

To be filled with the Spirit
Speaking in tongues
Healings

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Be Filled with the Spirit.....	3
The Scriptures are perfect.....	4
Filled with the Spirit.....	5
A few points to highlight.....	8
Being full of the Holy Spirit.....	12
The anointing and the seal with the Holy Spirit.....	13
The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers.....	15
Chapter 2: Speaking in Tongues.....	16
Regarding Mark 16.....	17
The first time speaking in tongues took place.....	20
Tongues (languages or the organs).....	21
Testimony.....	24
Other passages in Acts.....	26
In Corinth.....	26
Conclusion.....	29
Caution is required.....	30
Examples from history.....	31
Satan can also use believers.....	32
Women often play a leading role.....	32
Chapter 3: Signs and Miracles.....	34
The signs.....	34
The early centuries.....	35
The first signs.....	35
Why does this begin with Moses?.....	37
At the beginning.....	38
Joshua, Elijah, Elisha.....	38
In the Gospels.....	40
After the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.....	42
In the Book of Acts.....	43
In the Epistles.....	49
In a negative sense.....	50
Conclusion.....	52

The miracles recorded in history.....	53
Chapter 4: Healings.....	56
The enemy wants to separate us from the Lord.....	56
The sufferings of believers.....	57
Trials.....	58
Discipline.....	59
My grace suffices thee.....	61
Sick believers.....	61
The healing of unbelievers.....	63
How does God reveal Himself?.....	64
The signs.....	64
The grace of God came.....	65
The curse is removed.....	67
The end times.....	70
The desire of the faithful.....	71
Chapter 5: Does atonement include the healing of the body?.....	73
Other arguments.....	76
Yet another erroneous explanation.....	78
Things not based on Scripture.....	81
It is not found in the Epistle to the Romans.....	82
By grace alone.....	83
The consequences.....	85
The consequences of sin.....	86
Our bodies will be transformed.....	87
The prophecy.....	90
Final remark.....	92

Remark:

The quotes out of the Bible are taken from the J.N. Darby translation, which is closest one to the original.

Chapter 1: Be Filled with the Spirit

Much has been said in recent years about being filled with the Holy Spirit, and many things are associated with this concept. To judge the validity of what is put forward, we have an infallible touchstone: the Word of God. Scripture describes the Jews of Berea as more noble than those of Thessalonica, because not only did they receive Paul's message with great eagerness, but they also examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. And in Galatians 1:8, the same apostle says: *"But if even we or an angel out of heaven announce as glad tidings to you anything besides what we have announced as glad tidings to you, let him be accursed"*.

How necessary it is, then, for us—who live in an age when many false prophets have gone out into the world (1*) and when many professing Christians turn a deaf ear to the truth and turn to fables (2*)—that we should carefully test, in the light of God's word, everything that is presented to us. *"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And it is not wonderful, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also transform themselves as minis-*

ters of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:13–15).

(1) “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, if they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).*

(2) “For the time shall be when they will not bear sound teaching; but according to their own lusts will heap up to themselves teachers, having an itching ear; and they will turn away their ear from the truth, and will have turned aside to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3–4).*

The Scriptures are perfect

I would first like to highlight a few points. The Bible is the Word of God. Holy men of God wrote it, moved by the Holy Spirit. Thus it is the Holy Spirit who is in reality the author of the entire Bible. And this means that the Word is perfect. Everything we need to know is found there. By reading it carefully and comparing the passages with one another, we shall find that everything is set out there in sufficiently clear terms.

It also follows that every word in Scripture has a meaning, given by Scripture itself. Two or more words never have the same meaning. When we speak or write, we may sometimes choose inappropriate words, but the Word of God never does. If it uses a different word, it is because that word also has a different meaning. These things seem obvious to anyone who has studied

this subject. Yet little account is taken of them, and as a result, a distorted picture of God's thoughts is sometimes presented.

Filled with the Spirit

The phrase 'filled with the Spirit' appears three times in the Gospels, six times in the Acts of the Apostles and once in the Epistles. Furthermore, we find in Exodus 31:3 and 35:31 (1*) that Bezaleel is filled with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, understanding and knowledge, for all kinds of work, for devising plans, for carrying them out, etc. ... In Exodus 28:3 (2*), all those whom God has filled with the Spirit of wisdom are to make the holy priestly garments for Aaron. And of Joshua it is said that he is filled with the Spirit of wisdom.

(1*) *"See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in every work"* (Exodus 31:2–3).

"And Moses said to the children of Israel, See, Jehovah has called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and he has filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship" (Exodus 35:30–31).

(2*) *"Thou shalt speak with all [that are] wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to hallow him, that he may serve me as priest"* (Exodus 28:3).

In Luke 1:15, it is said of John the Baptist that he will be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (1*), "and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God". In verses 41 and 67, Elizabeth and Zechariah are filled with the Holy Spirit (2*), to bear witness. In Acts 2:4, the Holy Spirit is poured out and the disciples are all filled with the Holy Spirit (3*). The result is that they bear powerful witness, and three thousand souls, who were to be saved, are added.

(1*) *"For he shall be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb"* (Luke 1:15).

(2*) *"And it came to pass, as Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit"* (Luke 1:41).

"Zacharias his father was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied" (Luke 1:67).

(3*) *"They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth"* (Acts 2:4).

In Acts 4:8 (1*), Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, gives a powerful testimony before the Sanhedrin, and after the believers' prayer, they are all filled with the Holy Spirit, and God enables them to speak with great boldness (2*).

(1*) *"Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, Rulers of the people and elders of Israel ..."* (Acts 4:8).

(2*) *“When they had prayed, the place in which they were assembled shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).*

In Acts 9, God tells Ananias to go and find Saul, because Saul is destined to become a great servant (1*). Ananias goes and says: *“Saul, brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus that appeared to thee in the way in which thou camest, that thou mightest see, and be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 9:17).* In chapter 13, verse 9, it is said that Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, rendered the opposition of Elymas the sorcerer ineffective (2*). Then in the final verses, which describe the hostility towards the gospel, it is said in verse 52: *“And the disciples were filled with joy and [the] Holy Spirit”.*

(1*) *“The Lord said to him [= Ananias], ‘Go, for this man is an elect vessel to me, to bear my name before both nations and kings and the sons of Israel’” (Acts 9:15).*

(2*) *“Saul, who also is Paul, filled with the] Holy Spirit, fixing his eyes upon him [= Elymas], said, O full of all deceit and all craft: son of the devil, enemy of all righteousness; wilt thou not cease perverting the right paths of the Lord? And now behold, the Lord’s hand is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell upon him a mist and darkness; and going about he sought persons who should lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul, seeing what had happened, believed, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord” (Acts 13:9-12).*

We are taught in Ephesians 5:3–21(*), how believers are to conduct themselves among the children of disobedience. In this

context, we read: “*And be not drunk with wine, in which is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit*” (Ephesians 5:18).

(*) We ask the reader to open their Bible and read this passage.
This passage is too long to reproduce here.

These are all the passages in Scripture where there is mention of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

A few points to highlight

When we read these passages, several things strike us immediately:

1. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not the same as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Holy Spirit dwells in the believer only after the day of Pentecost (1*). This is expressly stated in John 14:16–18, 26 (2*) and in other passages. This is also evident, for example, from the fact that, according to Ephesians 1:13–14 (3*) and 2 Corinthians 1:22 (4*), the Holy Spirit only comes to dwell in someone after they have believed the gospel, whereas John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb. And in Acts 4:31 (5*), all are filled with the Holy Spirit, even though in Acts 2 they had already received the Holy Spirit and were then filled with the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 1:13, the Ephesians received the Holy Spirit (3*),

and in chapter 5:18, it is said that they must be filled with the Spirit (6*). According to other translations, this is presented as a responsibility to be filled with the Spirit.

(1*) Acts 2. We ask the reader to look up this chapter in their Bible. The passage is too long to reproduce here.

(2*) *“I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see him nor know him; but ye know him, for he abides with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you”* (John 14:16–18).

“The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and will bring to your remembrance all the things which I have said to you” (John 14:26).

(3*) *“In whom [= Christ] ye also have trusted, having heard the word of the truth, the glad tidings of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is [the] earnest of our inheritance to the redemption of the acquired possession to the praise of his glory”* (Ephesians 1:13–14).

(4*) *“Now ... is God, who also has sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts”* (2 Corinthians 1:22).

(*5) *“When they had prayed, the place in which they were assembled shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the word of God with boldness”* (Acts 4:31).

(*6) *“Be not drunk with wine, in which is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit”* (Ephesians 5:18).

2. From the above, it is clear that being filled with the Holy Spirit is not always a permanent state, but usually a tem-

porary one, although John the Baptist may have been an exception to this, because of his exceptional position.

3. It is also clear from the passages of Scripture quoted that being filled with the Holy Spirit is given for the Lord's work and to bear witness to Him.
4. Scripture does not link being filled with the Holy Spirit to performing miracles and signs, nor to speaking in foreign tongues. In none of the passages in the Old and New Testaments where being filled with the Holy Spirit is mentioned are signs and wonders referred to. We find an exception in Acts 2:4 (1*), where 'other tongues' are mentioned, and in Acts 13:9 (2*), where Elymas is struck blind (3*). From the three chapters of Acts where speaking in foreign tongues is mentioned (4*), it is clear that speaking in tongues is linked to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit [see also 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 (5*)]. From the passages in the Gospels where signs are mentioned, and the seventeen passages in Acts where we find signs, it is clear that Scripture in no way links signs to being filled with the Holy Spirit, although it is stated in only one instance that the person performing a sign was filled with the Holy Spirit. It is noteworthy that the believers in prayer in Acts 4:21–31 (6*) ask for boldness to

proclaim the Word, so that healings, signs and miracles may take place. God grants them the boldness they asked for, but not by means of signs and the like. He fills them with the Holy Spirit, and then they proclaim the Word of God with great boldness.

(1*) *“They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth” (Acts 2:4).*

(2*) *“Saul, who also is Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixing his eyes upon him ...” (Acts 13:9).*

(3*) We ask the readers to look up Acts 13:4–12 in their Bible. The text is too long to reproduce here.

(4*) *“They were all filled with [the] Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth ... and how do we hear them each in our own dialect in which we have been born ... Cretans and Arabians, we hear them speaking in our own tongues the great things of God” (Acts 2:4, 8, 11).*

“Upon the nations also the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out: for they heard them speaking with tongues and magnifying God” (Acts 10:45–46).

