickness was caused by sin, Allen maintained that the purification of human nature from sin by the experience of sanctification would eliminate illness.

While in his late 20's, Allen had been healed of consumption by the prayer of faith at a meeting of Methodist class leaders in 1846. He immediately began to pray for the sick, becoming the first American to make the faith healing ministry his full-time vocation. The beginning of his work was contemporaneous with that of Dorothea Trudel, although at the time he had no knowledge of the supernatural events that were occurring under her ministry. Without any instruction in the methods or techniques of praying for the sick except for the examples of the New Testament, Allen ventured ahead with his new ministry. Unlike his European counterparts who established their ministries at one location, Allen itinerated. For 50 years he traveled throughout the eastern half of the United States, praying for the sick and teaching divine healing.

The receptivity of Allen's ministry was basically but not exclusively limited to the disinherited of society. His itineration to individual homes, to poorhouses, to the developing faith homes, to camp meetings, and to churches enabled him to spread his message, but his shy personality and especially his unschooled ways prevented him from obtaining a larger audience.³⁴

Over the years Allen was instrumental in bringing a number of persons into the faith healing ministry. The most important of these was Mrs. Elizabeth Mix, a black woman from Wolcottville, Connecticut, who had been healed of tuberculosis under Allen's ministry.³⁵ She was a well-educated, articulate, and persuasive person. Under Allen's tutelage she became the first black healing evangelist in the nation. Her healing ministry was so well received that even the most outspoken opponents of divine healing, such as James Buckley, editor of the *Christian Advocate*, respected her and her accomplishments. Interestingly, even physicians sent their patients to her for prayer.³⁶

It is significant to note Mrs. Mix's articulation of an important and universal principle of the divine healing movement when she instructed patients to "pray believing and then act faith." She emphasized that it is not necessary to feel some particular emotion, but it is essential for the patient to act as though he believes what he professes to believe. That is, the petitioner must act out his faith by making physical exertions that will justify his professed belief that God is actually healing him.³⁷

Although Allen and his disciples provided the first systematic beginnings of the divine healing movement in America, the person to whom the distinction belongs of having done more than any other individual to propagate faith healing and to draw the attention of the American church to the doctrine during his lifetime was Charles Cullis, a medical doctor in Boston.³⁸ He was the single most important figure in the development of the divine healing movement in America. Cullis, who functioned as another vital link between the holiness and divine healing movements, has been

identified by one recent historian as “an important, neglected figure of late-nineteenth-century evangelism.”³⁹ His significance in linking these two movements is demonstrated by his successful convincing of prominent holiness leaders that full salvation included not only salvation or healing of the spirit, but also the healing of the physical body. Included among these leaders were John Inskip, first president of the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness (1867-84); William McDonald, second president of the National Camp Meeting Association (1884-92); William E. Osborn, founder of the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting; Daniel Steele, New Testament professor at Boston University; William E. Boardman, author of *The Higher Christian Life*; A. J. Gordon, founder of Gordon College in Massachusetts; A. B. Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance; and two Friends, Hannah Whitall Smith of Philadelphia, and David B. Updegraff, a leader in the Ohio Yearly Meeting.

In addition, Cullis's endeavors in spreading the messages of perfection and divine healing led to his founding of a publishing firm, the Willard Tract Repository, which was the first press in the nation to begin regular publication of divine healing materials including the works of Blumhardt, Trudel, and Stockmayer from Europe. Cullis also founded a faith healing home, conducted weekly faith healing services in his local church, and held faith healing conventions across the nation. By the time of his death in 1892, the doctrine of divine healing was a firmly established feature in the expansive landscape of American Christianity.

In the midst of a personal crisis in 1861-62, Cullis underwent an intense and profound spiritual experience in which he professed salvation and vowed to serve God with his talents. Several months later, on August 19, 1862, following his attendance at Phoebe Palmer's Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness in New York City, he received the experience of sanctification.⁴⁰ Following these experiences he endeavored to take the gospel of love and care to the poor, the hopeless, and especially the terminally sick and neglected. Knowing that indigent consumptives had nowhere to seek relief since both hospitals and poorhouses denied them admittance owing to their incurable status, he determined to pioneer a home where such victims could have proper care during their dying days. On September 27, 1864, his first consumptive home was opened. Here consumptives could receive totally free the comforts of a warm home and complete medical care. This home, however, was only the beginning of Cullis's outreach.

During the decade of the 1880's Cullis's faith work grew and multiplied until it became a constellation of charities. It eventually included not only four consumptives' homes, a school of nursing, a publishing house (that produced three monthly magazines), five churches, various urban missions, a high school, and a Bible college, but also two orphanages, a cancer home, a spinal home, a paralytics' home, a faith-cure home, a home for “fallen women,” a home for the mentally insane, a mission to the American Jewish population, a college and orphanage for the black freshmen in the South—the Boydton Institute, a mission to the Chinese in America, a school at Renick's Valley in West Virginia, an evangelistic outreach to the blacks

in Oxford, North Carolina, and several missions in California. His work became international in scope by the sending of missionaries to India and South Africa.⁴¹

This extensive and phenomenal benevolent ministry was keyed by Cullis's ministry of faith healing.⁴² In fact, the faith healing aspect of his ministry became so predominant by the early 1880's that one author, William I. Gill, felt compelled to remind his readers that faith healing was only one branch of the work. Gill acknowledged, however, that Cullis personally believed the faith-healing aspect of the work to be the most important.⁴³

The reading of the *Life of Dorothea Trudel* in 1869 convinced Cullis that healing in answer to the prayer of faith was a permanent privilege for the people of God. In January 1870 he demonstrated his new belief when Miss Lucy Drake was healed of a brain tumor that had completely immobilized her for five months.⁴⁴ This healing was the turning point of Cullis's ministry. He immediately began converting the holiness leadership to his new viewpoint regarding physical healing by faith. Following a four-month trip to Europe in September 1873, where he visited the faith works of Blumhardt, Trudel, and George Müller, Cullis devoted himself with new vigor and aggressiveness to the ministry of faith healing.⁴⁵

In 1874 Cullis began conducting annual faith conventions at Framingham, Massachusetts, and later at Old Orchard Beach, Maine. These conventions constituted typical nineteenth-century holiness camp meetings with an emphasis upon Christian perfection, but included the added dimension of divine healing. The meetings quickly became internationally known. In the words of one of his critics, James Buckley, Cullis was credited with having given Old Orchard the same "reputation among his followers as the grotto of Lourdes [had] among the Roman Catholics."⁴⁶

Without question, Cullis's faith conventions did more to focus attention on the message of divine healing throughout America than any other single event. The outpouring of articles by both the secular and religious presses across the country on the faith conventions and on divine healing in general was phenomenal considering that the topic had seldom appeared in the news media to this date. As Frank Townsend reported, the "remarkable scenes" witnessed at Cullis's faith conventions brought the subject of divine healing into "considerable prominence."⁴⁷ Regardless of the stance taken on the issue of faith healing by the different editors and reporters, the massive publicity received by the topic during the years 1881-85 effectively spread interest in the doctrine across the land. One needs only to examine the extensive outpouring of articles on the subject by national, regional, and local papers during this period to understand that the nation was now becoming aware that a new movement was being born.⁴⁸

