

**Compassion on people as a stimulus for the development
of the church's healing ministry:
Lessons from the lives of two Pentecostal pioneers¹**

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Abstract

The church's healing ministry developed rapidly during the past century, with more and more churches, as well as individuals, becoming involved in this ministry. The question of what the key components of a successful healing ministry are thus arises. The ministries of two Pentecostal pioneers who were influential in the establishment and further development of Pentecostalism in South Africa (Lake during the period 1908 to 1912 and Wigglesworth during 1936), the United States and other parts of the world are studied in this regard. It is clear from both their actions and their own reflections on the topic that a divine compassion on the sick was an essential element in the development of their respective ministries. The article concludes by emphasising the importance of this aspect in the training and equipping of those wishing to enter into similar ministries.

Introduction

The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM) has recently celebrated its centenary. It is well known that the healing ministry of John G Lake, who visited South Africa during the years 1908 to 1912, played a significant role in the establishment and early developments of this church. He himself said that "one of the cardinal teachings of our organization was the ministry of healing through faith in Jesus Christ, the son of God" (cf. van der Spuy 1985:71). On his return to the United States he exercised a profound influence on the understanding and practice of the healing ministry, and became known as a healing evangelist. Similarly, Smith Wigglesworth preached and practised the healing message in many countries in the years following 1914. He visited South Africa in 1936, and had a profound influence on the AFM and specifically on David du Plessis (cf. Susanto 2007:48), who later became known as Mr Pentecost.

Despite the successes they achieved, their ministries of healing, often called “divine healing ministries”,³ insofar as they refer specifically to *physical* healing of the body, were almost non-existent in most mainline or traditional churches at the turn of the previous century.

In reflecting on the situation a hundred years ago, one should take into account that medical science was making enormous strides at that time. The view that the church had not much of a role to play in the healing process was supported by the influences of the Western worldview in all spheres of life. Western missionaries co-operated with Western medical missionaries, and mission hospitals were built in order to care for the physical bodies of patients, while the church would care for their spiritual needs.

It is not the aim of this article to explore the historical or theological background and thinking that led to the state of affairs just mentioned. Suffice to say that because of a series of events and theological insights it was generally accepted that the gifts of the Spirit, including the healing gifts, had long ceased to be operational in the life of the church. It was taught that Jesus exercised his healing gifts in order to make a specific point: God wanted to show that Jesus was empowered in a special way, but that after the apostolic age and from the time that the Bible books were brought together the need for these gifts and for such a ministry offered by the church had faded away. Thus, in theology and in practice, most mainline denominations and specifically the Reformed tradition usually did not expect, and even denied, the existence of divine healing and did not accommodate it in its worship and evangelistic services.⁴

However, things have changed dramatically, not only in the life of the church, but also in terms of the general spiritual climate. In the words of Barnes and Sered (2005:3):

Throughout much of the twentieth century, miraculous healing or non-scientific healing received attention primarily in terms of “exotic,” “bogus,” or “superstitious” behaviour, or when it came into conflict with biomedical practices or government regulatory agencies.

Yet, contrary to predictions that biomedical advances soon would eliminate vestigial needs for religious healers, by the turn of the twenty-first century, spiritual and religious healing actually garnered new popularity, visibility and legitimacy.

This is particularly true of the development of the Christian healing ministry. Pentecostal and/or Charismatic⁵ movements in particular, as well as some mainline churches, have developed various kinds of healing ministries; for example, itinerant healing evangelists have made an impact in a number of countries, local churches offer healing services, groups organise healing

retreats, individuals are trained in praying and caring for the sick, and so forth.

The aim of this article is to explore an aspect of the Christian healing ministry that emerged or was focused on during the twentieth century, namely compassion toward or on the sick, and to make suggestions in this regard. Thus one may ask, on the basis of a study of the lives and ministries of Lake and Wigglesworth, whether the development or experience of compassion for the sick can enhance the quality of the healing ministries of those who, roughly a hundred years later, are endeavouring to follow in their footsteps. The main question that this article seeks to answer is thus whether Christians who believe in, or are in some way or another actively involved in such ministries could enhance the quality of their gifts and services by having more compassion on those to whom they minister.