“Paul having laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:6).

(5*) We ask the reader to consult 1 Corinthians 12 & 13 in their Bible. The text is too long to reproduce here.

(6*) We ask the readers to read Acts 4:21–31 in their Bible, as the text is too long to reproduce in full. *“Now, Lord, look upon their threatenings, and give to thy bondmen with all boldness to speak thy word, in that thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and that signs and won-*

ders take place through the name of thy holy servant Jesus” (Acts 4:29–30).

5. Nowhere is it said of anyone that they were filled with the Holy Spirit after hands were laid on them, except in Acts 9:17 (*). There, Ananias lays his hands on Saul and says that God has sent him, so that Saul might be filled with the Holy Spirit. But Scripture does not say that Saul was filled at that moment, let alone that this took place through the laying on of hands. In all other passages, this could not have taken place through the laying on of hands.

(*) *“Ananias went and entered into the house; and laying his hands upon him he said, Saul, brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus that appeared to thee in the way in which thou camest, that thou mightest see, and be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 9:17).*

Being full of the Holy Spirit

Apart from being ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’, there is also mention of being ‘full of the Holy Spirit’. This is said only of the Lord Jesus (1*), Stephen (2*) and Barnabas (3*). When we read these passages, we see that this is not so much about the power to carry out ministry, but rather about the practical state in which the person finds themselves. The believer is in a state where the Holy Spirit is in control of their entire life and in which He can carry out His ministry without hindrance. In the

case of both Stephen and Barnabas, being ‘full of the Spirit’ goes hand in hand with being ‘full of faith’. But nowhere is being ‘full of the Holy Spirit’ linked to speaking in tongues or to performing signs or miracles.

(1*) *“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness”* (Luke 4:1).

(2*) *“They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and [the] Holy Spirit”* (Acts 6:5)

“Being full of the Holy Spirit, having fixed his eyes on heaven, he [= Stephen] saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55).

(3*) *“He [= Barnabas] was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith”* (Acts 11:24).

The anointing and the seal with the Holy Spirit

Scripture also speaks of the anointing and the seal with the Holy Spirit. The term ‘anointing’ is found only in 2 Corinthians 1:21 and 1 John 2:20, 27 (1*). From these verses, it is clear that this refers to being in God’s presence, and enables one to discern what is not of Him [compare Revelation 3:18 (2*)]. The seal (3*) is mentioned only in 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30 (4*). These three passages relate to the certainty of later receiving the inheritance. God has already set His seal upon us and has thus given us the assurance that we belong to Him [compare Revelation 7:3 (5*)]. Both the anointing and the seal-

ing apply to all believers, and in 2 Corinthians 1:21–22 (6*), these two things are seen as one in connection with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer.

(1*) *“He that establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God”* (2 Corinthians 1:21).

“Ye have the unction from the holy one, and ye know all things”
(1 John 2:20).

“The unction which ye have received from him abides in you” (1 John 2:27).

(2*) *“I counsel thee to buy of me ... eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see”* (Revelation 3:18).

(3*) A seal is the impression made by an official stamp, also known as a seal, which authenticates the official validity of the document on which it is affixed.

(4*) *“Who [= Christ] also has sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts”* (2 Corinthians 1:22).

“Having heard the word of the truth, the glad tidings of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13).

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which ye have been sealed for the]day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).

(5*) *“Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, until we shall have sealed the bondmen of our God upon their forehead”*
(Revelation 7:3).

(6*) *“Now he that establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God, who also has sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts”* (2 Corinthians 1:21–22).

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers

Finally, it is clear from Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13 (*) and other passages that, in the present age, the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer. Praying to receive the Holy Spirit is therefore a sign of unbelief and ignorance.

(*) *“If the Spirit of him that has raised up Jesus from among the dead dwell in you, he that has raised up Christ from among the dead shall quicken your mortal bodies also on account of his Spirit which dwells in you”* (Romans 8:11).

“Do ye not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God?” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

“Who [= God] also has sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Corinthians 1:22).

“The glad tidings of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13).

Chapter 2: Speaking in Tongues

Speaking in other languages without having learnt them is not found in the Old Testament. We also find only one prophecy on this subject there (1*). Had this prophecy not been expressly quoted in 1 Corinthians 14:21 (2*) and applied to speaking in tongues, we would probably not have applied it in this sense. It is the context that clarifies its meaning. It is because the priests and prophets in Israel no longer regard true knowledge and have lost their understanding (3*), that God will speak to them through men in an incomprehensible language and a foreign accent. It is their enemies who will execute judgement upon them. This passage is used by the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 14 to show clearly that tongues are a sign for unbelievers, and not for believers.

(1*) *“With stammering lips and a strange tongue will he speak to this people; to whom he said, This is the rest: cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing. But they would not hear. And the word of Jehovah was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little: that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken”* (Isaiah 28:11–13).

(2*) *“It is written in the law, ‘By people of other tongues, and by strange lips, will I speak to this people; and neither thus will they hear me, saith the Lord’”* (1 Corinthians 14:21).

(3*) *“But these also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are they gone astray. The priest and the prophet have*

erred through strong drink; they are overpowered by wine, they are gone astray through strong drink; they have erred in vision, they have stumbled in judgment. For all tables are full of filthy vomit, so that there is no more place. Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand the report? Them that are weaned from the milk, withdrawn from the breasts? For [it is] precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little. ...”
(Isaiah 28:7–10).

Regarding Mark 16

Nor do we find speaking in tongues in the Gospels, except on a single occasion, as a prophecy uttered by the Lord Jesus in Mark 16:17 (*).

(*) *“These signs shall follow those that have believed: in my name they shall cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues”* (Mark 16:17).

As this verse is so often cited as proof whenever the subject of speaking in tongues is raised, I wish to stay on it a little longer. In verse 14 (1*), the Lord comes to the eleven and rebukes them for their unbelief and the hardness of their hearts. Then, in verse 15 (2*), He entrusts them with the mission to preach the gospel to all creation, and in verse 16 (3*) He tells them what the consequences of this preaching will be for those who hear it. In verse 17 (4*), He then tells them (the eleven) that those who believe will be accompanied by signs. In verse 20 (5*), they set out, and

the Lord fulfils His promise and confirms the Word through the signs that accompany it.

- (1*) *“Afterwards as they lay at table he was manifested to the eleven, and reproached them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen him risen” (Mark 16:14).*
- (2*) *“And he said to them, Go into all the world, and preach the glad tidings to all the creation” (Mark 16:15).*
- (3*) *“He that believes and is baptised shall be saved, and he that disbelieves shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16).*
- (4*) *“And these signs shall follow those that have believed: in my name they shall cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues” (Mark 16:17).*
- (5*) *“And they [= the eleven], going forth, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs following upon it” (Mark 16:20).*

We see, therefore:

1. That the signs are given only as confirmation of the word (*).

(*) Compare: *“And when he was in Jerusalem, at the pas-sover, at the feast, many believed on his name, beholding his signs which he wrought. But Jesus himself did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men, and that he had not need that any should testify of man, for him-self knew what was in man” (John 2:23–25).*

2. It is not stated that signs will accompany all believers.
3. The promise is given directly to the eleven alone, and verse 20 (Mark 16) says that, when this Gospel was written,

the promise had already been fulfilled. This is in accordance with Hebrews 2:3–4, where it is written: “*so great salvation, which, having had its commencement in being spoken of by the Lord, has been confirmed to us by those who have heard; God bearing, besides, witness with them to it, both by signs and wonders, and various acts of power, and distributions of the Holy Spirit, according to his will*”.

We also find in 2 Corinthians 12:12 (1*) confirmation that the signs were proof of the apostleship. Furthermore, an apostle had to have seen the Lord (2*).

(1*) *“The signs indeed of the apostle were wrought among you in all endurance, signs, and wonders, and works of power”* (2 Corinthians 12:12).

(2*) *“It is necessary therefore, that of the men who have assembled with us all the time in which the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day in which he was taken up from us, one of these should be a witness with us of his resurrection.*

And they appointed two, Joseph, who was called Barsabas, who had been surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou Lord, knower of the hearts of all, shew which one of these two thou hast chosen, to receive the lot of this service and apostleship, from which Judas transgressing fell to go to his own place. And they gave lots on them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:21–26).

“Am I not free? am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?” (1 Corinthians 9:1).

“Last of all, as to an abortion, he appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called apostle, because I have persecuted the assembly of God” (1 Corinthians 15:8–9).

The first time speaking in tongues took place

It is in Acts 2 that we first encounter speaking in tongues (1*). The Holy Spirit comes to dwell on earth and baptise believers into one body; until then, they had been, to a certain extent, independent of one another. They thus form this one Body, the Church or Assembly (2*). Until that day, the Holy Spirit had indeed been at work on earth, but He had never dwelt there, except in the Lord Jesus (3*). Now He came to earth to dwell in the Church or Assembly, which the Lord Jesus had formed through His death. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit also came to dwell in each believer individually.

(1*) The full text is too long to be reproduced here; we ask the reader to consult their Bible. We shall quote only: *“They were all filled with [the] Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth” (Acts 2:4).*

(2*) *“For also in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free, and have all been given to drink of one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13).*

(3*) *“He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives not the Spirit by measure” (John 3:34).*

“In him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell”
(Colossians 1:19)

Would this powerful event — that God, the Holy Spirit, came to dwell on earth — go unnoticed? Just as the coming of God the Son to earth was accompanied by signs (the multitude of angels in the land of Bethlehem and the star in the East), so too was the coming of the Holy Spirit. Here again, in Acts 2, the signs are not visible to the whole world, but only to a very small group of people. Yet the consequences of this momentous event become visible to anyone who is willing to be convinced (*).

(*) *“If any one desire to practise his will [= God’s will], he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is of God, or that I speak from myself”* (John 7:17).

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit does not come in the form of a dove. This could only happen to the Lord Jesus, the only pure, spotless Man, Who walked His path with gentleness and righteousness. Here, the emphasis is on the testimony: tongues like fire, which were divided (*).

(*) *“And there appeared to them parted tongues, as of fire, and it sat upon each one of them”* (Acts 2:3).

Tongues (languages or the organs)

I would like to point out that the Greek word “glossa”, used here, means both tongue (the organ) and language. For example, when

the Epistle of James refers to the tongue (the organ), this is the word used. But it is also used when referring to a language, for example in 1 Corinthians 13:1: *“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels”* and in Revelation 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15: *“Every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation”* etc. ...