R. Kelso Carter, one of the leading apologists for the movement, called this period of widespread publicity and attention the "wonder" stage of the modern development of divine healing.⁴⁹ This "wonder" stage is illustrated by an editorial in the *Christian Advocate* in 1882 which concluded that at the present time divine healing "should neither be pushed aside as unworthy of notice, nor received with unquestioning credulity."⁵⁰ Several

years later, Carter would insist that “the mass of evidence offered, the multitude of witnesses arising, and the words of Scripture on the subject, demand at least a respectful hearing, and invite the closest scrutiny into the decline and practice of Divine Healing.” By 1887 he would observe that “True or False, there is no belief rising more swiftly before the churches everywhere than that of Divine Healing.”⁵¹

With this new surge of interest created in divine healing as a result of the widespread publicity the doctrine received in the early 1880's, Cullis decided to carry his faith conventions beyond the confines of Old Orchard. He began staging faith conventions in the major cities throughout the country, including Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, Chicago, Boston, Pittsburgh, and Detroit. The climax of these faith conventions came when William Boardman convened the International Conference on Divine Healing and True Holiness in the great Agricultural Hall of London, England, in which more than 2000 persons gathered on June 1-5, 1885. This was the first such international gathering of its kind and was followed immediately by a series of small faith conventions throughout the United Kingdom.⁵²

The interest in divine healing that Cullis's faith conventions helped to generate was increased by the proliferation of publications concerning the topic. During the decade of the 1880's there was an outpouring of popular, testimonial works such as Cullis's *More Faith Cures; or Answers to Prayer in the Healing of the Sick*, Carrie Judd's *The Prayer of Faith*, R. Kelso Carter's *Miracles of Healing*, Theodore Monod's *The Gift of God*, and Ethan Allen's *Faith Healing: or, What I Have Witnessed of the Fulfillment of James 5:14,15,16*. More importantly, however, this was the decade for the first doctrinal and theological treatises on the subject. Most of these first apologetics were published by the Willard Tract Repository since they were written at the personal request and encouragement of Charles Cullis. One of Cullis's biographers, the Reverend William Daniels, identified the Repository as one of the key instruments in making Cullis's faith work the center of the divine healing movement in America. Next to the faith convention, Daniels declared the Repository to be the “chief visible” cause for advancing the doctrine of divine healing into one of the most important questions before the Christian world in the nineteenth century.⁵³

The first of these doctrinal treatises was produced by one of the leaders of the Keswick holiness movement, William Boardman, and was entitled, *The Great Physician (Jehovah Rophi)*. [In London the volume was printed under the title, *The Lord That Healeth Thee (Jehovah Rophi)*.] This volume, which launched Boardman into a career as one of the leading authorities and practitioners of faith healing in the nineteenth century, was written with the same care and thoroughness as his 1859 defense of the doctrine of sanctification, *The Higher Christian Life*. Another significant volume was A. J. Gordon's *The Ministry of Healing: Miracles of Cure in All Ages*, published in 1882. This was a lengthy historical and doctrinal study on faith healing from the early church fathers, progressing through the post-Reformation period. This theological and scriptural defense of divine healing was considered by the doctrine's most hostile critic, B. B. Warfield, to be an “ingenious” apologia and a “very persuasive” argument.⁵⁴

Two years later (1884) R. L. Stanton's volume, *Gospel Parallelism: Illustrated in the Healing of the Body and Soul*, appeared. Stanton, a former president of Miami University in Ohio and a moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, wrote this volume to demonstrate that Christ's atonement had laid a foundation equally for deliverance from sin and from disease. He insisted that it was absolutely necessary "to include both in any true conception of what the gospel offers to mankind."⁵⁵ The volume, however, which quickly became the leading apologia for the doctrine was R. Kelso Carter's *The Atonement of Sin and Sickness; or A Full Salvation for Soul and Body*. Carter's thesis was that Christ's atonement has provided for the body all that it has provided for the soul. *Century Magazine* proclaimed this work "the leading authority" on the subject of faith healing, and the Chicago periodical *Inter-Ocean* identified the publication as the "best writing upon this subject." So popular was this volume that four years later John B. Alden revised and enlarged the work under the new title *Divine Healing; or the Atonement*. An additional important apologia published in the 1880's was R. L. Marsh's "*Faith Healing: A Defense, or, The Lord Thy Healer*. This volume had been presented originally as a bachelor of divinity thesis at Yale Divinity School.

These theological and historical treatises that were published in defense of divine healing had a profound and significant impact upon the movement. They tended to legitimize the movement by providing a systematic approach to the doctrine theologically, and by demonstrating a solid rootage of the church historically through the tracing of the practice of divine healing throughout the centuries. Since faith homes and faith conventions such as those operated by Cullis tended to emphasize and focus upon the experiential aspect of healing, these scholarly apologetics provided a needed balance to the movement. Even critics of the doctrine acknowledged the respect and stability these works brought to the movement.⁵⁶

No single individual influenced the American divine healing movement as much as Charles Cullis. Through his ministry the doctrine and practice of divine healing was firmly established in the American religious scene. During Cullis's lifetime his name had become synonymous with the divine healing movement. R. Kelso Carter was correct in his observation that "to Dr. Cullis undoubtedly belongs the distinction of having done more than any other man to bring healing by faith to the attention of the Church in the last century."⁵⁷ Truly, Cullis was the "apostle" of divine healing in America.⁵⁸

Conclusions

The American divine healing movement was born and nourished during a period when this nation faced intensive military and political conflicts within; a period in which the nation wrenched its soul over the moral evil of slavery and sought to find redemption by the sacrificial shedding of its own blood; and a period when the nation sought healing within itself following the most traumatic and costly armed conflict of its existence. This was an era when industrialization and economic inequality were

drastically changing the life-styles of the nation; a time when America sought feebly to deal with her out-cast and discarded humanity; a time when the momentum of modern progress was transforming the disinherited of society into the nation's neglected masses; and when the working man was becoming just another gear in the seemingly humanless machine of endless progress.

The birth and nourishment of the movement was also during a time when the spiritual stabilities of life were being tampered with by the forces of modern science and biblical criticism and a time when Christianity was being disempowered and the supernatural subordinated by the natural. This was a period when events seemed beyond the control of the average person and the common man began to feel God had deserted him. In the aftermath of the Civil War there were those who sought to reestablish a more personal and intimate relationship with God and to accomplish this by becoming a holy people in the wilderness of nineteenth-century life. In the midst of what often seemed hopeless circumstances, these people developed a deep-rooted desire once again to see and experience God in living commerce with His creation. The desperate cries of these despairing people were to be answered, as Horace Bushnell had prophesied, when a new era of God's miraculous intervention into the daily affairs of society would begin in the last half of the nineteenth century. With a vigorous expectation on the part of the people, this new manifestation of the supernatural began, with its most common expression being divine healing. Possibly the best explanation for healing being the common expression of the supernatural manifestation that occurred during the latter half of the nineteenth century is stated by Dr. Francis MacNutt (a former Roman Catholic priest with a vital healing ministry today): "My own experience leads me to the conclusion that healing is the most convincing demonstration to most people that God is with us."

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Notes

¹The nineteenth-century healing movement refers to that group of persons who contended that physical illness was cured by the supernatural intervention of God when the prayer of faith is prayed. Historically, this movement used the terms divine healing, faith healing, and faith cure interchangeably.