This emphasis on compassion in the context of the healing ministry is in strong contrast to the rational views held in some of the so-called mainline churches. It is based on a number of scripture verses reflecting Jesus' attitude toward the sick, which reveal that he healed them not only in order to show his power or his divinity, but because he had compassion towards those who suffered or who called out to him for help.

The lives of Smith Wigglesworth and John G Lake

These two ministers of healing were selected for attention in this article because both were internationally acclaimed among Pentecostals as great men of God (cf. Liardon 2007b, Cartwright 2003:7). Their respective ministries were also exceptionally fruitful (cf. Wilson 2002:1, 219–220; Liardon 2006:9; 1996:9; 1999:9, 17, 493), and they exercised a significant influence on later Pentecostal and Charismatic leaders.

Smith Wigglesworth

Smith Wigglesworth was born on June 10, 1859, near Bradford in England. From the age of six he worked alongside his parents, pulling and cleaning turnips in the field (Wigglesworth in Frodsham [1948] 2002:11). At the age of seven, in addition he began working in a mill, and in consequence received almost no formal school education. Wigglesworth (in Hywel-Davies 1987:160) provides an autobiographical account of his spiritual journey, explaining that his conversion occurred through a simple song about the bleeding Lamb of Calvary, and that the first person he won for Christ was his mother (Frodsham [1948] 2002:13; Hywel-Davies 1987:25–27). His confirmation on September 5, 1872 was decisive, since before receiving this, he learnt the basic Puritan teachings of the Church of England. Also, the laying on of the Bishop's hand imparted upon him a tangible divine blessing

(Wigglesworth in Hywel-Davies 1987:28). He also mentions being “immersed as a Baptist” (in Hywel-Davies 1987:160). Wigglesworth practised personal evangelism under the influence of the local Methodist church in Bradford. At that time he worked as a plumber. His evangelistic zeal and social concerns were nurtured within the Salvation Army context (cf. Liardon 2007b). When he was 20, Wigglesworth met Mary Jane Featherstone (Polly), whom he married in 1882. In Leeds he was introduced to and became familiar with divine healing ministry through his attendance of a number of Zionist meetings (Cartwright [2000] 2003:22–23) whose practice and origin were associated with John Alexander Dowie (1847–1907), the founder of Zion City near Chicago. Yet the event that changed his life forever and directed him towards a committed ministry of divine healing was the miraculous healing of the dying wife of Mr Clark, a Baptist minister in Bradford. Wigglesworth poured out a half pint bottle of oil on the woman’s head while praying; she was healed after Wigglesworth physically saw Jesus smiling at him.

I was standing beside her at the top of her bed looking towards the foot when suddenly the Lord Jesus appeared. I had my eyes open gazing on him. There he smiles. After a few moments he vanished. But something that day happened that changed the whole of my life (Wigglesworth in Hywel-Davies 1987:53).

Following this event, and after listening to a visiting preacher, Wigglesworth, who had suffered from haemorrhoids since childhood, stopped using the remedy he was accustomed to using, and was miraculously healed when he anointed himself with oil. One Sunday in 1890, Wigglesworth collapsed in agony and was close to death (cf. Cartwright [2000] 2002:20). A whole night’s prayers for his healing did little to ease his suffering. He survived nonetheless, and in a sermon dated between October and December 1923, Wigglesworth (Liardon ed. 1996:352) testified that on that occasion he had been delivered from a demonic attack and had been instantly healed. This led to a resolute commitment to let God freely display His loving, supernatural graces and glory in his own life and ministry. Following the teaching of the Keswick Convention, in July 1893 Wigglesworth received “Spirit baptism” without speaking in tongues. On Saturday, October 26, 1907, at the age of 48, Wigglesworth went to All Saints’ Church in Sunderland after receiving news of the recent Pentecostal manifestation there. As stated in his testimony, Wigglesworth (1908:15) received several waves of mighty anointing, although this did not occur in this church, but during a Salvation Army meeting. Finally, before returning to Bradford at the end of four days of increased anointing, Wigglesworth was baptised in the Spirit in accordance with the account of Pentecost (Hywel-Davies 1987:68–69). This occurred in

