

RESPONSE TO DAVID HAN'S "HEALING IN THE PENTECOSTAL TRADITION"

ANDREW PREVOT

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The second phase of the exploratory dialogue between the PCCNA and the USCCB that took place at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma, helped me appreciate many similarities between Pentecostal and Catholic approaches to healing. Although differences remain, I now see that our two Christian faith communities are much closer in their understanding of this theme than I had previously recognized. These similarities include worship of Christ as Healer; affirmation of a close connection between salvation and healing; reference to biblical passages such as James 5; a holistic approach that encompasses soul and body; an anticipation of final eschatological healing; and a set of ritual practices involving prayer, laying on of hands, and anointing with sacred oil. These similarities demonstrate a common faith in a saving God who rescues us from sin, suffering, and death and invites our active participation and cooperation in the work of sanctification.

David Han's essay encapsulates all of these theological points, while highlighting some of the distinctive features of the Pentecostal tradition. He gives a great overview of the historical roots of this tradition in Holiness and Wesleyan movements and very helpfully clarifies how a once-stark opposition between spiritual and medical forms of healing, which was salient in some early sources, has been significantly softened over time. Han's emphasis on the centrality of healing to Pentecostal experience is quite striking. His contention that healing may even rival glossolalia and Spirit-baptism in its level of importance prompts me to wonder whether the Catholic Church has placed enough emphasis on this essential aspect of Christ's saving work.

Put more positively, I think Catholics could benefit from further dialogue with Pentecostals on this topic. Through such conversation and relationship, Catholics could learn to be more attentive to the promise of healing that is an integral part of the gospel. Although some Catholics, particularly in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, have incorporated faith healing into their everyday religious practice, this is not standard for all Catholics. The two traditional Sacraments of Healing—namely Anointing of the Sick and Penance or Reconciliation (which offers healing from sin)—are a regular part of Catholic ministry. These sacraments powerfully mediate the healing grace of Christ to suffering people in the Catholic Church, using prayers, touch, and oil in ways that resemble Pentecostal practice to some degree. Nevertheless, my sense is that many Catholics would do well to learn more about the biblical origins, subsequent developments, and profound meanings of these sacraments and to take greater

advantage of them in their daily lives. Further Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue could, in this way, spur Catholics to gain a deeper understanding of vital aspects of their own sacramental tradition, even while helping them grow in knowledge and love of their Pentecostal brothers and sisters.

One curiosity I have is whether Pentecostal Christians will find any value in the Catholic emphasis on *fides et ratio* (faith and reason). More specifically, I am interested in the way this principle suggests a fundamental compatibility between healing practices that are rooted in Christian belief and those that are grounded in scientifically-backed medical practice. While Catholics arguably could and should increase their appreciation of faith-based healing, they have been keen to prioritize reason in their healing efforts and to recognize it as a gift from God. Many Catholics have been leaders in the fields of bioethics, social ethics, public health, and medicine. They have developed major healthcare institutions that serve the needs of diversely religious and secular populations. They have not regarded this work as something in tension with their faith but rather as one concrete means of authentically practicing it. An open question for me is to what extent Pentecostal traditions share this sense of a deep synergy between faith and reason, particularly in the domain of healing. Although Han points out that earlier views presupposing a contradiction between the two are no longer dominant, I am intrigued to see what a positive Pentecostal articulation of the faith-reason connection might look like.

Finally, I would like to comment on the practice of blessing handkerchiefs and using them as a conduit of healing grace, particularly in cases where a more direct physical laying on of hands or anointing with oil is not possible. This practice reminds me of the way many Catholics venerate the relics of saints, including even items of clothing. Our two traditions share a belief that some mode of sanctifying human presence is communicable through non-human, tangible objects. We both intuit that things that have been blessed by a holy person, someone doing Christ's work in the world, are able to hold and transmit some measure of Christ's saving power. In neither tradition is faith merely an intellectual activity. It is a holistic experience that includes the body, the community, and the surrounding world. Faith is expressed not only in words but in rich material cultures. It is a way of perceiving the "sacramentality" of things, to use a Catholic word. Learning more about the material cultures of Pentecostalism has been one of the great gifts of this dialogue for me.

In closing, I want to thank David Han for his highly illuminating and engaging paper. It opens up many fruitful avenues for further conversation between Pentecostals and Catholics. Moreover, although I am certain this was not its main purpose, it also offers a helpful nudge to Catholics, who might otherwise neglect the parts of their own tradition that affirm the healing power of Christ. Are Catholics sufficiently mindful of the fact that healing is one of the core motifs of the gospel? Have they really opened themselves to receive such grace in their lives? These are good questions for Catholics to ponder.