



THE
"GOSPEL OF HEALING"

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“THE GOSPEL OF HEALING.”

“HEALING by faith,” as it is commonly called, is growing into credit with many in the present day. It is no wonder if, in a world so full of the suffering which sin has caused, and where, even by Christians, what sin is is so little realized, it should be so. Neither what Scripture calls the “flesh” is known, nor the new creation. Christ’s work is thought to be but to restore what Adam’s destroyed; and Christ’s obedience only to put us where, if we had

not sinned, we should have been without it. Then it is easy to imagine that for the Christian the world should become pretty much what the garden of Eden was to Adam,—that thorns and thistles are not to exist for *him*; although they have still to confess that death remains, that the present body is to be dissolved, (or changed, if the Lord comes first,) and that our paradise is in heaven.

This would seem indeed an effectual contradiction of the thought; but what cannot man's desire for it make appear reasonable? Mr. Simpson's pamphlet, "The Gospel of Healing," will show us how possible it is for even a believer, with the open Word and the facts of nature right before his eyes, to set aside both, and to see only what

he thinks ought to be. No one is perhaps in higher esteem among those who accept his views than Mr. Simpson; he states clearly what he holds, and with no lack of boldness, and will be the last, surely, to complain if we inquire a little into the scriptural foundations of his faith, which he proposes to us for our own, and which he believes nothing but unbelief and rationalism can oppose.

His "gospel" may be stated in few words. Man has a twofold nature; he is both a moral and spiritual being; and both natures have been equally affected by the fall; we would therefore expect that any complete scheme of redemption would include both natures, and provide for the restoration of his physical as well as the renova-

tion of his spiritual life. Nor are we disappointed. The Redeemer offers Himself to us as a complete Saviour: His indwelling Spirit the life of our spirit, *His resurrection-body the life of our mortal flesh*. In the same full sense as He has borne our sins, Jesus Christ has surely borne away and carried off our sicknesses,—yes, and even our pains; so that, abiding in Him, we need not, and we should not, bear either sickness or pain. We are members of His body, His flesh, and His bones. These words recognize a union between our body and the resurrection-body of the Lord Jesus Christ, which gives us the right to claim for our mortal frame all the vital energy of His perfect life.

This is the doctrine—stated in Mr.

Simpson's own words. Of course, with this, there is the usual pressing of Mark xvi. 17 and kindred texts long pressed in a similar way by Romanists, Irvingites, Mormons, and such like; who have been always ready to produce the same host of living witnesses to the truth of their claims.

From doctrine of the kind just stated, we should expect, however, miracles mightier than ever Rome claimed or apostles actually wrought; for if we may "claim for our mortal frame all the vital energy of Christ's perfect life," the resurrection of the dead itself—and we do not know that Mr. Simpson's faith reaches as far as this—should not be the limit of the power displayed. Those so gifted ought, plainly, *not to die at all*. "His

body is ours; His life is ours; and it is all-sufficient:" for what? to heal a few sick folk? How paltry indeed such a conclusion! "His resurrection-body the life of our mortal flesh"! But how, then, can it possibly be any longer mortal? The believers in Mr. S.'s creed ought to be nothing less than a company of unsuffering immortals, or their faith has no proper fruit.

Some of his school have, indeed, boldly accepted this conclusion, and maintain that it is only through unbelief that any Christian dies at all: even, it is to be supposed, the whole "noble army of martyrs," with Stephen and James the apostle at their head! Mr. Simpson does not go as far as this indeed, but why not? If Christ bore sickness for us, did He not also die for

us? If the result of the former should be to free us from sickness, should not the result of the latter be to free us from death?

It is not true, however, that *in this sense* Christ bore our sicknesses; for Matthew applies this text from the prophet (Isa. liii. 4) to the Lord's ministry of grace among men, and not to the cross, or to atonement (Matt. viii. 16, 17), He "took" and "bare," in loving sympathy, not in atonement, all the sorrows and the sufferings which His hand relieved. The atonement for sickness, of which people speak, could not, indeed, be needed. If *sin* be atoned for, mercy can come in any where to relieve and heal the body: that which meets the *cause* can of course meet its effects also.

Is not Christ, then, a "complete Saviour"? and is He not the Redeemer of both natures—the mortal as well as the spiritual, the body as well as the soul? Assuredly; but "we *wait* for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." The passage which Mr. S. so little understands as to quote it in his favor contains, indeed, the very refutation of his doctrine: "And *if Christ be in you*, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness; but if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." Mr. Simpson actually says of this that it "cannot refer to the future resurrec-

tion; that will be by the voice of the Son of God, not the Holy Spirit; this is a present dwelling and a present quickening by the Spirit; and it is a quickening of the mortal body, not soul; what can this be but physical restoration?" Painful it is to pursue such things, more painful to think that Christians can be deceived by them. Does not Mr. Simpson know that our Lord's own resurrection is referred, in Scripture, to Himself, the Father, and the Spirit of God as well (Jno. ii. 19; Rom. viii. 11; 1 Pet. iii. 18)? How could he who had just said, "If Christ be in you, the body is *dead*," in the same breath declare that it was quickened by the Spirit? whereas, in plain *contrast* with the present condition, the apostle says, not "*hath* quickened,"

or "*does* quicken," but "*shall*,"—"shall also quicken your mortal body by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. viii. 11.)