All Saints' Church, following a laying-on of hands by Mrs Mary Boddy. This was really a culmination of God's spiritual blessings in his life (cf. Liardon ed. 1996:829; Wigglesworth 1999e:250). This Pentecost-like baptism in the Spirit was the beginning of his greater use in Britain. His worldwide evangelistic and healing ministry began in 1914, a year after the death of his wife on January 1, 1913 (Hywel-Davies 1987:92, 97–99; Cartwright [2000] 2003:55, 59ff.). He later went to Canada and America and started to minister there with great success, developing his favourite theme of “faith in God” (Hywel-Davies 1987:100–101). He returned to Britain in 1915. After the end of World War I, he was invited to many European countries and to Australia, New Zealand and Sri Lanka before returning to Canada and America in 1925 (see Hywel-Davies 1987:107–144). In 1936, he ministered in South Africa. Wherever he went, great revivals occurred, marked by hundreds and thousands of conversions, unusual divine healing incidents, and the Pentecostal blessings. His worldwide ministry was limited by his increased age, and was ended by the outbreak of World War II in 1939 (Cartwright [2000] 2003:161). Until March or April 1945, Wigglesworth (then 86) continued to conduct the Preston Conventions in Britain, acting as one of the main speakers. His regular ministry extended until his death at the age of 88 on March 12, 1947 (Hywel-Davies 1987:155, 160). A week before he died, with tears in his eyes, Wigglesworth (in Wilson 2002: 212) expressed his wish for every minister of the Gospel when he enquired of Albert Hiebert “When are you going to move into the realm that you have not yet touched and get going for God?”

Wigglesworth was commonly known as a forefather of the Pentecostal and Charismatic renewals. Never attaching himself to any denomination or to any local church, he was also called an “evangelist” and “apostle of faith” (cf. Hacking [1972, 1981] 1995:17; Madden 1993:13; Hywel-Davies 1987:17, 28, 144–145; David Winter in Hywel-Davies 1987:12–13; Wilson 2002:219). Hacking ([1972, 1981] 1995:35) refers to Wigglesworth as “the living embodiment” of faith.

John G Lake

John Graham Lake was born at St. Mary's, Ontario, Canada, on March 18, 1870. In 1886 he followed his parents, who moved to the northern part of Michigan, in the United States.

Lake was converted to God in 1886, at the age of 16. Three essential things took place in his life. First, through an encounter with a dying young woman who shared her deathbed vision with him, he experienced a new perspective on and consciousness of the nearness of God: “After I left that room I walked with a soft tread for many days. I was walking in a new presence, a new realization, a consciousness that God was not so far away,

and heaven was just as close as Jesus Christ is to the Christian hearts” (Lindsay ed. 2003a:93). As his heart was moved by God, he committed his whole life to Him. Second, in the same year he saw how a person close to his heart – possibly his dying 22-year-old brother – was healed. Third, after witnessing this healing, Lake (Liardon ed. 1999:117–118), who had suffered from chronic constipation for nearly nine years, made a consecrated resolution to God that soon resulted in his own miraculous healing. In October 1891, Lake was admitted to the Methodist ministry in Chicago, but instead founded a newspaper company. In 1896, he began to sense that his total consecration to God was being tested through the health problems of his wife and his first son (his wife was diagnosed with consumption, and subsequently became paralysed). Lake’s life was clouded by sickness and death in his family, and he came to believe that only God in Christ could deliver his loved ones. On April 28, 1898, with support through prayer of friends from Dowie’s church, Lake offered up a believing prayer to Jesus for the healing of his wife. According to Gloria Copeland (1994:xvii), this experience revealed to Lake that God and His power were with him for healing. In 1901, Lake and his family moved to Zion City, under John Alexander Dowie. In 1904, he left the city and returned to Chicago. Finally, in 1904, he took a great leap of faith by completely abandoning his business, disposing of all of his wealth, and embarking on independent evangelistic work with just a single dollar to his name, undertaking to live by faith, in imitation of George Muller and Hudson Taylor (cf. Tannenber 1999:12). On April 19, 1908, Lake and his wife and seven children left Indianapolis for a missionary calling to South Africa. He was instrumental in the formation of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) Church, later becoming its second president. His time in South Africa was not without hardship, as during this period he lost his wife very suddenly, and in 1910 engaged in a ministry trip that failed miserably (cf. Van der Spuy 1985:62). Lake finally returned to the United States in 1912, and never returned to Africa. Roughly two years later he founded the Healing Rooms in Spokane. Tannenber (1999:16) rightly states that Lake’s ministry in Spokane was actually the climax of his life and work, as the Healing Rooms attracted thousands of people from the United States and other countries. From 1920 onwards, living in Portland, Lake became physically weaker. Liardon (2007a) states that nevertheless “by 1924, Lake was known throughout America as a leading healing evangelist. He had established forty churches throughout the United States and Canada”. In 1931, Lake returned to Spokane to minister there, continuing to achieve exceptional success in terms of divine healing manifestations daily. He died on September 16, 1935.