²R. A. Torrey, *Divine Healing: Does God Perform Miracles Today?* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1924), pp. 6, 7.

³For a thorough examination of the topic, see Paul G. Chappell, "Great Things He Hath Done: The Origins of the Divine Healing Movement in America," to be published Fall 1985 by the University of Indiana Press.

⁴See Mary Bushnell Cheney, *Life and Letters of Horace Bushnell* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980) and Barbara M. Cross, *Horace Bushnell: Minister to a Changing America* (Chicago, 1958) for the two best sources of information on Bushnell's life and work.

⁵Horace Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural as Together Constituting the One System of God* (London: Alexander Strahan, 1867, originally published in 1858), p. 321.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 317, 318.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 321.

⁸Smith H. Platt, *My 25th Year Jubilee: or Cure by Faith After Twenty-five Years of Lameness* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: 1875), p. 55.

⁹Bushnell, *Nature and Supernatural*, p. 318.

¹⁰Dorothea Trudel, *The Prayer of Faith, Showing the Remarkable Manner in Which Large Numbers of Sick Persons Were Healed in Answer to Prayer*, with an introduction by Charles Cullis, 3rd ed. (Boston: Willard Tract Repository, 1872), p. 5.

¹¹See Benjamin B. Warfield, *Miracles: Yesterday and Today True and False* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965). Originally published as *Counterfeit Miracles*, Scribner's, 1913.

¹²See Frederick Zundel, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt* (Germany: n.n., 1880). The most comprehensive account of Blumhardt's life and work.

¹³R. Kelso Carter, *Pastor Blumhardt, A Record of the Wonderful Spiritual and Physical Manifestations of God's Power in Healing Souls and Bodies Through the Prayers of His Servant, Christoph Blumhardt* (Boston: Willard Tract Repository, 1883), pp. 17, 18, 22, 23.

¹⁴R. Kelso Carter, "Divine Healing," *Century Magazine*, XXXIV (March 1887), 780.

¹⁵"Eine Mutter: The True Story of a Mother's Life." This pamphlet, written by Dorothea Trudel but published anonymously, is the story of her mother's life and her own early childhood. It is reproduced in its entirety as chapter three in *Dorothea Trudel: The Prayer of Faith*, pp. 29-56.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 81-86.

¹⁷See Otto Stockmayer, *Sickness and the Gospel* (New York: A. C. Gaebelein, n.d.). First edition published in French ca. 1878.

¹⁸A. J. Gordon, *The Ministry of Healing: Miracles of Cure in All Ages* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, 1961), p. 163.

¹⁹Stockmayer, pp. 12-16, 52.

²⁰Quoted by Gordon, p. 164.

²¹Zundel, p. 284.

²²Stockmayer, pp. 42-44, 56.

²³*Guide to Holiness*, n.s., XLIII (May 1885), 27, 28.

²⁴John Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. John Telford, V (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 16.

²⁵Carrie Judd, "Faith's Reckonings," *Triumphs of Faith*, I (January 1881), 104.

²⁶Phoebe Palmer, "Meetings for Holiness-Sectarianism," *Beauty of Holiness*, VIII (June 1857), 364, 365.

²⁷Phoebe Palmer, *Guide to Christian Perfection*, XXIII (June 1853), 176; *The Way of Holiness* (New York: Palmer and Hughes, 1847), p. 37.

²⁸Phoebe Palmer, *Faith and Its Effects; or Fragments from My Portfolio* (New York: Palmer, 1854), p. 52.

²⁹Phoebe Palmer, *Four Years in the Old World* (New York: W. C. Palmer, Jr., 1870), p. 96 (personal letter by Palmer on September 16, 1859).

³⁰Phoebe Palmer, *Beauty of Holiness*, VIII (June 1857), 164, 165.

³¹Asa Mahan, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost* (New York: W. C. Palmer, Jr., 1870), pp. 47, 77, 78.

³²Melvin E. Dieter, "Wesleyan-Holiness Aspects of Pentecostal Origins: As Mediated Through the Nineteenth-Century Holiness Revival," *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, ed. Vinson Synan, pp. 67, 68.

³³William T. MacArthur, *Ethan O. Allan* (Philadelphia: The Parlor Evangelist, n.d.), p. 14.

³⁴"Faith Convention at Old Orchard. Dr. Cullis and His Work — Meetings for Consecration — Healing by Faith — Marvelous Cures in Answer to Prayer," *New York Witness*, August 11, 1883; MacArthur, pp. 9, 14.

³⁵Carrie F. Judd, *The Prayer of Faith* (Beulah Heights, Calif.: Office of Triumphs of Faith, 1880), p. 13.

- ³⁶J. M. Buckley, "Mrs. Elizabeth Mix," *Century Magazine*, XXXII (June 1886), 222; Mary E. Hall, "Experiences of Spiritual and Physical Healing," *Triumphs of Faith*, II (February 1882), 31.
- ³⁷Mrs. Edward Mix, "Faith in God," *Triumphs of Faith*, I (June 1881), 84; Carrie Judd, "Faith's Reckonings," 104.
- ³⁸Kenneth Mackenzie, *Our Physical Heritage in Christ* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1923), p. 18; Carter, p. 109.
- ³⁹Edith Lydia Waldvogel, "The 'Overcoming Life': A Study in the Reformed Evangelical Origins of Pentecostalism" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1977), p. 134.
- ⁴⁰William E. Boardman, *Faith Work Under Dr. Cullis, in Boston* (Boston: Willard Tract Repository, 1874), pp. 14-16; Cullis, *First Annual Report* (period ending September 30, 1865), p. 8.
- ⁴¹William Daniels, ed., *Dr. Cullis and His Work: Twenty Years of Blessing in Answer to Prayer* (Boston: Willard Tract Repository, 1885), pp. 154, 319-337.
- ⁴²Kenneth Mackenzie, *Divine Life for the Body* (New York: Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 1926), p. 19.
- ⁴³William I. Gill, "The Faith Cure," *New England Magazine*, V (March 1887), 448.
- ⁴⁴Cullis, *Ninth Annual Report* (period ending September 30, 1873), p. 45; Personal letter from Miss Drake presenting her testimony of healing, dated August 31, 1879 from London. Reproduced in William Boardman, "The Lord that Healeth Thee" (*Jehovah-Rophi*) (London: Morgan and Scott, 1881), pp. 120-123.
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- ⁴⁶James Buckley, "Faith Healing and Kindred Phenomena," *Century*, XXXII (June 1886), 222.
- ⁴⁷Frank S. Townsend, "Faith-Cure," *Christian Advocate*, LVII (October 19, 1882), 660.
- ⁴⁸Paul G. Chappell, "The Divine Healing Movement in America," (Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 1983), p. 154.
- ⁴⁹Carter, "Faith Healing" Reviewed After Twenty Years, pp. 16, 17.
- ⁵⁰Editorial, *Christian Advocate*, LVII (August 24, 1882), 530.
- ⁵¹R. Kelso Carter, "Divine Healing, or 'Faith Care,'" *Century Magazine*, XXXIV (March 1887), 780.
- ⁵²*Record of the International Conference on Divine Healing and True Holiness held at the Agricultural Hall, London, June 1 to 5, 1885.*
- ⁵³Daniels, *Cullis and His Work*, pp. 51, 195.
- ⁵⁴Warfield, p. 159.
- ⁵⁵R. L. Stanton, *Gospel Parallelisms: Illustrated in the Healing of Body and Soul* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Office of Triumphs of Faith, 1883), p. 13.
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Origins of the Divine Healing Movement in America

Paul G. Chappell

The American divine healing movement was born and nourished during a period in which the nation wrenched its soul over the moral evil of slavery. The birth and nourishment of the movement was also during a time when the spiritual stabilities of life were being tampered with by the forces of modern science and biblical criticism. With a vigorous expectation on the part of the people, this new manifestation of the supernatural began.