However, this word is used in Acts 2:3 (*“parted tongues as of fire”*), but also in verse 4 (*“they began to speak with other tongues”*), and in verse 11, where the crowd of Jews living abroad says: *“We hear them speaking in our own tongues the great things of God”*. This word “glossa” is subsequently used wherever speaking in tongues is mentioned (*).

(*) *“They heard them speaking with tongues and magnifying God”*(Acts 10:46).

“Paul having laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:6)

“To another operations of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discerning of spirits; and to a different one kinds of tongues; and to another interpretation of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:10).

“God has set certain in the assembly: first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers; then miraculous powers; then gifts of healings; helps; governments; kinds of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:28).

“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1).

“For he that speaks with a tongue does not speak to men but to God: for no one hears; but in spirit he speaks mysteries” (1 Corinthians 14:2).

“He that speaks with a tongue edifies himself; but he that prophesies edifies the assembly. Now I desire that ye should all speak with tongues, but rather that ye should prophesy. But greater is he that prophesies than he that speaks with tongues, unless he interpret, that the assembly may receive edification. And now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you ... Thus also ye with the tongue, unless ye give a distinct speech, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye will be speaking to the air ... If therefore I do not know the power of the sound, I shall be to him that speaks a barbarian, and he that speaks a barbarian for me. Thus ye also, since ye are desirous of spirits, seek that ye may abound for the edification of the assembly. Wherefore let him that speaks with a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray with a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray also with the understanding; I will sing with the spirit, but I will sing also with the understanding. Since otherwise, if thou blessest with the spirit, how shall he who fills the place of the simple Christian say Amen, at thy giving of thanks, since he does not know what thou sayest? ... I thank God I speak in a tongue more than all of you: but in the assembly I desire to speak five words with my understanding, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue” (1 Corinthians 14:4-1).

Furthermore, the Greek word “*dialektos*” (dialect) also appears, but only in a few passages of the Book of Acts (*).

(*) *“That that field was called in their own dialect Aceldama; that is, field of blood” (Acts 1:19).*

“We hear them each in our own dialect in which we have been born” (Acts 2:8).

“Paul, standing on the stairs, beckoned with his hand to the people; and a great silence having been made, he addressed them in the Hebrew tongue” (Acts 21:40).

“And hearing that he addressed them in the Hebrew tongue, they kept the more quiet” (Acts 22:2).

“I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew tongue, ‘Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?’” (Acts 26:14).

Testimony

From the above, we see that the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in Acts 2 in the form of a testimony: *“parted tongues as of fire”*. It is not a single language, but many. And they were divided in all directions. Thus, the testimony will no longer be limited to a single language, as was the case before the day of Pentecost (*), but it will go out to many peoples. The result is that they speak in other languages, and all the Jews living abroad hear them speaking in their own language of the great and magnificent works of God.

(*) See, for example: *“These twelve Jesus sent out when he had charged them, saying, ‘Go not off into the way of the nations, and into a city of Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel’” (Matthew 10:5–6).*

In light of these considerations, the purpose of speaking in tongues becomes clear. It is a sign that the good news of God’s

grace is now crossing the borders of Israel and extending to all peoples, nations and languages. Thus the Holy Spirit provides a means to remove the obstacle caused by the confusion of tongues at Babel (1*), in order to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples (2*). The disciples, who were uneducated and ignorant men (3*), speak of God to people speaking foreign languages, in their own languages, even though they had never learnt them. The supernatural and divine nature of their message is thus demonstrated. That is why the listeners, convinced, listen attentively when Peter speaks to them, and three thousand souls are converted.

(1*) *“And the whole earth had one language, and the same words ... they said, Come on, let us build ourselves a city and a tower, the top of which may reach to the heavens ... And Jehovah came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men built. And Jehovah said, Behold, the people is one, and have all one language; and this have they begun to do. And now will they be hindered in nothing that they meditate doing. Come, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another`s speech. And Jehovah scattered them thence over the face of the whole earth ... Therefore was its name called Babel; because Jehovah there confounded the language of the whole earth. And Jehovah scattered them thence over the face of the whole earth”* (Genesis 11:1–9).

(2*) *“All were amazed and wondered, saying, Behold, are not all these who are speaking Galilaeans? and how do we hear them each in our own dialect in which we have been born”* (Acts 2:7–8).

(3*) *“But seeing the boldness of Peter and John, and perceiving that they were unlettered and uninstructed men, they wondered; and they recognised them that they were with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).*

Other passages in Acts

As we have seen, in Acts, apart from chapter 2, we find speaking in tongues only in one verse of chapter 10 (1*) and in another in chapter 19 (2*). In chapter 10, it concerns Gentiles (the nations), and in chapter 19, when Jewish believers - who are not yet Christians but disciples of John the Baptist - are brought into the Church. The three instances in Acts therefore clearly bear the mark of the early Church. And in all three cases, they concern entire groups of people who all speak in tongues and who receive this gift without having asked for it.

(1*) *“They heard them speaking with tongues and magnifying God” (Acts 10:46).*

(2*) *“Paul having laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:6).*

In Corinth

In the Epistles, we find speaking in tongues only in 1 Corinthians 12–14. There we find the following important points:

1. All manifestations of the Spirit, including speaking in tongues, were given “for the profit” (*).

(*) *“To each the manifestation of the Spirit is given for profit” (1 Corinthians 12:7).*

2. Not everyone spoke in tongues, but the Spirit gave this to some [12:8–11, 28–30] (*).

(*) *“To one, by the Spirit, is given [the] word of wisdom; and to another [the] word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit; and to a different one faith, in the power of the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healing in [the power of] the same Spirit; and to another operations of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discerning of spirits; and to a different one kinds of tongues; and to another interpretation of tongues. But all these things operates the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each in particular according as he pleases” (1 Corinthians 12:8–11).*

“God has set certain in the assembly: first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers; then miraculous powers; then gifts of healings; helps; governments; kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? Are all teachers? are all in possession of miraculous powers? have all gifts of healings? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?” (1 Corinthians 12:28–30).

3. In the order given by the Word of God, speaking in tongues is at the very bottom (ch. 12 vv. 8–10 & vv. 28–30, already quoted in the previous point). That this is indeed a ranking is clear from reading these passages. In both verse 28 and verse 29, the apostles are named first.
4. Nowhere does it appear that speaking in tongues was to be permanent, for the apostles, who are named first, existed

only at the beginning. According to 1 Corinthians 9:1 (1*) [see also Acts 1:21–22 (2*)], it was necessary for an apostle to have seen the Lord. Therefore, there could be no more new apostles. Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 3 (3*) and Ephesians 2 (4*) and 3 (5*) state that the apostles laid the foundation of the Church. Yet it is clear that this occurred only once, at the beginning.

(1*) *“Am I not free? am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?”*
(1 Corinthians 9:1).

(2*) *“It is necessary therefore, that of the men who have assembled with us all the time in which the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day in which he was taken up from us, one of these should be a witness with us of his resurrection”*(Acts 1:21–22).

(3*) *“According to the grace of God which has been given to me, as a wise architect, I have laid the foundation”* (1 Corinthians 3:10)

(4*) *“Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone”*
(Ephesians 2:20).

(5*) *“... as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the power of the Spirit”* (Ephesians 3:5).

5. The gift of tongues was not given to be exercised in the assembly, but as a sign to unbelievers (1*). Nor was it for unbelievers in a way that they cannot understand (2*). But

if they can understand, it is truly a sign of God's power. This is therefore entirely consistent with what we find in Acts 2.

(1*) *"But in the assembly I desire to speak five words with my understanding, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.*

Brethren, be not children in your minds, but in malice be babes; but in your minds be grown men. It is written in the law, By people of other tongues, and by strange lips, will I speak to this people; and neither thus will they hear me, saith the Lord. So that tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy, not to unbelievers, but to those who believe. If therefore the whole assembly come together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and simple persons]enter in, or unbelievers, will not they say ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and some unbeliever or simple person come in, he is convicted of all, he is judged of all; the secrets of his heart are manifested; and thus, falling upon his face, he will do homage to God, reporting that God is indeed amongst you" (1 Corinthians 14:19–25).

(2*) *"If therefore the whole assembly come together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and simple persons enter in, or unbelievers, will not they say ye are mad?" (1 Corinthians 14:23).*

Conclusion

- a. The forecast of speaking in tongues is found only in Mark 16. This gift was given solely to the apostles, for the purpose of confirming the preached Word of the Gospel.

- b. We find speaking in tongues only in Acts 2, 10 and 19, and it is clearly in connection with the early days of the Church that it is mentioned.
- c. Subsequently, it is only in 1 Corinthians 12–14 that it is mentioned again, and this is with a view to correcting its excesses.
- d. Both Acts and 1 Corinthians show that existing languages were spoken and that this gift was not given to be exercised in the assembly, although it was tolerated to a certain extent, but only on condition that they were interpreted.
- e. That speaking in tongues is independent of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Caution is required

Since everything in Scripture indicates that the gift of tongues is linked to the early days of the Church, it is essential to be very cautious and to examine all manifestations carefully in the light of God's Word. All the more so since Scripture expressly tells us that the devil and his angels disguise themselves as angels of light. And also that signs, wonders and even prophecy can come from the devil (*).

(*) *“Whose [= the man of sin] coming is according to the working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood”* (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

“I will go forth, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt entice him, and also succeed: go forth, and do so” (2 Chronicles 18:21).

“A certain female slave, having a spirit of Python, met us, who brought much profit to her masters by prophesying” (Acts 16:16).

Etc.

Examples from history

This is also explicitly confirmed by history. Speaking in unlearned tongues is also found in the pagan world. The pagan philosopher Plato, who lived some four hundred years before Christ, wrote that certain people did not speak their own language or dialect, but that of the demons who possessed them (*). Virgil also refers to this phenomenon. The Anabaptists during the Reformation, who lived in great immorality and other evils, spoke in tongues. Irving (c. 1830), who claimed that the Lord Jesus had a sinful nature, spoke in tongues. Mormons profess to speak in tongues.

(*) Clement of Alexandria, First Homily, p. 140, Sythoff edition, 1914.

Satan can also use believers

When we examine these things, let us remember that Satan not only disguises himself as an angel of light, but also has his works carried out— often mixed with good things — by true believers (*). The good things that are sometimes found in a movement do not, however, make that movement as a whole good. Yes, if there are true believers within it, not everything can be false. But the question is not whether everything is false, but whether the whole is in accordance with Scripture.