The influence of divine compassion on the ministries of Smith Wigglesworth and John G Lake

Divine compassion in this context indicates that both men believed that God, through his Spirit, changed and assisted their natural qualities in order to have compassion on people. In other words, it was divine love for the suffering that worked through them and made their ministries more effective. They were able to identify with the afflicted and felt the same pain as the sufferers. This love also flowed from faith, so that faith operational in their lives combined with a compassionate love toward the sick.

Wigglesworth was inspired by compassion. His heart was deeply moved by the suffering of others, causing him to call on the Lord for divine healing. Lake struggled more in this respect, yet succeeded in manifesting divine compassion toward the sick, so that divine healing occurred. What follows are descriptions of instances revealing this compassion, and the personal views of Wigglesworth and Lake in that regard.

Manifestations of divine compassion in the lives of Wigglesworth and Lake

Divine compassion is Wigglesworth's hallmark in his encounters with the sick. He recounts his meeting with a woman whose cancer returned three years after an operation to cure it:

I saw she was in great pain, and I have great sympathy for people who have tried to get relief and have failed. If you preachers lose your compassion you can stop preaching, for it won't be any good. You will only be successful as a preacher as you let your heart become filled with the compassion of Jesus. As soon as I saw her I entered into the state of her mind. I saw how distressed she was. She came to me in a mournful spirit, and her whole face was downcast (Liardon ed. 1996:750).

Note that he identifies the compassion needed here as the kind manifested by Jesus. Wigglesworth (1999d:101–102, 165) confirms the need for compassion:

Oh, I do wish I were like Jesus. When I think that we left behind us at Melbourne, Australia, over 100 who were invalid and helpless and could not come to the meetings, and that we had no time to go to them! Oh, how my heart aches for those in similar circumstances! Jesus said, 'I will come.' Yes, it is

lovely! You never need to be afraid that He will not find you if you seek Him.

In comforting the sick, Wigglesworth's deep, sincere compassion overflowed, as seen from the following (1999a:500): "You talk about your infirmities – look at this! ... O God, help me; I feel more like weeping than talking tonight. My cup runs over as I see the magnitude of this living God" (Wigglesworth 1999a:500). The same compassion motivated his extending divine healing to a woman with a mental illness: "And then a young woman about eighteen or so just grinned at me and walked out of the door, and that finished the whole business. That brought me to a place of compassion that something had to be done for this woman; it did not matter what it was" (Wigglesworth 1999a:488).