One of the notably significant, yet controversial, phenomena to develop in the modern history and theology of the American church has been the doctrine and ministry of divine healing. Since the latter half of the nineteenth century there has existed in America a discernible divine healing movement, a movement fully endowed with its own doctrine, leaders, and popular following.¹ The significance of the movement lies in its uniqueness as the first to popularize a concept of salvation that includes health and healing as an integral part. By the early twentieth century, the renowned R. A. Torrey was reporting that "a most extraordinary interest" in the subject was being awakened throughout the nation. This heightened interest has continued until currently millions of Americans positively affirm Torrey's proclamation, "I know God performs miracles of healing today."²

Regrettably, this movement has been one of the few significant developments in the American church that has remained almost completely unexamined by church historians. This article is a brief exploration of the origins of the American divine healing movement.³

Foundations of a Movement

In the years immediately preceding the Civil War, one of America's leading theologians, Horace Bushnell,⁴ noted that Christianity was being disempowered and overshadowed by the advent of the modern era of science. He concluded that Christianity was being subjugated to the bondage of the "method of science — as if nothing could be true, save as

it is proved by the scientific method." Christianity, Bushnell maintained, was imperceptibly being removed from the realm of faith and restricted to the domain of man's understanding. The legitimate place of the supernatural in the system of God as a necessary part of the divine system was being discredited. God himself was being restricted and imprisoned by the imposition of physical laws and scientific methods. The church and its leadership so disclaimed and discredited miraculous and supernatural demonstrations, insisted Bushnell, that the common man was beginning to expect little from his God, and man's religious experiences seemed to be under "a doom of suppression."⁵

He observed that as the natural takes priority over the supernatural

Christian souls [fall] into a kind of dumb-bell exercise, good as exercise, but never to be answered. The word is good to be exegetically handled, but there is no light of interpretation in souls, more immediate; all truth is to be second hand truth, never a vital beam of God's own light Expectation is gone — God is too far off, too much imprisoned by laws, to allow expectation from Him. The Christian world has been gravitating, visibly, more and more, toward this vanishing point of faith, for whole centuries, and especially since the modern era of science began to shape the thoughts of men by only scientific methods. Religion has fallen into the domain of the mere understanding, and so it has become a kind of wisdom not to believe much, therefore to expect as little.⁶

Bushnell, however, did sense a longing within the church for the deposition of such a religious system composed of mere rational reason and the complacency of a secondhand faith. Within a segment of the church, an expectation for a livelier, more apostolic faith seemed to be developing. The people, Bushnell observed, were "tired, beyond bearing of the mere school forms and defined notions; they want some kind of faith that shows God in living commerce with men, such as He vouchsafed them in the former times."⁷ A small number of other ministers such as Smith H. Platt, a Methodist preacher, echoed this opinion by concurring that the occasion had now arisen "for a fresh display of signs and wonders to keep the Church and the world alive and open to the realities of God's immediate visitation."⁸

Bushnell predicted that the most widely attested dispensation of miracles and supernatural demonstrations to occur in centuries was about to commence. He joined his voice with other expectant believers:

Let Him [God] now break forth in miracle and holy gifts, let it be seen that He is still the living God, in the midst of His dead people. . . . He can hear prayers. . . . [A]ll His promises in the Scripture He can fulfill, and they go to Him with great expectations. They see, in these gifts, that the Scripture stands, that the graces and works, and holy fruits of the apostolic ages, are also for them. It is as if they had now a proof experimental of the resources embodied in the Christian plan. The living God, immediately revealed, and not historically only, begets a feeling of present life and power, and religion is no more a tradition, a secondhand light, but a grace of God unto salvation, operative now.⁹

The latter part of the nineteenth century was to prove Bushnell's prophecy of a new dispensation of the supernatural to be true. The most common manifestations of the miraculous and supernatural were to be realized in demonstrations of divine healing. By the early 1870's a leading churchman in Boston would boast that if all the numerous instances of healing through faith that were constantly occurring could be collected together, the church would be astonished at such a great body of testimony.¹⁰

Early European Influences

Most nineteenth-century Europeans, as well as Americans, believed the age of miracles had ceased with the apostolic period of the church.¹¹ Yet, in the middle of the century a healing ministry was to develop in Europe that would provide the American movement with an inspirational example of God's present supernatural working and a practical pattern for implementing a divine healing ministry. The most immediate and inspirational European influences centered on the ministries of Johann Blumhardt, Dorothea Trudel, and Otto Stockmayer.

The healing ministry of Johann Blumhardt, a Lutheran pastor, began in 1843 in the small village of Möllingen in the heart of Germany's Black Forest.¹² In praying for a dying young girl, Katarina Dittus, he discovered that the testamentary words of Christ, "They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover," were not outdated. The supernatural healing of the girl at his hands created a marked sensation. Revival broke out in the local parish. Reminiscent of the earlier religious awakenings in both Europe and America, people with tears and lamentations flocked to the churches confessing their sins and seeking deliverance from the wrath of God.¹³

As newspapers spread the news of these events across Europe, multitudes of the sick from throughout the continent migrated toward Möllingen seeking the healing prayers of Blumhardt. To assist these masses, he established a faith home (which eventually accommodated over 150 invalids at a time) as the center of his healing operations. Here the sick were instructed in the biblical message of healing within a faith-building atmosphere so as to enable them to obtain spiritual power over their sickness. So successful was the faith home concept that R. Kelso Carter reported in 1887 that more than 30 such healing centers operated in America.¹⁴

A second notable healing ministry in Europe that inspired the American scene was that of a young florist, Dorothea Trudel. In 1851 several of her coworkers in the Swiss village of Mannedorf fell ill and steadily grew worse as their disease resisted all medical treatment. Reflecting on James 5:14,15, Dorothea anointed her sick coworkers with oil and prayed for them. Instantaneously they were healed. Shortly afterward, an epidemic broke out and many were healed through her prayers. These two events projected Trudel into the forefront of the public and brought people throughout Europe seeking her prayers.¹⁵

In 1856, owing to her praying for the sick, she was charged with "practicing the healing art without a license." (This is the first recorded

instance of such a formal charge being leveled against a faith healer in modern history.) In her trial before the Zurich tribunal of justice she was acquitted of all charges. However, the massive publicity from the trial attracted such large multitudes to her faith homes that most had to be turned away. To reach these multitudes, Trudel began the use of written correspondence to pray for the sick. This instrumentality was also to become normative in America, for by this means the faith healing practitioners were able to extend their ministries far beyond their local environs.¹⁶

If Blumhardt and Trudel were inspirational examples and patterns to be imitated in regard to their faith homes and methodology, Otto Stockmayer was to provide the most systematic presentation of the theology undergirding the movement.¹⁷ A. J. Gordon, one of the leading American advocates of divine healing, referred to Stockmayer as the "theologian of the doctrine of healing by faith."¹⁸

The basic presupposition of the healing movement was articulated by Stockmayer in his thesis that deliverance from sickness could not be separated from the whole work of redemption. He found justification for this thesis in what he considered the important connection between Matthew 8:16,17, and Isaiah 53:4. Using the Matthean scripture to interpret Isaiah 53:4, he concluded that Christ had borne man's physical as well as his spiritual sufferings on the cross. The connection between these two scriptures "clearly and unquestionably" shows, according to Stockmayer, that it cannot be God's final will for man to suffer physical infirmities and diseases since Christ had borne them on the cross for all mankind.¹⁹

Once understanding that it is not the will of God that his children should be sick (James 5:14-18), and that Christ has redeemed us from our sickness as from our sins, (Matt. 7:16,17), we can no longer look upon healing as a right which it would be lawful for us to renounce. It is no longer a question whether we wish to be healed, God's will must be fulfilled in our bodies as well as in our souls. Our beloved Lord must not be robbed of a part of the heritage of his agony.