(*) *“From that time Jesus began to shew to his disciples that he must go away to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised. And Peter taking him to him began to rebuke him, saying, God be favourable to thee, Lord; this shall in no wise be unto thee. But turning round, he said to Peter, Get away behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me, for thy mind is not on the things that are of God, but on the things that are of men”*
(Matthew 16:21–23).

Women often play a leading role

It is striking, for example, that although speaking in tongues is not openly taught, it is nevertheless a practical manifestation that characterises several groups. Wherever speaking in tongues is emphasised, women become the main leaders, and as a result, 1 Timothy 2:11–15 is completely ignored (*). This is a well-known

phenomenon in all evil and non-Christian groups. Consider, for instance, the Church of Christ, Scientist (Mrs Eddy), the Theosophists (Mrs Blavatsky, then Annie Besant), the Seventh-day Adventists (Mrs White), etc. It is well known that amongst spiritualists, for every male medium, there are at least a dozen female mediums.

(*) *“Let a woman learn in quietness in all subjection; but I do not suffer a woman to teach nor to exercise authority over man, but to be in quietness; for Adam was formed first, then Eve: and Adam was not deceived; but the woman, having been deceived, was in transgression. But she shall be preserved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and love and holiness with discretion”* (1 Timothy 2:11–15).

Chapter 3: Signs and Miracles

There is a difference between a sign and a miracle. A sign is always a miracle, but not every miracle is a sign. Is the birth of a baby not a miracle? Is the human body with all its organs not a miracle? Is all of nature and everything that happens within it not a miracle? Is not the new birth of a person an even greater miracle? These miracles we have just mentioned occur so frequently that we have become accustomed to them and no longer consider them to be miracles. Generally speaking, we only consider as miracles those things that happen rarely and which, as a result, stand out from what we are used to, and from the way in which God usually acts. Ever since man was created, he has been able to witness miracles and will continue to do so for all eternity. For God is sovereign in His omnipotence, and if He so wills, He may deviate from what He Himself has established as custom or natural law.

The signs

Signs, however, presuppose the presence of sin and the fact that people do not believe what God says, or indeed do not believe in Him at all. A sign is a miracle that God performs to show that He is indeed there, standing above all things. Thus, there will be

no more signs in eternity, for the simple reason that there is no longer any unbelief there.

In this booklet, we wish to confine ourselves to the signs and miracles that God has performed through human beings.

The early centuries

In the first two thousand five hundred years after creation, we find no signs performed by a man. Were there then no believers or servants of God during all that time? Oh, certainly there were. Let us only think of a man like Enoch, of whom the Word of God says that he walked with God and was taken up by God. Let us also think of Noah, who walked with God and who, in the Word of God, is called a preacher of righteousness. And of Abraham, the father of all believers. Is there anyone in the Old Testament greater and more faithful than Abraham? And so we could name many more believers. Yet these men left no trace.

The first signs

It is at the beginning of the Exodus, in connection with Moses, that we find the first signs. When God sent Moses to deliver Israel, He knew that Pharaoh would not listen to him. That is why God would strike *“Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in*

the midst thereof; and after that he will let you go” (Exodus 3:20). And when Moses feared that even the elders of Israel would not believe him, God also gave signs, so that through them they might be convinced that Moses was truly sent by the Lord. ()*

() “And Moses answered and said, But behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, Jehovah has not appeared to thee. And Jehovah said to him, What is that in thy hand? And he said, A staff. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And Jehovah said to Moses, Stretch out thy hand and take it by the tail - and he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand - that they may believe that Jehovah, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.*

And Jehovah said moreover to him, Put now thy hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom, and took it out, and behold, his hand was leprous, as snow. And he said, Put thy hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again, and took it out of his bosom, and behold, it was turned again as his flesh. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the other sign. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also those two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it on the dry land; and the water that thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land” (Exodus 4:1–9).

From these passages, we see that signs were given:

1. As a judgement on the unbelief.

2. As proof that the one performing the sign truly has a special mission from God.

Why does this begin with Moses?

What set Moses apart from Abraham, Noah and others? Was it because he performed miracles and they did not? Did he have more faith than the others? If we read Exodus 4 (1*), we see that this was not the case. The faith of Abraham and Noah was far greater than that of Moses. And it was not only Moses, but Noah too, who announced the judgement and showed the way to escape it. Similarly, it is not only in Moses, but also in Abraham, that we find the beginning of a new era in God's dealings with the earth. What is the distinctive feature that sets Moses apart from the others? It is not merely the fact that he received revelation concerning new things, and that he was chosen by God to usher in the beginning of a new dispensation (2*). This was also the case with Noah and Abraham. But he received a special mission from God to proclaim these things to those who did not know that this was a testimony from God.

(1*) Continuation of the quotation from verses 1 to 9 “... *Moses said to Jehovah, Ah Lord! I am not eloquent ... Jehovah said to him, Who gave man a mouth? ... have not I, Jehovah? ... Ah Lord! send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. Then*

the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Moses ...” (Exodus 4:10-14).

- (2*) “dispensation” a period during which God’s dealings with the earth take on a particular character.

At the beginning

From the very beginning, we also see that these signs were performed within a short space of time. Where else do we find signs performed by Moses after the first few weeks of the Exodus, save perhaps when he struck the rock? As for miracles, there are quite a few that occur. Is it not a miracle when Moses remains on the mountain for forty days without eating or drinking (Exodus 34) (*)? One could cite others. But these miracles were not signs that were performed by him.

- (*) *“He [= Moses] was there with Jehovah forty days and forty nights; he ate no bread, and drank no water” (Exodus 34:28).*

Joshua, Elijah, Elisha

Later, when Joshua led the people into the land, another sign is recorded in chapter 10 of the Book of Joshua (1*). But after that, we hear no more of signs for 700 years, until Elijah and Elisha appear on the scene. These two prophets once again performed signs and miracles, which did not take place in the territory of Judah, for there was the temple and also the law. Having separ-

ated from Judah, it was only in Israel that the worship of the Lord had officially been abolished, and people had returned to the worship of idols. God then gave his apostate people a special testimony through these two servants, just as he will do in the last days (2*).

(1*) *“Then spoke Joshua to Jehovah in the day when Jehovah gave up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand still upon Gibeon; And thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon! And the sun stood still, and the moon remained where it was, until the nation had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? And the sun remained standing in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a full day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that Jehovah hearkened to the voice of a man; for Jehovah fought for Israel”* (Joshua 10:12–14).

(2*) *“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lamps which stand before the Lord of the earth; and if any one wills to injure them, fire goes out of their mouth, and devours their enemies. And if any one wills to injure them, thus must he be killed. These have power to shut the heaven that no rain may fall during the days of their prophecy; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth as often as they will with every plague”* (Revelation 11:3–6).

In the Gospels

After Israel rejected this testimony, we find no further signs. Seven hundred years then passed before we again saw signs and miracles, when the Lord Jesus was travelling through the land.

It is remarkable that John the Baptist performed no signs (1*), even though the Lord Jesus said of him that Moses and Elijah were no greater than he, and that, moreover, he had been filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (2*). The Lord Himself did not perform any signs until He was publicly manifested to carry out His ministry (3*). Chapter 11 of the Gospel of Matthew (4*) tells us what the purpose of these signs was: to prove that He was sent by God. See also other passages (5*).

(1*) *“Many came to him, and said, John did no sign; but all things which John said of this man were true”* (John 10:41).

(2*) *“For he shall be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother`s womb”* (Luke 1:15).

(3*) *“Jesus went round the whole of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every bodily weakness among the people. And his fame went out into the whole of Syria, and they brought to him all that were ill, suffering under various diseases and pains, and those possessed by demons, and lunatics, and paralytics; and he healed them”* (Matthew 4:23–24).

(4*) *“Jesus answering said to them, Go, report to John what ye hear and see. Blind men see and lame walk; lepers are cleansed, and*

deaf hear; and dead are raised, and poor have glad tidings preached to them” (Matthew 11:4–5).

(5*) *“When he was in Jerusalem, at the passover, at the feast, many believed on his name, beholding his signs which he wrought” (John 2:23).*

“Jesus therefore said to him, Unless ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe” (John 4:48).

“I have the witness that is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father has given me that I should complete them, the works themselves which I do, bear witness concerning me that the Father has sent me” (John 5:36).

“A great crowd followed him, because they saw the signs which he wrought upon the sick” (John 6:2).

“They said therefore to him, What sign then doest thou that we may see and believe thee? what dost thou work?” (John 6:30).

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus the Nazaraean, a man borne witness to by God to you by works of power and wonders and signs, which God wrought by him in your midst, as yourselves know” (Acts 2:22).

Then the Lord chose the twelve apostles and sent them out with the mission to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom and perform signs (*). He then sent out the Seventy with the same mission, albeit a somewhat more limited one. It is important to note that the mission of the Twelve Apostles and that of the Seventy were expressly limited to Israel. They were not to go beyond the borders of Israel. The time of grace for the nations had not yet come.

(*) *“Having called to him his twelve disciples, he gave them power over unclean spirits, so that they should cast them out, and heal every disease and every bodily weakness” (Matthew 10:1).*

After the resurrection of the Lord Jesus

After the Lord had been rejected by Israel, and the work of redemption had been accomplished, the risen Lord, as He was about to return to heaven, sent out the apostles once more (1*). But now it is no longer a question of the gospel of the kingdom, but of the new dispensation of grace. This is why the Gospel must be proclaimed throughout the whole world, and thus also to the nations, which in the dispensation of the law were to remain outside (2*). The Lord again associates signs with this testimony, just as He did with Moses. These signs bear the character that God imprints upon the proclaimed message. Mark 16:20 tells us that the apostles fulfilled the mission and that the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through signs. This is also confirmed by the Epistle to the Hebrews (3*).

(1*) *“Afterwards as they lay at table he was manifested to the eleven, and reproached them with]their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen him risen. And he said to them, Go into all the world, and preach the glad tidings to all the creation. He that believes and is baptised shall be saved, and he that disbelieves shall be condemned. And these signs shall follow those that have believed: in my name they shall cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they should drink any deadly thing it shall not injure them; they shall lay hands upon the infirm, and they shall be well.*

The Lord therefore, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God. And they, going forth, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs following upon it” (Mark 16:14–20).