Lake never refused a cry for help (Reidt 1989:36). Although not without a struggle, (Liardon ed. 1999:360–361; Copeland ed. 1994:99; Lindsay ed. 2003a:40) Lake demonstrated compassion when he ministered to a dying woman in terrible agony:

I had prayed again and again with no results. But this day something just happened inside of me. My soul broke clear down, and I saw that poor soul in a new light and before I knew it I reached out and gathered her in my arms and hugged her up to my soul, not my bosom. In a minute I knew the real thing had taken place and I laid her back on the pillow and in five minutes she was well. God was waiting on me, until he could get to my soul the sense of that tenderness that was in the Son of God ... I am eager to get in that category of folks [together with the most loving Jesus] who can manifest the real love of God all the time.⁶

Reflections on divine compassion by Lake and Wigglesworth

Wigglesworth explained that the divine compassion in him was not static in nature, but dynamic and always expanding. This idea is integrated in his view of Spirit baptism, characterised by the ever-increasing grace and power of God: "I am seeing today that whatever I have reached, I am only on the rippling of the wave of the surface of God's intense zeal of love and compassion. He [Jesus] is always saying nothing less than this: 'Come on.' So I am going forward" (Wigglesworth 1999a:563). He indicated that this compassion must be divine in origin and thus emanate from the Spirit of God, not from the flesh. The actual nature of this divine compassion is Jesus' compassion, which has a working power greater than death (Wigglesworth 1999d:165). This conclusion is confirmed in Wigglesworth's combining of

the divine character of Jesus, especially His compassion, with the energising power of God:

I am perceiving by the Spirit of the living God that there is nothing good in me (Rom 7:18); the Spirit moves me to see that in Him there is not only energizing power, but that in the act there is also divine character – the presence of the ideal character that kept Him [Jesus] calm and collected all the time. Within Jesus, there is also compassion, a knowledge of the needy. This is the place for me to reach; yes, I seek that, the character of the Lord (Wigglesworth 1999d:159).

Explaining Luke 7:11–15, Wigglesworth (1999d:165) states, “Jesus had compassion on the widow [from Nain], and His compassion for the widow was greater than death.” On the same page he prays, “May I ‘be found in Him, not having my own righteousness’ (Phil 3:9),” expressing his desire that Jesus’ compassion should become his own, implanted by God as His righteousness. Should this happen, Wigglesworth declares (1999d:165), the thing internally hidden in him “is greater than me, manifesting the power of God. It is not in human nature but in the power of God.”

Divine compassion leads to a sustained or intensive dealing with the sick, and thus manifests the divine long-suffering. This is revealed in an instance recorded by Wigglesworth in which he prayed right through the night for a dying young girl, with glorious results (Wigglesworth 1999c:360). He adds that the quality of long-suffering is a requirement for those who have the gifts of healing (1999b:142). To this truth Wigglesworth showed a remarkable and untiring adherence, and complete sincerity in making every spiritual effort before God for divine healing. He testified that on many occasions his dealings with the sick lasted hours and sometimes even the entire night before healing was achieved. Furthermore, he explained that divine compassion generates sweet, comforting words, which are “the most helpful and the most faith-inspiring” to the sick (Wigglesworth 1999e:251). In similar vein, Wigglesworth (1999c:361) stated,

The man who is persevering with God to be used in healing must be a man of long-suffering. He must always be ready with a word of comfort. If the sick one is in distress and helpless and does not see everything eye to eye with you, you must bear with him. Our Lord Jesus Christ was filled with compassion and lived and moved in a place of long-suffering, and we will have to get into this place if we are to help needy ones.

Elsewhere, Wigglesworth (2000:186) explains that his faith is stimulated by divine compassion, which is worked by the Spirit: “The chief thing in dealing with a person who is sick is to discern his exact condition. As you are ministering under the Spirit’s power, the Lord will let you see just what will be the most helpful and the most faith-inspiring to him.” Divine compassion, for Wigglesworth (2000:186), also works together with the presence of God to accomplish things needed for divine healing:

I have had more revelations of the Lord’s presence when I have ministered to the sick at their bedsides than at any other time. It is as your heart goes out to the needy ones in deep compassion that the Lord manifests His presence. You are able to discern their conditions. It is then that you know you must be filled with the Spirit to deal with the conditions before you.