It is by virtue of a divine will that the offering of the body of Jesus Christ has sanctified us (Heb. 10:10), which means that Christ by his death has withdrawn the members of our body, with our entire being, from every sacrilegious end or use. He has regained and consecrated them for his own exclusive and direct use.

Wrested by Christ's ransom from all foreign power, from the power of sin or sickness or of the devil, our members must remain intact, surrendered to him who has redeemed them.²⁰

Stockmayer insisted along with Blumhardt that "the promises of God are not self-fulfilling, their realization depends upon man." Thus, in order for man to receive deliverance from sickness he must do so by faith just as he receives his freedom from sin.²¹

In addition, Stockmayer emphasized that a sick believer is not directed to the gifts of healing or working of miracles which are gifts deposited with the church. Rather, from the beginning Christ gave the power to heal the

sick in connection with the work of evangelism, i.e., the work of extending the Kingdom of God. This power was first given to the apostles, who in turn appointed elders who received the same power. According to Stockmayer, James 5:16 made healing no longer dependent upon the prayer of the elders, but rested it with the effectual and fervent prayer of a righteous man. Thus the circle widened and all the children of God were exhorted to pray one for another in the case of sickness. This development reveals the acute need for persons to be cleansed of their sin (sanctified) since it is the prayer of a "righteous person that is answered."²²

American Holiness Influence

The most significant theological influence upon the divine healing movement came from the nineteenth-century American holiness movement. With its emphasis upon purification from sin and the power of the Holy Spirit in individual lives, the holiness movement provided the theological environment for faith healing in America. In teaching the doctrine of Christian perfection the holiness advocates emphasized certain characteristics that were of utmost importance for the divine healing movement. First, most holiness advocates insisted that the experience of perfection or entire sanctification was a second and separate work of grace that was realized instantaneously by the supernatural intervention of God.²³ Wesley did regard this as a definite experience, but he taught it as a point in a process of growth and gradualism.²⁴ In the 1830's, however, under the teachings of Finney and Phoebe Palmer, the instantaneous emphasis virtually eclipsed the gradual aspect of the experience. Part of the divine healing movement reflected this position by declaring that healing always occurred instantaneously, and if it did not, it was owing to a lack of faith or existing sin on the part of the sick person.

On the other hand, the Keswickian branch of the holiness movement allowed for the progressive aspect of the experience by teaching a practical deliverance from continuance in known sin by an "instant abandonment of sin, and of every known weight which prevents or hinders progress." Those practitioners of divine healing who reflected the Keswickian view of sanctification believed that when God is petitioned in faith for healing He immediately confers it, although the actual manifestation of the healing may occur gradually.²⁵

In addition to being an instantaneous experience, the holiness movement emphasized that entire sanctification is "immediate salvation."²⁶ Palmer insisted that man must "venture now" to receive the experience of perfection, for God stands waiting to bestow this experience upon every believer.²⁷ When asked how soon a person could expect to experience this state of perfection, she replied: "Just so soon as you come believingly . . . come complying with the conditions and claim it . . . it is already yours. If you do not now receive it, the delay will not be on the part of God, but wholly with yourself."²⁸ The entire faith healing movement echoed these views by emphasizing that a person could receive his healing now, immediately.

Finally, in the 1850's, Palmer began to refer to Christian perfection variously as "the baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire," "an enduement with power," "the baptism of fire," and as a "Pentecostal baptism."²⁹ She was one of the first to adopt and popularize the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" terminology. Feeling the holiness movement was in the midst of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, she asked, "If the ushering of the dispensation of the spirit (at Pentecost) was so glorious, what ought we to expect now? — Surely not a decrease in power."³⁰ She concluded that now, as in the earliest days of the Spirit's dispensation, pentecostal blessing brings pentecostal power.

Asa Mahan, who also supported the use of the terminology "baptism of the Holy Ghost" to identify the perfectionist experience, noted that power was one of the most striking characteristics of this baptismal experience and that it was clearly the privilege of all believers to receive and exercise (this assumption was based upon Acts 1:8, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you"). Included within this realm of common heritage for every believer were the gifts of the Spirit, such as prophecy and divine healing.³¹

By propagating the doctrine of Christian perfection or the baptism of the Holy Spirit as purification from sin, the enduement with power, and the living of a consecrated life of holiness, the nineteenth-century holiness movement provided the basic theological milieu in which the supernatural gifts of God, and in particular, divine healing would flourish. After acknowledging that the pentecostal power of Acts was still available today for all believers, it was a logical step to allow for the accompanying supernatural signs. When one accepts the basic presupposition of the faith healing movement that all sickness is ultimately related to sin and Satan, and the presupposition of the holiness movement that the believer is endued with the pentecostal power of Acts, then the sanctified believer, who through God has power over sin and Satan, also has power over sickness. This thesis provided the fundamental basis for the intimate connection between perfectionism and divine healing. As the holiness scholar Melvin Dieter has observed, with this renewed activity of the Holy Spirit working in the believer's life, "many holiness adherents saw the increased incidence of miraculous physical healing as another demonstration of the new dispensation of the Spirit. The belief in and the witness to miraculous divine healings attended the holiness movement at every turn."³²

Beginnings of a Movement

The pioneers of divine healing in America candidly demonstrate the interwoven connection between the holiness and divine healing movements, and between the European and American healing movements. These pioneers were among the foremost proponents of Christian perfection. In fact, the man commonly referred to by his contemporaries as the father of the divine healing movement in America, Ethan O. Allen, in 1846 became the first member of the American healing movement to associate officially the doctrine of Christian perfection with

divine healing.³³ Like the founder of Methodism, Allen believed that Christ's atonement provided not only for justification but also for purification of the human nature from sin. Agreeing with Stockmayer that sickness was caused by sin, Allen maintained that the purification of human nature from sin by the experience of sanctification would eliminate illness.

While in his late 20's, Allen had been healed of consumption by the prayer of faith at a meeting of Methodist class leaders in 1846. He immediately began to pray for the sick, becoming the first American to make the faith healing ministry his full-time vocation. The beginning of his work was contemporaneous with that of Dorothea Trudel, although at the time he had no knowledge of the supernatural events that were occurring under her ministry. Without any instruction in the methods or techniques of praying for the sick except for the examples of the New Testament, Allen ventured ahead with his new ministry. Unlike his European counterparts who established their ministries at one location, Allen itinerated. For 50 years he traveled throughout the eastern half of the United States, praying for the sick and teaching divine healing.