- (2*) *“Wherefore remember that ye, once nations in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that called circumcision in the flesh done with the hand; that ye were at that time without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who once were afar off are become nigh by the blood of the Christ” (Ephesians 2:11–13).*
- (3*) *“So great salvation, which, having had its commencement in being spoken of by the Lord, has been confirmed to us by those who have heard; God bearing, besides, witness with them to it, both by signs and wonders, and various acts of power, and distributions of the Holy Spirit, according to his will” (Hebrews 2:3–4).*

In the Book of Acts

The Acts of the Apostles describes to us how the apostles carried out the mission they received from the Lord. They preach the gospel and perform signs, in confirmation of their word. It is remarkable that of the eleven apostles (and if we reread the passages quoted, we see that it was practically only Peter), it is stated seven times that they performed signs (1*). Next, we find this seven times for Paul (2*), and it is mentioned three times in connection with Stephen and Philip (3*).

(1*) *"Many wonders and signs took place through the apostles' means" (Acts 2:43).*

"Having taken hold of him by the right hand he raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones were made strong" (Acts 3:7).

"Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled thy heart that thou shouldest lie to the Holy Spirit ... Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and expired ... his wife ... came in ... Peter answered her, Tell me if ye gave the estate for so much? And she said, Yes, for so much ... Peter said to her ... ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord ... she fell down immediately at his feet and expired" (Acts 5:3–10).

"By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders done among the people" (Acts 5:12).

"They brought out the sick into the streets and put them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter, when he came, might overshadow some one of them. And the multitude also of the cities round about came together to Jerusalem, bringing sick persons and persons beset by unclean spirits, who were all healed" (Acts 5:15–16).

"He found there a certain man, Aeneas by name, who had been lying for eight years upon a couch, who was paralysed. And Peter said to him, Aeneas, Jesus, the Christ, heals thee: rise up, and make thy couch for thyself. And straightway he rose up" (Acts 9:33–34).

"Peter ... said, Tabitha, arise ... having called the saints and the widows, presented her living. And it became known throughout the whole of Joppa, and many believed on the Lord" (Acts 9:40–42).

(2*) *"Now behold, the Lord's hand is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell upon him a mist and darkness; and going about he sought persons who should lead him by the hand" (Acts 13:11).*

“Paul ... fixing his eyes on him, and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Rise up straight upon thy feet: and he sprang up and walked” (Acts 14:9–10).

“Paul, being distressed, turned, and said to the spirit, I enjoin thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out the same hour” (Acts 16:18).

“Even napkins or aprons were brought from his body and put upon the sick, and the diseases left them, and the wicked spirits went out” (Acts 19:12).

“Eutychus ... fell from the third story down to the bottom, and was taken up dead. But Paul descending fell upon him, and enfolding him in his arms, said, Be not troubled, for his life is in him” (Acts 20:9–10).

“Paul having gathered a certain quantity of sticks together in a bundle and laid it on the fire, a viper coming out from the heat seized his hand. And when the barbarians saw the beast hanging from his hand, they said to one another, This man is certainly a murderer, whom, though saved out of the sea, Nemesis has not allowed to live. He however, having shaken off the beast into the fire, felt no harm. But they expected that he would have swollen or fallen down suddenly dead. But when they had expected a long time and saw nothing unusual happen to him, changing their opinion, they said he was a god” (Acts 28:3–6).

“It happened that the father of Publius lay ill of fever and dysentery; to whom Paul entered in, and having prayed and laid his hands on him cured him. But this having taken place, the rest also who had sicknesses in the island came and were healed” (Acts 28:8–9).

(3) “Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought wonders and great signs among the people” (Acts 6:8).*

“The crowds with one accord gave heed to the things spoken by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs which he wrought” (Acts 8:6).

“Simon also himself believed; and, having been baptised, continued constantly with Philip; and, beholding the signs and great works of power which took place, was astonished” (Acts 8:13).

If we read the Book of Acts carefully, we will notice some important points relevant to our topic.

1. Apart from the apostles themselves, only Stephen and Philip, servants specially called by God, performed miracles, but only once or twice. They are mentioned in several passages of Acts (ch. 2; ch. 5; ch. 16, etc.). None of the other servants, such as Barnabas, James, Silas and others, performed miracles.
2. The first seven signs mentioned in the Book of Acts were all performed in Jerusalem. Then Philip performed signs in Samaria, followed by Peter performing two in the region of Judea outside Jerusalem. And afterwards, Paul performed seven among the Gentiles.
3. The signs that take place outside Jerusalem are all in different locations. There is never any mention of signs being performed twice in the same place. Almost always, these

signs occur the first time that the person performing them preaches the gospel in that place. The only exceptions to this are:

- a. In Ephesus. Paul had already been there (*), but only briefly, because he had no time.

(*) *“Paul ... took leave of the brethren and sailed ... with him Priscilla and Aquila ... he arrived at Ephesus, and left them there ... when they asked him that he would remain for a longer time with them he did not accede” (Acts 18:19–20).*

- b. In the Troas region. He had been there twice, according to 16:8–11 (1*) and 2 Corinthians 2:12 (2*), but he had probably preached the gospel there little or not at all.

(1*) *“Having passed by Mysia they descended to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There was a certain Macedonian man, standing and beseeching him, and saying, Pass over into Macedonia and help us. And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go forth to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to announce to them the glad tidings. Having sailed therefore away from Troas, we went in a straight course ...” (Acts 16:8–11).*

(2*) *“Now when I came to Troas for the publication of the glad tidings of the Christ, a door also being opened to me in the Lord” (2 Corinthians 2:12)*

4. At the beginning of the Book of Acts we find a series of signs. As the testimony spreads and becomes known, the signs become increasingly rare over time.
5. Those who were healed through signs were for the most part unbelievers. Sometimes the sick person believed in the power capable of healing him. At other times, as in Acts 3 (*), this was certainly not the case. The man did not know the one standing before him and expected nothing more than to receive alms. In other cases, the sign was a judgment from God.

(*) *“Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, which is the ninth hour; and a certain man who was lame from his mother’s womb was being carried, whom they placed every day at the gate of the temple ... to ask alms of those who were going into the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to enter into the temple, asked to receive alms. And Peter, looking stedfastly upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed to them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, Silver and gold I have not; but what I have, this give I to thee: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazaraean rise up and walk. And having taken hold of him by the right hand he raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones were made strong” (Acts 3:1–7).*

In the Epistles

In the epistles, it is only in 1 Corinthians 12 (1*) that miracles and the gift of healing are mentioned. God had given this gift of grace to certain people (1*), but it is not stated who these people are, nor is there any mention of how they exercised this gift. The First Epistle to the Corinthians was written at the time of Acts 19 (2*) (see 1 Cor. 15:32; 16:5–9). In none of the Epistles written after Acts 28:29 (3*) are there any references to signs, healings or speaking in tongues.

(1*) *“God has set certain in the assembly: first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers; then miraculous powers; then gifts of healings; helps; governments; kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? Are all teachers? are all in possession of miraculous powers? have all gifts of healings? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But desire earnestly the greater gifts, and yet shew I unto you a way of more surpassing excellence”* (1 Corinthians 12:28–31).

(2*) *“And it came to pass, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper districts, came to Ephesus, and finding certain disciples, he said to them, Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye had believed? ... the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied ... God wrought no ordinary miracles by the hands of Paul ... Thus with might the word of the Lord increased and prevailed”* (Acts 19).

“If, to speak after the manner of man, I have fought with beasts in Ephesus ...” (1 Corinthians 15:32).

“But I will come to you when I shall have gone through Macedonia; for I do go through Macedonia ... I will not see you now

in passing, for I hope to remain a certain time with you ... I remain in Ephesus until Pentecost ...” (1 Corinthians 16:5–9).

(3*) Acts 28:29 concludes the account of the Acts of the Apostles up to the first imprisonment of the Apostle Paul.

It is particularly noteworthy that it is only in the Epistle to the Corinthians that mention is made of the gift of “speaking in tongues” and that of healing, given that the spiritual state of this congregation was very poor. The Corinthians were carnal; they were in dispute with one another and questioned the apostle’s authority. There was a dreadful case of fornication amongst them, which they did not judge, and which left them indifferent. Some would get drunk during the Lord’s Supper. False doctrines were spreading amongst them. In the other Epistles, addressed to churches where the situation was far better, these gifts are not mentioned, particularly in the epistles written after the end of the Acts of the Apostles.

In a negative sense

2 Thessalonians 2:9 rightly speaks of “*all power and signs and wonders of falsehood*”. But these are the signs of the Antichrist, which he performs by the power of the devil. See also Revelation 13 (*).

(*) *“I saw another beast rising out of the earth; and it had two horns like to a lamb, and spake as a dragon ... it works great*

signs, that it should cause even fire to come down from heaven to the earth before men. And it deceives those that dwell upon the earth by reason of the signs which it was given to it to work before the beast, saying to those that dwell upon the earth to make an image to the beast, which has the wound of the sword, and lived” (Revelation 13:11–14).

Furthermore, in Matthew chapter 7 (*) we find people who, in the name of the Lord Jesus, cast out demons, prophesied and performed many miracles. Yet the Lord Jesus must say to them: *“I never knew you. Depart from me, workers of lawlessness”.*

(*) *“Not every one who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he that does the will of my Father who is in the heavens. Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied through thy name, and through thy name cast out demons, and through thy name done many works of power? and then will I avow unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, workers of lawlessness” (Matthew 7:21–23).*

Did not Judas Iscariot also perform signs? He was one of the twelve whom the Lord had sent!

We also find that among believers, influenced by Satan, things were happening that were attributed to the Holy Spirit. This is what we see in the Gospels with Peter (1*) and also with those who preach the Gospel out of envy and a spirit of contention (2*).

(1*) *“He says to them, But ye, who do ye say that I am? And Simon Peter answering said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answering said to him, Blessed art thou, Simon*

Bar-jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens” (Matthew 16:15–17).

“Jesus began to shew to his disciples that he must go away to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised. And Peter taking him to [him] began to rebuke him, saying, God be favourable to thee, Lord; this shall in no wise be unto thee. But turning round, he said to Peter, Get away behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me, for thy mind is not on the things that are of God, but on the things that are of men” (Matthew 16:21–23).