So, again, when Paul says, "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal body," Mr. S. sees in this nothing but "physical experience;" "His life was a constant miracle;" "this life, he tells us (*v.* 16), was 'renewed day by day'!" *Paul* says it was his "inward man;" and he contrasts it with the "outward man," which was at the same time perishing. What was that outward man according to Mr. Simpson?

He quotes also the apostle's prayer for Gaius, with the same entire un-

consciousness of how his witness testifies against him. For why should there be need to pray that a man might "prosper and be in health, even as his soul prospered," if that was the constant rule in divine government for the Christian?

Again, he connects 1 Cor. x. 11 with Ex. xv. 25, 26, to make the promise apply to Christians that God will put none of the diseases of the Egyptians upon them; not heeding or knowing that the Greek says "types," and that the apostle is speaking of such things as the passage of the Red Sea, the manna, and the water from the rock, which assuredly are not things literally made good to us. The essential contrast between an earthly people, such as Israel, and those who are

“blessed with all spiritual blessings in *heavenly* places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. i. 3) is ignored altogether.

With most of the above texts it is hoped that few of our readers will have much difficulty. There remain some others, as to which many may not be so clear; yet as to such passages as Jno. xiv. 12—“The works that I do shall he do also,” and the signs which should follow them that believe (Mark xvi. 17, 18), it is plain enough that while for a time these things *did* follow, it would be totally false to say that they follow now. There is no hint of unbelief making this void, as it is contended. Are such things as these true of Mr. Simpson or his disciples: “They shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up ser-

pents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them"? or that he or they do the works that Christ did, which would include the raising of the dead, at any rate? If not, what folly to bring forward such cures of sick people as Romanists, Mormons, and spiritualists can boast of just as confidently, and with as much apparent truth, and make a fancied fulfillment of a small portion of what the Lord said pass muster for the whole!*

But what, then, it will be asked, makes such a difference between the pentecostal times and ours? Oh if men would only inquire into the

*It is plain that in the times of the apostles there was no counterfeit of divine healing which could really be compared with it. Its power as evidence would be lost if this were possible. *Why* do not Mr. Simpson and his people raise the dead? Have we not good reason to press for serious answer to this question?

causes, and judge honest judgment. instead of claiming by the power of their faith alone to bring back that Pentecost so long passed away! Where to-day is that Church with the great multitude of it "of one heart and of one soul," "continuing steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers"? Surely the sights and sounds of the day are those of the predicted Babylon rather. And which of us will wash his hands and dare to say, "In this I have no part"? Is it the time for putting on the ornaments of the day of espousal, when God is saying, as to Israel of old, "Ye are a stiff-necked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment and consume thee; there-

fore now put off thine ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee”?

Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were among us, they should but deliver their own souls by their righteousness. Who has shoulders to lift off from us the weight of eighteen centuries of failure? Let us own it, and take humbly what is our common shame. If this is the harder thing, it is still the more blessed, for with him who does this really God will be.

But what are we to think of Mr. Simpson's wonderful discovery of the narrow channel in which it seems since the apostolic days the water of (physical) life has been flowing? “But now the apostolic age is closing; is this to be continued? and if so, by

whom? By what limitation is it to be preserved from fanaticism and presumption? by what commission is it to be perpetuated to the end of time, and placed within the reach of all God's suffering saints?" What is the answer? Jas. v. 14 and the elders of the Church! Read the apostle's closing address to some of these very elders (Acts xx. 29, 30), beloved reader, and ask yourself what sort of preservation would be thus guaranteed, and if rather the apostle's warning does not find a fulfillment in such a pretension.

I do not want, however, to dismiss the subject without adding a word as to what remains for us in these days. For this, we must first of all distinguish between cases which Mr. S.

necessarily mixes up in confusion. Elihu, in the book of Job, shows us the chastening of a soul under God's hand, for which his flesh is consumed until he dies, or else humbles himself and confesses his sin and finds mercy. The apostle speaks in this way of a sin unto death, for which he does not say that any one should pray. In James, this case of chastening is supposed, though not exclusively. Here, the remedy is clearly not in doctors, and it is of the very greatest importance to remember it. Here still the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and "confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" abides ever as the resource. The prayer of faith surely remains to us.

All sickness does not come under the head of chastening, though discipline we may find in it, and find it needful, therefore, to that end. The apostle's thorn in the flesh had this character, and was *not* removed, nor could be; God taught him to acquiesce in and to profit by it. For Timothy's weak "stomach's sake and often infirmities" he prescribes, not the prayer of faith, but "a little wine." Trophimus he leaves at Miletum sick; Epaphroditus too is sick, nigh unto death, right under the apostle's eye; but God has mercy on him, and on Paul too thus, and raises him up. Even in apostles' days, and with such as he, the gifts of healing were used, not indiscriminately, or for the personal ease of Christians, but for the glory of God

as with Lazarus' resurrection, or that healing of the sick of the palsy, "that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

Thus stands the matter, simply taking Scripture. That we need still the admonition, "Have faith in God,"—that men may still die, because they seek not to God, but the physician, as Asa did,—that many an one may lie unhealed for whom a simpler and therefore more discerning faith would find in God the power to heal,—all this need not be doubted. On the other hand, Christians cannot be too earnestly warned against a view of things, coming up in many quarters in the present day, which ignores the sorrowful realities of the flesh and the world. It is but another fig-leaf apron,

—another human invention to cover man's nakedness; a fruit of wisdom acquired by the fall, and not divine.

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