The receptivity of Allen's ministry was basically but not exclusively limited to the disinherited of society. His itineration to individual homes, to poorhouses, to the developing faith homes, to camp meetings, and to churches enabled him to spread his message, but his shy personality and especially his unschooled ways prevented him from obtaining a larger audience.³⁴

Over the years Allen was instrumental in bringing a number of persons into the faith healing ministry. The most important of these was Mrs. Elizabeth Mix, a black woman from Wolcottville, Connecticut, who had been healed of tuberculosis under Allen's ministry.³⁵ She was a well-educated, articulate, and persuasive person. Under Allen's tutelage she became the first black healing evangelist in the nation. Her healing ministry was so well received that even the most outspoken opponents of divine healing, such as James Buckley, editor of the *Christian Advocate*, respected her and her accomplishments. Interestingly, even physicians sent their patients to her for prayer.³⁶

It is significant to note Mrs. Mix's articulation of an important and universal principle of the divine healing movement when she instructed patients to "pray believing and then act faith." She emphasized that it is not necessary to feel some particular emotion, but it is essential for the patient to act as though he believes what he professes to believe. That is, the petitioner must act out his faith by making physical exertions that will justify his professed belief that God is actually healing him.³⁷

Although Allen and his disciples provided the first systematic beginnings of the divine healing movement in America, the person to whom the distinction belongs of having done more than any other individual to propagate faith healing and to draw the attention of the American church to the doctrine during his lifetime was Charles Cullis, a medical doctor in Boston.³⁸ He was the single most important figure in the development of the divine healing movement in America. Cullis, who functioned as another vital link between the holiness and divine healing movements, has been

identified by one recent historian as “an important, neglected figure of late-nineteenth-century evangelism.”³⁹ His significance in linking these two movements is demonstrated by his successful convincing of prominent holiness leaders that full salvation included not only salvation or healing of the spirit, but also the healing of the physical body. Included among these leaders were John Inskip, first president of the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness (1867-84); William McDonald, second president of the National Camp Meeting Association (1884-92); William E. Osborn, founder of the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting; Daniel Steele, New Testament professor at Boston University; William E. Boardman, author of *The Higher Christian Life*; A. J. Gordon, founder of Gordon College in Massachusetts; A. B. Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance; and two Friends, Hannah Whitall Smith of Philadelphia, and David B. Updegraff, a leader in the Ohio Yearly Meeting.

In addition, Cullis's endeavors in spreading the messages of perfection and divine healing led to his founding of a publishing firm, the Willard Tract Repository, which was the first press in the nation to begin regular publication of divine healing materials including the works of Blumhardt, Trudel, and Stockmayer from Europe. Cullis also founded a faith healing home, conducted weekly faith healing services in his local church, and held faith healing conventions across the nation. By the time of his death in 1892, the doctrine of divine healing was a firmly established feature in the expansive landscape of American Christianity.

In the midst of a personal crisis in 1861-62, Cullis underwent an intense and profound spiritual experience in which he professed salvation and vowed to serve God with his talents. Several months later, on August 19, 1862, following his attendance at Phoebe Palmer's Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness in New York City, he received the experience of sanctification.⁴⁰ Following these experiences he endeavored to take the gospel of love and care to the poor, the hopeless, and especially the terminally sick and neglected. Knowing that indigent consumptives had nowhere to seek relief since both hospitals and poorhouses denied them admittance owing to their incurable status, he determined to pioneer a home where such victims could have proper care during their dying days. On September 27, 1864, his first consumptive home was opened. Here consumptives could receive totally free the comforts of a warm home and complete medical care. This home, however, was only the beginning of Cullis's outreach.

During the decade of the 1880's Cullis's faith work grew and multiplied until it became a constellation of charities. It eventually included not only four consumptives' homes, a school of nursing, a publishing house (that produced three monthly magazines), five churches, various urban missions, a high school, and a Bible college, but also two orphanages, a cancer home, a spinal home, a paralytics' home, a faith-cure home, a home for “fallen women,” a home for the mentally insane, a mission to the American Jewish population, a college and orphanage for the black freshmen in the South—the Boydton Institute, a mission to the Chinese in America, a school at Renick's Valley in West Virginia, an evangelistic outreach to the blacks

in Oxford, North Carolina, and several missions in California. His work became international in scope by the sending of missionaries to India and South Africa.⁴¹

This extensive and phenomenal benevolent ministry was keyed by Cullis's ministry of faith healing.⁴² In fact, the faith healing aspect of his ministry became so predominant by the early 1880's that one author, William I. Gill, felt compelled to remind his readers that faith healing was only one branch of the work. Gill acknowledged, however, that Cullis personally believed the faith-healing aspect of the work to be the most important.⁴³

The reading of the *Life of Dorothea Trudel* in 1869 convinced Cullis that healing in answer to the prayer of faith was a permanent privilege for the people of God. In January 1870 he demonstrated his new belief when Miss Lucy Drake was healed of a brain tumor that had completely immobilized her for five months.⁴⁴ This healing was the turning point of Cullis's ministry. He immediately began converting the holiness leadership to his new viewpoint regarding physical healing by faith. Following a four-month trip to Europe in September 1873, where he visited the faith works of Blumhardt, Trudel, and George Müller, Cullis devoted himself with new vigor and aggressiveness to the ministry of faith healing.⁴⁵

In 1874 Cullis began conducting annual faith conventions at Framingham, Massachusetts, and later at Old Orchard Beach, Maine. These conventions constituted typical nineteenth-century holiness camp meetings with an emphasis upon Christian perfection, but included the added dimension of divine healing. The meetings quickly became internationally known. In the words of one of his critics, James Buckley, Cullis was credited with having given Old Orchard the same "reputation among his followers as the grotto of Lourdes [had] among the Roman Catholics."⁴⁶

Without question, Cullis's faith conventions did more to focus attention on the message of divine healing throughout America than any other single event. The outpouring of articles by both the secular and religious presses across the country on the faith conventions and on divine healing in general was phenomenal considering that the topic had seldom appeared in the news media to this date. As Frank Townsend reported, the "remarkable scenes" witnessed at Cullis's faith conventions brought the subject of divine healing into "considerable prominence."⁴⁷ Regardless of the stance taken on the issue of faith healing by the different editors and reporters, the massive publicity received by the topic during the years 1881-85 effectively spread interest in the doctrine across the land. One needs only to examine the extensive outpouring of articles on the subject by national, regional, and local papers during this period to understand that the nation was now becoming aware that a new movement was being born.⁴⁸

R. Kelso Carter, one of the leading apologists for the movement, called this period of widespread publicity and attention the "wonder" stage of the modern development of divine healing.⁴⁹ This "wonder" stage is illustrated by an editorial in the *Christian Advocate* in 1882 which concluded that at the present time divine healing "should neither be pushed aside as unworthy of notice, nor received with unquestioning credulity."⁵⁰ Several

years later, Carter would insist that “the mass of evidence offered, the multitude of witnesses arising, and the words of Scripture on the subject, demand at least a respectful hearing, and invite the closest scrutiny into the decline and practice of Divine Healing.” By 1887 he would observe that “True or False, there is no belief rising more swiftly before the churches everywhere than that of Divine Healing.”⁵¹