(2) “Some indeed also for envy and strife, but some also for good will, preach the Christ. These indeed out of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the glad tidings; but those out of contention, announce the Christ, not purely, supposing to arouse tribulation for my bonds” (Philippians 1:115–17).*

Conclusion

We have therefore seen that the signs in the Old Testament were performed only by a few servants of God, who had received a special commission from God to proclaim a new testimony to the unbelievers. Alongside these few particular servants, there were at the same time thousands of others who did not perform signs. In the New Testament, particularly in the Gospels, we have seen that, apart from the Lord Jesus, only the 12 and the 70 men, specially sent by the Lord, performed signs. In the rest of the New Testament, only the apostles perform signs and wonders, and also Stephen once and Philip twice.

Furthermore, in both the Old and New Testaments, these signs were given to attest that the preaching of these special servants came from God. This is also why these signs became fewer and fewer, ceasing entirely once the divine testimony was confirmed and recorded in the written Word.

We have also seen that unbelievers can perform signs in the name of the Lord Jesus and are not always exposed on earth, and that believers, under the influence of the Devil, can do things that outwardly appear very beautiful, being associated with good things.

The miracles recorded in history

History often recounts the healing of the sick, instances of speaking in tongues, and other such occurrences. Among pagan peoples, belief in miraculous healings was generally widespread. The Egyptians, Greeks, Romans and the Germanic peoples all had their priests and men of sacred character, who performed healings in a supernatural manner. In the previous chapter you can see that Plato was already speaking of speaking in tongues. Naturally, I cannot cover the whole of history. I wish only to consider a few examples.

Montanus, who lived in the second half of the second century, claimed to be a prophet: he proclaimed that the prophecy of Joel had now been fulfilled. He spoke in tongues and laid hands on the sick. Two prominent women left their husbands to join him. In his speaking in tongues, he sometimes claimed to be God. The movement grew significantly and persisted for several centuries.

In the seventeenth century, there was a fanatical sect in France known as the Camisards. They also spread as far as England, where they were called the French Prophets.

Just like Montanus and several modern-day sects, they claimed to possess ‘divine inspiration’. The Camisards also claimed to have the gift of prophecy, speaking in tongues, and healing the sick. The entire movement was known for its widespread immorality. There were many cases of fornication, adultery and incest among them (according to Dr A.C. Gaebelien). This movement, along with that of Montanus (to which Tertullian belonged), was mentioned in the January 1955 issue of ‘Courants de Puissance’ as their precursors.

In the same century, it was a widespread belief that a reigning prince could cure inflamed glands simply by touching the sick. On Easter Day 1696, having touched 1,600 people, Louis XIV said: ‘The king touches you, God heals you’. Charles II touched

around 100,000 people in the same way. The historian Macaulay recounts that, when William III refused to do so, there was a flood of tears and cries of despair from parents and children suffering from this illness. On such occasions, Mark 16:17–18 (*) was generally read.

(*) *“And these signs shall follow those that have believed: in my name they shall cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they should drink any deadly thing it shall not injure them; they shall lay hands upon the infirm, and they shall be well”*

Mormons (an anti-Christian sect) speak in tongues, heal the sick and claim to have the gift of prophecy.

Spiritists speak in tongues and heal the sick.

The Church of Christ the Scientist is neither Christian nor scientific (it denies the divinity of the Lord Jesus, His atoning work, the Holy Spirit, etc.). It claims to perform the same works as the Lord Jesus. Indeed, the sick are healed by them.

Dr Coué, a French doctor, performed marvellous healings. He was not religious and did not present himself as such. He simply had his patients repeat very often: ‘I am already feeling much better’, and then: ‘I am getting better’. And indeed, hundreds were healed in this way.

Let us be on our guard!

Chapter 4: Healings

The Holy Spirit came to earth to guide believers into all truth, and also so that they might be focused on Him who ascended to the right hand of God, the Lord Jesus, after having accomplished the work of redemption. Soon He will return to take His own to be with Him in the Father's house, so that they may be with Him forever.

The enemy wants to separate us from the Lord.

Satan cannot take away the salvation that believers possess in Christ. But he does try, by every possible means, to divert their gaze from the Lord Jesus, in order to deprive them of the only source of true happiness, spiritual growth and a blessed witness.

To achieve this aim, he mainly uses a single method: he tries to preoccupy believers with themselves and their circumstances. He places all sorts of things before their eyes, which in themselves may not be bad at all. Yet in this way, their thoughts and activities are occupied, to the detriment of the glory due to the Lord, towards which the thoughts of believers ought to be directed. He gives believers the illusion that they are thus happier, and that they can serve the Lord better, instead of walking in

simple obedience to the Word of God. In reality, it is just the opposite.

Satan very often uses the suffering through which God leads His own here on earth. Man is created to live on this earth and to enjoy it. That is why suffering is a painful thing for human nature. It is therefore understandable that people like to listen when they are presented with something which, in their view, can deliver them from this suffering. It is also for this reason that emphasis is placed on passages from the Word of God in which God promises to answer if one turns to Him in faith.

The sufferings of believers

Well then! What does the Word of God say about suffering? The Bible teaches us that every trial, in God's hands, is a means of blessing, the consequences of which are eternal. Illness, although like death a consequence of sin, is also one of the trials that God sends us to achieve this goal.

In chapter 8 of the Epistle to the Romans, there is mention of suffering in relation to this fallen creation: a creation that groans. Being in the midst of it, we too groan, awaiting the redemption of our bodies. Yet it is said in this passage that all things work together for the good of those who love God (*), but not that

God would spare His children from suffering. We read in the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians: *“For our momentary and light affliction works for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are for a time, but those that are not seen eternal”* (2 Corinthians 4:17–18). Yet this “light affliction of a moment” which produces such glorious results often lasts a lifetime. For God’s work in us is not aimed at this earth, but at heaven.

(*) *“We do know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose”*
(Romans 8:28).

Trials

The Apostle James tells us that we should regard it as a cause for great joy when we face all kinds of trials. If we try to avoid these trials, God cannot achieve His purpose, with its glorious results for us. That is why we are advised to pray in faith for the wisdom that can guide us through trials in accordance with God’s will, so that the perfect results may be achieved (1*). Trials are by no means something extraordinary from which we should seek to escape as quickly as possible (2*).

(1*) *“Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into various temptations, knowing that the proving of your faith works en-*

duration. But let endurance have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. But if any one of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all freely and reproaches not, and it shall be given to him” (James 1:2–5).

(2) “Beloved, take not as strange the fire of persecution which has taken place amongst you for your trial, as if a strange thing was happening to you” (1 Peter 4:12).*

Whether it be persecution, sickness or some other trial, God’s children need these things today just as much as in the days of the apostles. Yes, we must expect them all the more, because before bringing judgement upon the world, God first applies it to His own house. He purifies and sanctifies His own, to enable them to walk faithfully and enjoy His fellowship. Trials are therefore evidence of His work of grace, love and wisdom towards His beloved children. And this is with a view to glory, where we shall see the full result of His dealings with us. It must truly be a very great ignorance of God’s ways to want to persuade Him to abandon His educational care for us.

Discipline

If we reflect on the above, it is not difficult to see how far today’s healers are removed from God’s thoughts when they say: “You do not need to be ill. You can regain your health immediately, if only you have faith”. In reality they are saying: “God is not treating you well! He is mistaken about you; we want to restore

your health!” This whole movement denies the Father’s ways of governing His children, or at the very least passes over them in silence. What, for example, do these people think of the teaching in chapter 12 of the Epistle to the Hebrews? How could we find room there for the desire to be healed when God says in this passage: *“My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when reprov’d by him; for whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives. Ye endure for chastening, God conducts himself towards you as towards sons; for who is the son that the father chastens not?”* (Hebrews 12:4–17). Do we really wish to deprive the Christian of the fruit of discipline, which alone enables us to share *“his holiness”* (Hebrews 12:10), and later to bear *“the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those exercised by it”* (Hebrews 12:11)?

I repeat once more: The determined will to heal someone is a contempt for discipline! It discourages the afflicted, accusing them of lacking faith; or at the very least, it gives rise to the thought in them that their suffering is without purpose. Such things are in complete contradiction to the thoughts of God and deprive souls of the blessings that come from God’s perfect ways.

My grace suffices thee

Healers today would surely have told the Apostle Paul that, just as he had shaken off the viper that had fastened itself to his hand in Malta (Acts 28:3–6), he ought to have done the same with his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12)! The apostle himself, before he knew the Lord’s thoughts on the matter, had prayed that the trial might be taken away from him, because he thought he would not be able to carry out the work entrusted to him properly. But for him and for us, the Lord’s perfect answer was: “*My grace suffices thee; for my power is perfected in weakness*” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul now knew that his desire to serve would be fulfilled, indeed, if the thorn remained. From then on, he could glory in the thorn. Or was the thorn not removed because he lacked sufficient faith, as is often said to those who are not sensitive to such suggestions?

Sick believers

Has it ever occurred to the people of this healing movement that, amongst the hundreds of miraculous healings of diseases mentioned in the New Testament, not a single one concerns a believer? And not because there were no sick believers! God has ensured that we know that His children too share in infirmities

and sicknesses, as long as they are still on this earth. The Lord Jesus Himself says in Matthew 25:36: “I was ill”, by which He does not refer to Himself, but to those who are united with Him. Epaphroditus was sick, close to death (1*). Not because of sin, as in 1 Corinthians 11, but because of the Lord’s work. And Paul did not heal him by a miracle. Timothy had stomach pains and was often ill (2*). Was this because of sin? Clearly, that was manifestly not the case. And yet Paul does not heal him, but advises him to drink not only water but also a little wine, as this is better for the stomach. Why does Paul leave Trophimus sick in Miletus (3*) and not heal him? Must we not conclude from the Third Epistle of John, verse 2, that Gaius was quite often ill (4*)? Why, then, does the apostle John so expressly wish him good health of body, whilst adding that he knows his soul is well? The apostles did nothing to alter God’s ways with His children! Did they have so much less insight into God’s thoughts than these healers? Oh no. They knew that their Father, when He led them through sickness, had higher purposes in mind than mere physical health.

(1*) *“I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-workman and fellow-soldier, but your messenger and minister to my need, since he had a longing desire after you all, and was distressed because ye had heard that he was sick; for he was also sick close to death, but God had mercy on him, and not indeed on him alone, but also on me, that I*

might not have sorrow upon sorrow. I have sent him therefore the more diligently, that seeing him ye might again rejoice, and that I might be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy, and hold such in honour; because for the sake of the work he drew near even to death, venturing his life that he might fill up what lacked in your ministration toward me” (Philippians 2:25–30).