He makes the further observation that only when one achieves genuine, *divine* compassion will the gifts of the Spirit be activated, and believed that the “gifts of healings” will be effectively exercised only in divine compassion. Wigglesworth’s example and idea are clear from the following statement:

When I was in the plumbing business, I enjoyed praying for the sick. Urgent calls would come, and I would have no time to wash. With my hands all black, I would preach to these sick ones, my heart all aglow with love. Ah, your heart must be in it when you pray for the sick. You have to get right to the bottom of the cancer with a divine compassion, and then you will see the gifts of the Spirit in operation (Wigglesworth 1999c:359–360; 2000:187).

Like Wigglesworth, Lake believed that the significance of divine compassion is shown in the fact that divine love toward the sick is a vital element with which the Spirit of God works to manifest miraculous healing. Divine love toward the sick is the measure of the extent of the touching work of the Spirit for divine healing. In this regard, Lake stated:

Distance makes no difference. The Spirit of God in you will go as far as your love reaches. *Love* is the medium that conveys the Spirit of God to another soul, anywhere on God’s earth. This is what takes place as you pray. The Spirit of God comes upon you and bathes your soul and a shaft of it reaches out and touches that soul over there. If you had an instrument that was

fine enough to photograph spirit, you would discover how this is done (Liardon ed. 1999:414, original emphasis).

According to Lake, Jesus “healed because it was His nature to heal. The multitude surrounded Him. His love gushed forth like an electric billow ... Jesus healed both saint and sinner – to the dismay of His apostles, who had not yet grown to the soul stature of Jesus” (Liardon ed. 1999:489). Throughout his discussion, Lake indicates that Jesus is the same loving One who heals in both the present and future.

Discussion

Both Wigglesworth and Lake emphasised the importance of divine compassion as a prerequisite for a fruitful ministry of divine healing, and agreed that Jesus’ touch for healing is graciously given out of His loving compassion toward the sick.

In listing the factors that significantly awaken and increase the divine anointing and fruitfulness to perform divine healing, Jack Deere (2003:119–131) rightly puts the qualities of divine compassion and mercy toward the sick at the top of the list, followed by or together with the motive to glorify God, faith for divine healing, and standing on God’s promise respectively. Mercy refers to the manifested divine love with regard to sin and its destructive effect. It is clearly manifested in Christ when dealing with the sick, since miraculous healing is intended to be connected to His willingness to forgive their sins (see also James 5:15). After discussing Jesus’ compassionate model of miraculous healing, Deere (1993:119–121) correctly concludes that divine compassion is a determinant for a fruitful ministry of divine healing:

The healing ministry of Jesus was motivated by compassion ... The sheer number of the texts just mentioned [Mat 9:27–31; 14:13–14; 15:22–28, 32; 17:13–14; 20:29–34; Mark 1:41–42; 5:19; 9:22; Luke 7:11–17] demonstrates that God’s compassion and mercy were major factors in the healings of the New Testament ... Jesus ... did not give them [the sick] theological platitudes; he *healed* them. Understanding Christ’s compassion for the sick and hurting has great practical ramifications ... He is in the compassion business. *To the degree that you can enter into his compassion for the sick and for the hurting, you can be a vessel through whom the healing power of Jesus can flow.* If you really want to be used in a healing ministry, *ask your heavenly Father to let you feel his compassion for the hurting.* To argue that Jesus has withdrawn his healing ministry from

the church today is to argue that he has also withdrawn his compassion from the church. But if we believe in a compassionate Savior, we ought to have confidence in his desire to heal in the church today (original emphasis in part).

Conclusions

It is interesting to note that despite the strong rational emphasis previously adopted in reasoning that the church has no specific healing ministry to offer, the lives of Lake and Wigglesworth reveal precisely the opposite. Both found that part of the fruit of the Spirit's dealings with them led to divine compassion towards the sick, and eventually to active healing ministries. To put it differently, it is clear that divine compassion was a very important factor in the healing ministries and in the lives of the two people studied above. However, both noted that, although of prime importance, a genuine compassion toward the sick is valuable for divine healing *only* if it flows from the supernatural source, in other words from genuine faith and genuine love generated by the Holy Spirit. Thus, it must be a divine compassion, not a natural one.⁷

This implies that in order to develop in quality and stature, any ministry of divine healing in the present must show or at least try to be filled with the same kind of loving compassion toward the sick.