With this new surge of interest created in divine healing as a result of the widespread publicity the doctrine received in the early 1880's, Cullis decided to carry his faith conventions beyond the confines of Old Orchard. He began staging faith conventions in the major cities throughout the country, including Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, Chicago, Boston, Pittsburgh, and Detroit. The climax of these faith conventions came when William Boardman convened the International Conference on Divine Healing and True Holiness in the great Agricultural Hall of London, England, in which more than 2000 persons gathered on June 1-5, 1885. This was the first such international gathering of its kind and was followed immediately by a series of small faith conventions throughout the United Kingdom.⁵²

The interest in divine healing that Cullis's faith conventions helped to generate was increased by the proliferation of publications concerning the topic. During the decade of the 1880's there was an outpouring of popular, testimonial works such as Cullis's *More Faith Cures; or Answers to Prayer in the Healing of the Sick*, Carrie Judd's *The Prayer of Faith*, R. Kelso Carter's *Miracles of Healing*, Theodore Monod's *The Gift of God*, and Ethan Allen's *Faith Healing: or, What I Have Witnessed of the Fulfillment of James 5:14,15,16*. More importantly, however, this was the decade for the first doctrinal and theological treatises on the subject. Most of these first apologetics were published by the Willard Tract Repository since they were written at the personal request and encouragement of Charles Cullis. One of Cullis's biographers, the Reverend William Daniels, identified the Repository as one of the key instruments in making Cullis's faith work the center of the divine healing movement in America. Next to the faith convention, Daniels declared the Repository to be the “chief visible” cause for advancing the doctrine of divine healing into one of the most important questions before the Christian world in the nineteenth century.⁵³

The first of these doctrinal treatises was produced by one of the leaders of the Keswick holiness movement, William Boardman, and was entitled, *The Great Physician (Jehovah Rophi)*. [In London the volume was printed under the title, *The Lord That Healeth Thee (Jehovah Rophi)*.] This volume, which launched Boardman into a career as one of the leading authorities and practitioners of faith healing in the nineteenth century, was written with the same care and thoroughness as his 1859 defense of the doctrine of sanctification, *The Higher Christian Life*. Another significant volume was A. J. Gordon's *The Ministry of Healing: Miracles of Cure in All Ages*, published in 1882. This was a lengthy historical and doctrinal study on faith healing from the early church fathers, progressing through the post-Reformation period. This theological and scriptural defense of divine healing was considered by the doctrine's most hostile critic, B. B. Warfield, to be an “ingenious” apologia and a “very persuasive” argument.⁵⁴

Two years later (1884) R. L. Stanton's volume, *Gospel Parallelism: Illustrated in the Healing of the Body and Soul*, appeared. Stanton, a former president of Miami University in Ohio and a moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, wrote this volume to demonstrate that Christ's atonement had laid a foundation equally for deliverance from sin and from disease. He insisted that it was absolutely necessary "to include both in any true conception of what the gospel offers to mankind."⁵⁵ The volume, however, which quickly became the leading apologia for the doctrine was R. Kelso Carter's *The Atonement of Sin and Sickness; or A Full Salvation for Soul and Body*. Carter's thesis was that Christ's atonement has provided for the body all that it has provided for the soul. *Century Magazine* proclaimed this work "the leading authority" on the subject of faith healing, and the Chicago periodical *Inter-Ocean* identified the publication as the "best writing upon this subject." So popular was this volume that four years later John B. Alden revised and enlarged the work under the new title *Divine Healing; or the Atonement*. An additional important apologia published in the 1880's was R. L. Marsh's "*Faith Healing: A Defense, or, The Lord Thy Healer*. This volume had been presented originally as a bachelor of divinity thesis at Yale Divinity School.

These theological and historical treatises that were published in defense of divine healing had a profound and significant impact upon the movement. They tended to legitimize the movement by providing a systematic approach to the doctrine theologically, and by demonstrating a solid rootage of the church historically through the tracing of the practice of divine healing throughout the centuries. Since faith homes and faith conventions such as those operated by Cullis tended to emphasize and focus upon the experiential aspect of healing, these scholarly apologetics provided a needed balance to the movement. Even critics of the doctrine acknowledged the respect and stability these works brought to the movement.⁵⁶

No single individual influenced the American divine healing movement as much as Charles Cullis. Through his ministry the doctrine and practice of divine healing was firmly established in the American religious scene. During Cullis's lifetime his name had become synonymous with the divine healing movement. R. Kelso Carter was correct in his observation that "to Dr. Cullis undoubtedly belongs the distinction of having done more than any other man to bring healing by faith to the attention of the Church in the last century."⁵⁷ Truly, Cullis was the "apostle" of divine healing in America.⁵⁸

Conclusions

The American divine healing movement was born and nourished during a period when this nation faced intensive military and political conflicts within; a period in which the nation wrenched its soul over the moral evil of slavery and sought to find redemption by the sacrificial shedding of its own blood; and a period when the nation sought healing within itself following the most traumatic and costly armed conflict of its existence. This was an era when industrialization and economic inequality were

drastically changing the life-styles of the nation; a time when America sought feebly to deal with her out-cast and discarded humanity; a time when the momentum of modern progress was transforming the disinherited of society into the nation's neglected masses; and when the working man was becoming just another gear in the seemingly humanless machine of endless progress.

The birth and nourishment of the movement was also during a time when the spiritual stabilities of life were being tampered with by the forces of modern science and biblical criticism and a time when Christianity was being disempowered and the supernatural subordinated by the natural. This was a period when events seemed beyond the control of the average person and the common man began to feel God had deserted him. In the aftermath of the Civil War there were those who sought to reestablish a more personal and intimate relationship with God and to accomplish this by becoming a holy people in the wilderness of nineteenth-century life. In the midst of what often seemed hopeless circumstances, these people developed a deep-rooted desire once again to see and experience God in living commerce with His creation. The desperate cries of these despairing people were to be answered, as Horace Bushnell had prophesied, when a new era of God's miraculous intervention into the daily affairs of society would begin in the last half of the nineteenth century. With a vigorous expectation on the part of the people, this new manifestation of the supernatural began, with its most common expression being divine healing. Possibly the best explanation for healing being the common expression of the supernatural manifestation that occurred during the latter half of the nineteenth century is stated by Dr. Francis MacNutt (a former Roman Catholic priest with a vital healing ministry today): "My own experience leads me to the conclusion that healing is the most convincing demonstration to most people that God is with us."

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Notes

¹The nineteenth-century healing movement refers to that group of persons who contended that physical illness was cured by the supernatural intervention of God when the prayer of faith is prayed. Historically, this movement used the terms divine healing, faith healing, and faith cure interchangeably.

²R. A. Torrey, *Divine Healing: Does God Perform Miracles Today?* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1924), pp. 6, 7.

³For a thorough examination of the topic, see Paul G. Chappell, "Great Things He Hath Done: The Origins of the Divine Healing Movement in America," to be published Fall 1985 by the University of Indiana Press.

⁴See Mary Bushnell Cheney, *Life and Letters of Horace Bushnell* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980) and Barbara M. Cross, *Horace Bushnell: Minister to a Changing America* (Chicago, 1958) for the two best sources of information on Bushnell's life and work.