- (2*) *“Drink no longer only water, but use a little wine on account of thy stomach and thy frequent illnesses”* (1 Timothy 5:23).
- (3*) *“Trophimus I left behind in Miletus sick”* (2 Timothy 4:20).
- (4*) *“To the beloved Gaius ... I desire that in all things thou shouldest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospers”* (3 John 1–2).

The healing of unbelievers

But if it is not God’s will to heal believers in this way, must not the healing of unbelievers as a sign still exist? For one cannot deny that the Lord Jesus and also the apostles healed many sick unbelievers! Healers then rely on the argument that God is the Eternal One, the Unchanging One, and that, if there were healings in the past, there must still be healings now. Now, it is indeed true that God is Unchanging: *“For I Jehovah change not”* (Malachi 3:6). *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and to the ages to come”* (Hebrews 13:8). But that does not mean that God always reveals Himself in the same way!

How does God reveal Himself?

God has revealed Himself in a different way in every age of human history. To Adam He revealed Himself as Creator. To Noah as the One who made a covenant with the earth. To Abraham as the Almighty. To Israel as the Lord. To the Church as Father. And in the Millennial Kingdom He will reveal Himself as “the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth”. All His revelation is always in keeping with this character. Although God is the Unchanging One, He does not therefore always act in the same way. He reveals Himself and acts in accordance with the circumstances. We see this, for example, very clearly in His judgments. What a difference we see between the Flood, the confusion of tongues at Babel, the ten plagues, the death of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, and the judgments on Korah, Dathan and Abiram, Nadab and Abihu, and Miriam. After God, in Genesis 7, had destroyed by the Flood everything on the face of the earth, except for what was in the ark, He said in chapter 8: *“I will no more smite every living thing, as I have done”* (vers 21).

The signs

As we saw in the paragraph “Signs and Miracles”, the same applies to the healing of unbelievers. These are signs, for we are

not speaking here of answered prayers. God answers the prayers of His children, and He sometimes answers the prayers of unbelievers as well. *“They flattered him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongue; For their heart was not firm toward him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. But he was merciful: he forgave the iniquity, and destroyed them not”* (Psalm 78:36–38). *“Then he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul”* (Psalm 106:15). I even know of a case where God answered the prayer of an unbelieving mother for her dying child in such a way that the doctor said a miracle had taken place. And this was the occasion upon which she and her husband were converted. May God answer the prayers of His children, who do not know this from experience, even in cases of illness! But we are not speaking here of marvellous answers to prayer, but rather of things manifested publicly; it is of signs that we are speaking.

The grace of God came

God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning to them their offences. And as proof of this, the Lord Jesus came in marvellous grace to the earth, as a man among men. He revealed His goodness and compassion by healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, and feeding the hungry. Yes, He showed

that He wanted to remove all the consequences of sin by raising their dead.

The world has rejected God's grace: it has crucified the Lord of glory. But God raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand, saying: "*Sit at my right hand until I put thine enemies as footstool of thy feet*" (Hebrews 1:13). Soon the time will come when God will gather together all that is in heaven and on earth under the banner of the Lord Jesus (1*). And God can do this because of the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross, where He laid the foundation upon which all things will be reconciled to God (2*). We are already reconciled now. But all things (not all people) will soon be reconciled.

(1*) "*He purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth*" (Ephesians 1:9-10).

(2*) "*In him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell, and by him to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace by the blood of his cross - by him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, yet now has it reconciled in the body of his flesh through death; to present you holy and unblamable and irreproachable before it, if indeed ye abide in the faith founded and firm, and not moved away from the hope of the glad tidings, which ye have heard, which have been proclaimed in the whole creation which is under heaven*" (Colossians 1:19-23).

The curse is removed

When the Lord Jesus comes to earth to take possession of all things (1*), the curse of the earth will be removed. Then creation will be set free (2*). The desert and the parched land will rejoice (3*). *“The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity”* (Isaiah 33:24). Sickness and death will be no more (4*), except in the case of open rebellion against the Lord Jesus (5*).

(1*) *“Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the land lament, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one extremity of the heavens to the other extremity of them”* (Matthew 24:30–31).

“Behold, he comes with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they which have pierced him, and all the tribes of the land shall wail because of him. Yea. Amen” (Revelation 1:7).

(2*) *“The creature itself also shall be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God”* (Romans 8:21).

(3*) *“The wilderness and the dry land shall be gladdened; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and shouting ... Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and torrents in the desert. And the mirage shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of waters ... And the*

ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come to Zion with singing; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35).

(4) “He will swallow up death in victory. And the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of his people will he take away from off all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken” (Isaiah 25:8).*

“There shall be no more thenceforth an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not completed his days; for the youth shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof: they shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands” (Isaiah 65:20–22).

(5) “They shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorrence unto all flesh” (Isaiah 66:24).*

“The Lord at thy right hand will smite through kings in the day of his anger. He shall judge among the nations; he shall fill [all places] with dead bodies; he shall smite through the head over a great country. He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head” (Psalm 110:5–7).

Today, this is not yet the case; the Lord Jesus is still rejected and remains hidden, seated at the right hand of God. But He was presented by the apostles to the Jews (and later to the nations) as the One through whom the times of refreshing would come, if they received Him (1*). To confirm their word, God worked

alongside them through signs and wonders; the powers of the age to come (2*). God thus gave proof that this message of a new nature came from Him. He also showed that if the people received the Lord Jesus, the full blessing would then come immediately.

(1*) *“Repent therefore and be converted, for the blotting out of your sins, so that times of refreshing may come from [the] presence of the Lord, and he may send Jesus Christ, who was foreordained for you, whom heaven indeed must receive till the times of the restoring of all things, of which God has spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets since time began”* (Acts 3:19–21).

(2*) *“God bearing, besides, witness with them to it, both by signs and wonders, and various acts of power, and distributions of the Holy Spirit”* (Hebrews 2:4).

“Those once enlightened ... have tasted the good word of God, and the works of power of the age to come” (Hebrews 6:4–5).

But Israel also rejected the testimony of the Holy Spirit and was set aside (*). Furthermore, God gave His Word in written form (the New Testament), so that signs were no longer necessary to confirm that the testimony came from Him. Could God still publicly unite Himself with those who turned away from Him and who, in disobedience, went their own way?

(*) *“Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain those who announced beforehand concerning the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have now become deliverers up and murderers! ... hearing these things they were cut to the heart, and gnashed their teeth against him. But being*

full of the Holy Spirit, having fixed his eyes on heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, Lo, I behold the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. And they cried out with a loud voice, and held their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord; and having cast him out of the city, they stoned him ... And they stoned Stephen, praying, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And kneeling down, he cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And having said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:52–60).

“Be it known to you therefore, that this salvation of God has been sent to the nations; they also will hear it” (Acts 28:28).

The end times

We are living in a time of decline. The defining feature of the end times (the difficult times in which we live today) is this: there is much talk of power, but little of obedience to the Word of God! Having rejected the knowledge that can be received through simple faith in the Scriptures, people are inclined to believe in one form of power or another, which has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit, but which is admired by men: a power that will later be fully revealed in “the man of sin”. Satan readily gives his power to those who eagerly seek one form of supernatural power or another, instead of the Holy Spirit. One need not be particularly perceptive to discern, in our day, the warning signs of this “working of error” of which the apostle speaks in 2 Thessalonians 2:11. As soon as the Church has been taken from

the earth, this power will be fully revealed. It is already ensnaring people in its nets.

The desire of the faithful

But the faithful, who see the true state of the Church, are primarily concerned with spiritual health, so that the saints may walk in the truth, in true separation from the world and from all that is not according to the Lord's will. They desire that the Holy Spirit and His ministry — namely, the glorification of Christ — should take centre stage. They desire that the Church's bonds with Christ should be known and savoured, and that the members of the body of Christ should recognise and realise their union with one another, in the place God has assigned them. They also desire that the “joints” which provide support for the whole body should be in such living contact with the Head that His fullness may constantly benefit the whole body, so that, being well-joined together in its members, the body may grow with the growth of God (*), and that the saints, holding fast to the truth in love, may grow in every way to the glory of Him who is the Head, Christ.

(*) *“The whole body, fitted together, and connected by every joint of supply, according to the working in its measure of each one part, works for itself the increase of the body to its self-building up in love” (Ephesians 4:16).*

“The head, from whom all the body, ministered to and united together by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God” (Colossians 2:19)

Whoever thus chooses to walk in simple obedience receives from God the answer to the prayer which the Son offered, addressing the Father, on the night He was betrayed: *“Sanctify them by the truth: thy word is truth”* (John 17:17).

Chapter 5: Does atonement include the healing of the body?

To justify the claim that it is not necessary for a believer to be sick, so-called healers, using prayer as a tool, assert that the Lord Jesus also bore our infirmities; therefore, the healing of the body is included in the work of atonement.

Whilst we all agree with this assertion, and all cite Isaiah 53:4–5 (1*) and Matthew 8:17 (2*) as evidence, our reasoning nevertheless differs.

(1*) *“Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; and we, we did regard him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed”* (Isaiah 53:4–5).

(2*) *“So that that should be fulfilled which was spoken through Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases”* (Matthew 8:17).

In the February 1954 issue of the monthly magazine of this movement in the Netherlands (at that time called ‘Living Water’, but two months later the name was changed to ‘River of Power’), we read:

“It is clear to everyone that it is not God’s will that we should sin; Jesus died for our sins on the cross; He bore our sins. Why, then, is it not just as clear to so many people that it is

not God's will that we should be sick either? Did not Jesus bear our sicknesses on the cross? Indeed, we read clearly in Isaiah 53:3–10 (1*) what role sickness played in Jesus' suffering. This is confirmed in Matthew 8:17 (2*). Peter also speaks of this in 1 Peter 2:24 (3*). If we believe that Jesus also bore our sicknesses, then it is evident that it is not God's will for us to be sick, for Jesus came into the world to do God's will (Hebrews 10:5–10) (4*).

(1*) *"He is despised and left alone of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and like one from whom [men] hide their faces; - despised, and we esteemed him not.*

Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; and we, we did regard him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, but he opened not his mouth; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and was as a sheep dumb before her shearers, and he opened not his mouth. He was taken from oppression and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And men appointed his grave with the wicked, but he was with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, neither was there guile in his mouth. Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath subjected him to suffering. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see a seed, he shall

prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand” (Isaiah 53:3–10).