What has not been discussed is how this genuine compassion is developed in an individual or in a group of people or in a local church, but this unfortunately falls outside the scope of the present article. Suffice it to say that teaching concerning the need for compassion and prayerful preparation as part of training courses in order to develop the church's healing ministries appears to be essential.

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Endnotes

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- 1 This article is based on a section of a DTh thesis submitted at the University of South Africa (Department of Practical Theology) in June 2007. Prof. JPJ Theron was the supervisor.
- 2 Co-Researcher, Department of Practical Theology, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.
- 2 For a discussion and evaluation of terms such as *spiritual healing*, *divine healing*, *faith-healing*, *miraculous healing* and others often used in this regard, see Susanto (2007:2–7).
- 3 For instance, attempts have been made to exclude divine healing from the Reformed tradition (Jensen 1979:131–144). Jonathan Edwards (Pauw ed. 2002: 256; cf. Murray 1987: 242–243) states that there are no more extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and no need for them. Similarly, B B Warfield (1976:6–8), a Princeton Reformed theologian, argues that the sole purpose of miracles was to certify the New Testament apostles and their doctrine; therefore miraculous gifts, including divine healing, were discontinued with the establishment of the New Testament and the demise of the apostles (see Ruthven 1993:111; Edmunds and Scorer 1956:36–39). Consequently, he believes that the majority of churches in the apostolic age were miracle-working (Warfield 1967:ch. 1; 1976:5; cf. Packer 1990:220), and claims that theologians of the post-Reformation period were Cessationists (Warfield 1976:6–9).
While rightly emphasising the sufficiency of the Scripture and its supreme authority and proclamation, a large number in the Reformed tradition are suspiciously cautious about the role of miracles of healing in bringing people to faith and conversion (Pursey 2001:99–100). G H Kersten rejects any need for miracles in bringing people to faith and repentance. When explaining the physical healing of the ten lepers, he reduces “miraculous faith” required for performing any miracle to “*only a strong conviction in themselves that Christ was able to perform the miracle of healing in them [the nine lepers]. They did not seek Him for their salvation, nor did they give Him the honor that was due to Him ...* Regardless of how much it [miraculous faith related to performing any miracle] may draw the attention of the world, in essence it is the *least of the various types of faith* we have discussed [i.e. historical faith, temporary faith, saving faith, and miraculous faith]. *It does not even direct men to the Word of God as the revelation given for the salvation of sinners*” (Kersten 1983:399) (my emphasis).
- 4 For the importance of physical healing, gifts of healing, healing movements and ministers of healing in Pentecostal circles see Burgess and McGee (1988:350–353, 353–374). In fact, it can be said that the development of divine healing was one of the hallmarks of early Pentecostalism. Hollenweger (1997:18–19) lists a new understanding of the relationship between body and mind manifested by healing through prayer as one of the main features of the African American spirituality that became part of Pentecostalism. It is interesting to note that not all Pentecostal healing revivals can be traced to the Azusa revival of 1906. In many other parts of the world the same phenomena occurred almost simultaneously, or even before Azusa Street (Anderson 2005:15–17).
- 5 In a different place, when his theology manifested a growing emphasis on divine love, Lake (Liardon ed. 1999: 376; cf. Copeland ed. 1994: 488. See also Lindsay ed. 2003a:35) predicted a future in which the mighty manifestation of God in performing miracles – including divine healing – will be joined with tender love toward people: “Now beloved, I can see as my spirit discerns the future and reaches out to touch the heart of mankind, and the desire of God that there is coming from heaven a new manifestation of the Holy Ghost in power and that new manifestation will be in sweetness, in love, in tenderness, in the power of the Spirit, beyond anything your heart or mine ever saw. The very lightning of God will flash through men’s souls. The sons of God will meet the sons of darkness and prevail.”
- 6 Note Wigglesworth’s observation that “Our Lord Jesus would never have accomplished His great plan in this world except that He was so full of love for His Father, and love for us, that love never failed to accomplish its purpose. It worked in Him and through Him by the power of the Father’s love in Him” (Wigglesworth 1999e:179).