⁵Horace Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural as Together Constituting the One System of God* (London: Alexander Strahan, 1867, originally published in 1858), p. 321.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 317, 318.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 321.

⁸Smith H. Platt, *My 25th Year Jubilee: or Cure by Faith After Twenty-five Years of Lameness* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: 1875), p. 55.

⁹Bushnell, *Nature and Supernatural*, p. 318.

¹⁰Dorothea Trudel, *The Prayer of Faith, Showing the Remarkable Manner in Which Large Numbers of Sick Persons Were Healed in Answer to Prayer*, with an introduction by Charles Cullis, 3rd ed. (Boston: Willard Tract Repository, 1872), p. 5.

¹¹See Benjamin B. Warfield, *Miracles: Yesterday and Today True and False* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965). Originally published as *Counterfeit Miracles*, Scribner's, 1913.

¹²See Frederick Zundel, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt* (Germany: n.n., 1880). The most comprehensive account of Blumhardt's life and work.

¹³R. Kelso Carter, *Pastor Blumhardt, A Record of the Wonderful Spiritual and Physical Manifestations of God's Power in Healing Souls and Bodies Through the Prayers of His Servant, Christoph Blumhardt* (Boston: Willard Tract Repository, 1883), pp. 17, 18, 22, 23.

¹⁴R. Kelso Carter, "Divine Healing," *Century Magazine*, XXXIV (March 1887), 780.

¹⁵"Eine Mutter: The True Story of a Mother's Life." This pamphlet, written by Dorothea Trudel but published anonymously, is the story of her mother's life and her own early childhood. It is reproduced in its entirety as chapter three in *Dorothea Trudel: The Prayer of Faith*, pp. 29-56.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 81-86.

¹⁷See Otto Stockmayer, *Sickness and the Gospel* (New York: A. C. Gaebelein, n.d.). First edition published in French ca. 1878.

¹⁸A. J. Gordon, *The Ministry of Healing: Miracles of Cure in All Ages* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, 1961), p. 163.

¹⁹Stockmayer, pp. 12-16, 52.

²⁰Quoted by Gordon, p. 164.

²¹Zundel, p. 284.

²²Stockmayer, pp. 42-44, 56.

²³*Guide to Holiness*, n.s., XLIII (May 1885), 27, 28.

²⁴John Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. John Telford, V (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 16.

²⁵Carrie Judd, "Faith's Reckonings," *Triumphs of Faith*, I (January 1881), 104.

²⁶Phoebe Palmer, "Meetings for Holiness-Sectarianism," *Beauty of Holiness*, VIII (June 1857), 364, 365.

²⁷Phoebe Palmer, *Guide to Christian Perfection*, XXIII (June 1853), 176; *The Way of Holiness* (New York: Palmer and Hughes, 1847), p. 37.

²⁸Phoebe Palmer, *Faith and Its Effects; or Fragments from My Portfolio* (New York: Palmer, 1854), p. 52.

²⁹Phoebe Palmer, *Four Years in the Old World* (New York: W. C. Palmer, Jr., 1870), p. 96 (personal letter by Palmer on September 16, 1859).

³⁰Phoebe Palmer, *Beauty of Holiness*, VIII (June 1857), 164, 165.

³¹Asa Mahan, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost* (New York: W. C. Palmer, Jr., 1870), pp. 47, 77, 78.

³²Melvin E. Dieter, "Wesleyan-Holiness Aspects of Pentecostal Origins: As Mediated Through the Nineteenth-Century Holiness Revival," *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, ed. Vinson Synan, pp. 67, 68.

³³William T. MacArthur, *Ethan O. Allan* (Philadelphia: The Parlor Evangelist, n.d.), p. 14.

³⁴"Faith Convention at Old Orchard. Dr. Cullis and His Work — Meetings for Consecration — Healing by Faith — Marvelous Cures in Answer to Prayer," *New York Witness*, August 11, 1883; MacArthur, pp. 9, 14.

³⁵Carrie F. Judd, *The Prayer of Faith* (Beulah Heights, Calif.: Office of Triumphs of Faith, 1880), p. 13.

- ³⁶J. M. Buckley, "Mrs. Elizabeth Mix," *Century Magazine*, XXXII (June 1886), 222; Mary E. Hall, "Experiences of Spiritual and Physical Healing," *Triumphs of Faith*, II (February 1882), 31.
- ³⁷Mrs. Edward Mix, "Faith in God," *Triumphs of Faith*, I (June 1881), 84; Carrie Judd, "Faith's Reckonings," 104.
- ³⁸Kenneth Mackenzie, *Our Physical Heritage in Christ* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1923), p. 18; Carter, p. 109.
- ³⁹Edith Lydia Waldvogel, "The 'Overcoming Life': A Study in the Reformed Evangelical Origins of Pentecostalism" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1977), p. 134.
- ⁴⁰William E. Boardman, *Faith Work Under Dr. Cullis, in Boston* (Boston: Willard Tract Repository, 1874), pp. 14-16; Cullis, *First Annual Report* (period ending September 30, 1865), p. 8.
- ⁴¹William Daniels, ed., *Dr. Cullis and His Work: Twenty Years of Blessing in Answer to Prayer* (Boston: Willard Tract Repository, 1885), pp. 154, 319-337.
- ⁴²Kenneth Mackenzie, *Divine Life for the Body* (New York: Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 1926), p. 19.
- ⁴³William I. Gill, "The Faith Cure," *New England Magazine*, V (March 1887), 448.
- ⁴⁴Cullis, *Ninth Annual Report* (period ending September 30, 1873), p. 45; Personal letter from Miss Drake presenting her testimony of healing, dated August 31, 1879 from London. Reproduced in William Boardman, "The Lord that Healeth Thee" (*Jehovah-Rophi*) (London: Morgan and Scott, 1881), pp. 120-123.
- ⁴⁵Cullis, *Ninth Annual Report* (period ending September 30, 1873), p. 44.
- ⁴⁶James Buckley, "Faith Healing and Kindred Phenomena," *Century*, XXXII (June 1886), 222.
- ⁴⁷Frank S. Townsend, "Faith-Cure," *Christian Advocate*, LVII (October 19, 1882), 660.
- ⁴⁸Paul G. Chappell, "The Divine Healing Movement in America," (Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 1983), p. 154.
- ⁴⁹Carter, "Faith Healing" Reviewed After Twenty Years, pp. 16, 17.
- ⁵⁰Editorial, *Christian Advocate*, LVII (August 24, 1882), 530.
- ⁵¹R. Kelso Carter, "Divine Healing, or 'Faith Care,'" *Century Magazine*, XXXIV (March 1887), 780.
- ⁵²*Record of the International Conference on Divine Healing and True Holiness held at the Agricultural Hall, London, June 1 to 5, 1885.*
- ⁵³Daniels, *Cullis and His Work*, pp. 51, 195.
- ⁵⁴Warfield, p. 159.
- ⁵⁵R. L. Stanton, *Gospel Parallelisms: Illustrated in the Healing of Body and Soul* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Office of Triumphs of Faith, 1883), p. 13.
- ⁵⁶Marvin R. Vincent, "Modern Miracles," *Presbyterian Review*, IV (July 1883), 473; Warfield, p. 159.
- ⁵⁷Carter, "Faith Healing" Reviewed After Twenty Years, p. 109.
- ⁵⁸Mackenzie, *Our Physical Heritage in Christ*, p. 19.