- (2*) *“So that that should be fulfilled which was spoken through Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases” (Matthew 8:17).*
- (3*) *“Who [= Jesus] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, in order that, being dead to sins, we may live to righteousness: by whose stripes ye have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24).*
- (4*) *“Wherefore coming into the world he says, Sacrifice and offering thou willedst not; but thou hast prepared me a body. Thou tookest no pleasure in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin. Then I said, Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do, O God, thy will. Above, saying Sacrifices and offerings and burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou willedst not, neither tookest pleasure in (which are offered according to the law); then he said, Lo, I come to do thy will. He takes away the first that he may establish the second; by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:5–10).*

It is almost unbelievable that the author would dare to write this in such terms. If we do not wish to admit that she considers herself to know better than others, she is speculating on the laziness of readers, who will in any case not bother to check the texts cited; but we must then conclude that she herself has not bothered to read Matthew 8:17! Indeed, this passage expressly states that the words of Isaiah 53:4 were fulfilled in the life of the Lord Jesus, and not in His death. Moreover, Matthew provides the explanation: The Lord cast out demons and healed all who were sick, *“So that that should be fulfilled which was*

spoken through Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases”

This casual approach to Scripture is, moreover, found throughout their writings. In the same article, it is stated, for example, that through the fall, “the image of God in Adam, created in the image of God, died”. Where is this written in Scripture? How, then, could it be said in 1 Corinthians 11:7 of man: “*For man ... being God’s image and glory*”.

Other arguments

There are also other arguments. The late Aimee Semple McPherson, a world-renowned leader of the Pentecostal movement in America, reasoned from Isaiah 53:5: “*with his stripes we are healed*”. She said that Satan, through the fall, had brought a double curse, namely sin and sickness. But that the Lord Jesus, in His work of atonement, had brought a double restoration, namely salvation and healing. She arbitrarily divided Isaiah 53:5 into two parts and, on this basis, also divided the Lord Jesus’ work of atonement. “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him”, would, in her view, refer to our sins, and this part was fulfilled on the cross. The following, “and with his

stripes we are healed”, would, in her view, refer to our sicknesses, and this would have been fulfilled before the cross, when the Lord was struck and mistreated by the high priest and by Pilate. She offers no argument to support her views. She has probably simply allowed herself to be guided by the emotional resonance of the words “bruises” and “heal”, and has thus arrived at her conclusions. She has forgotten that the book of Isaiah is a prophecy, and that Isaiah, like all the other prophets, uses symbolic language. Furthermore, she has forgotten the important rule that the Word of God itself gives for the interpretation of prophecies, in 2 Peter 1:20–21: *“Knowing this first, that the scope of no prophecy of scripture is had from its own particular interpretation, for prophecy was not ever uttered by the will of man, but holy men of God spake under the power of the Holy Spirit”*. It is only by comparing Scripture with Scripture that we learn the true meaning of a biblical passage.

Who, then, gives us the right to divide Isaiah 53:5, which deals with the work of atonement for our sins, into one part relating to the cross and another part said to have taken place before the cross? There is no biblical evidence for this. Does not Scripture speak of healing of the soul in connection with sin (1*)? And does not Peter apply precisely this passage from Isaiah 53:5 to

the Lord's work for our sins (2*)? Here we have Scripture explaining itself.

(1*) *"I said, Jehovah, be gracious unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee"*(Psalm 41:4).

(2*) *"Who [= Jesus] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, in order that, being dead to sins, we may live to righteousness: by whose stripes ye have been healed"* (1 Peter 2:24).

Yet another erroneous explanation

Another argument is put forward by the late Dr A.B. Simpson in his book "The Gospel of Healing". When discussing Isaiah 53:4 (*), he states that the English (and also the French) translation conveys the meaning of the Hebrew text very imperfectly. According to him, it should in fact be translated as: "Surely He has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows (griefs)". And these words do not merely imply sympathy, but a true substitution and the complete removal of that which is borne and taken away. Dr Simpson was a Doctor of Theology and, for this reason, many are inclined to accept without question what someone like him writes, because they are in any case unable to judge. Thus, as J.N. Darby said, it was quite true: "If anyone, before an audience that knows neither Greek nor Hebrew, wishes to prove his doctrines by demonstrations in those languages, there is al-

most always something amiss”. This is borne out upon examination of these assertions.

(*) *“Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; and we, we did regard him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted”* (Isaiah 53:4).

Here is an example: the Hebrew word [for carried] in Isaiah 53:4, which Dr Simpson wishes to translate as ‘carried away’, is used from Isaiah 1 through to 53:4 in the following passages: in 5:26: ‘*He will lift up a banner*’ – in 10:26: ‘*his rod ... he will lift it up*’ – in 11:12: ‘*he shall lift up a banner*’ – in 14:4: ‘*thou shalt take up this proverb*’ – in 22:6: ‘*Elam beareth the quiver*’ – in 37:4: ‘*Therefore lift up a prayer*’ – in 52:8: ‘*The voice of thy watchmen, they lift up the voice*’. It is clear that, in all these passages, it is impossible for the word to mean ‘substitution’. Why, then, should it mean that only in Isaiah 53:4?

One might now ask: does the fact that the Lord ‘bore our sins’ in 1 Peter 2:24 (1*) not imply substitution? And if it does imply substitution, why would the ‘bearing of infirmities’ in Matthew 8:17 (2*) not imply substitution? Undoubtedly, Peter is speaking of substitution, and he uses the Greek word *anapherō*. Apart from being used three times in the Gospels, this word is found only in Hebrews 7:7; 9:28; 13:15 (3*); James 2:21 (4*) and 1 Peter 2:5 (5*) & 24 (1*) — the latter passage being the one we

are discussing here. In all these passages mentioned, the context is one of offering, which is not the case in Matthew 8:17 (2*).

(1*) *“Himself bore our sins in his body on the tree”* (1 Peter 2:24).

(2*) *“So that that should be fulfilled which was spoken through Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases”* (Matthew 8:17).

(3*) *“Beyond all gainsaying, the inferior is blessed by the better”* (Hebrews 7:7).

“Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear to those that look for him the second time without sin for salvation” (Hebrews 9:28).

“Let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of the lips confessing his name” (Hebrews 13:15).

(4*) *“Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?”* (James 2:21).

(5*) *“Yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 2:5).

In Matthew 8:17, a different Greek word is used: ‘bastazō’. Apart from this passage, this word occurs thirteen times in the Gospels and thirteen times in the rest of the New Testament [for example, in Matthew 3:11 and 20:12 (*)], and always in the sense of bearing a burden. For example, in Galatians 6:2: “Bear one another’s burdens”, where it is quite clear that this cannot mean substitution. And this word is never used in connection with offering, as is the case with anapherō.

(*) *“He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not fit to bear”* (Matthew 3:11).

*“These last have worked one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the heat”
(Matthew 20:12).*

Things not based on Scripture

We have therefore seen that none of their arguments are based on Scripture. But, what is even worse, their assertions lead to the worst conclusions. If the Lord Jesus bore our sicknesses and our pains in our stead, then, according to Matthew 8:17 [*“So that that should be fulfilled ... Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases”*], this would have taken place during His life before the cross. But in that case, His work would be divided into two parts: one on the cross, and the other before the cross. For, as Dr Simpson writes: ‘Three years as the Great Physician, and then six hours as the dying Lamb.’

For three years, then, the Lord would have accomplished an atonement without blood for our infirmities, etc., and then, on the cross, an atonement with blood for our sins. This is a heresy that no enlightened Christian can defend.

The author of the article published in “L’Eau Vive” and mentioned above does not fall into this error. She writes: “These three things — sin, sickness and death — are the works of the devil, which Jesus came to destroy [referring to 1 John 3:8 (*)].

And they were destroyed by the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ'. And she adds: 'Jesus bore our sicknesses at Golgotha'. And from this, she draws the conclusion that God does not want us to be sick, just as He does not want us to sin.

(*) *"He that practises sin is of the devil; for from the beginning the devil sins. To this end the Son of God has been manifested, that he might undo the works of the devil"* (1 John 3:8).

It is not found in the Epistle to the Romans

Now, if the above were true, we would certainly find it in the Epistle to the Romans. For in this epistle, the doctrine of salvation is presented to us very clearly: the forgiveness of sins and deliverance from sin. But this Epistle does not mention it at all. On the contrary, Romans 8:22–24 (1*) says that we live in a creation that groans, and that we ourselves groan too. And we are still waiting for the redemption of our bodies, for we have been saved in hope. And in verse 11, we read that our mortal bodies will be made alive in the future (2).

(1*) *"For we know that the whole creation groans together and travails in pain together until now. And not only that, but even we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, we also ourselves groan in ourselves, awaiting adoption, that is the redemption of our body. For we have been saved in hope; but hope seen is not hope; for what any one sees, why does he also hope?"* (Romans 8:22–24).

(2*) *“If the Spirit of him that has raised up Jesus from among the dead dwell in you, he that has raised up Christ from among the dead shall quicken your mortal bodies also on account of his Spirit which dwells in you” (Romans 8:11).*

By grace alone

If, indeed, the healing of the body — in terms of sickness and death — were included in the work of reconciliation, just as the atonement for our sins is, then we would have to admit that these three things ought to have the same consequences! No one who knows the Scriptures will deny that, as soon as a person has received the Lord Jesus, they share fully in His work. The matter of their sins is then settled for ever; they are taken away for ever (*). This does not depend on their works, either before or after their conversion, nor on their understanding of the extent of the Lord’s work. It is by grace alone.

(*) *“Blessed they whose lawlessnesses have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered” (Romans 4:7).*

“Therefore having been justified on the principle of faith, we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

“Much rather therefore, having been now justified in the power of his blood, we shall be saved by him from wrath” (Romans 5:9).

“For as indeed by the disobedience of the one man the many have been constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the one the many will be constituted righteous” (Romans 5:19).

“In whom [= Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

“Giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light, who has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love: in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:12–14).

“You, who once were alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, yet now has it reconciled” (Colossians 1:21).

“You, being dead in offences and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he has quickened together with him, having forgiven us all the offences” (Colossians 2:13).

“For by one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears us witness of it; for after what was said: This is the covenant which I will establish towards them after those days, saith the Lord: Giving my laws into their hearts, I will write them also in their understandings; and their sins and their lawlessnesses I will never remember any more. But where there is remission of these, there is no longer a sacrifice for sin” (Hebrews 10:14–18).

“Who [= Jesus] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, in order that, being dead to sins, we may live to righteousness: by whose stripes ye have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24). Etc. ...

So, according to these doctrines, since our conversion we should no longer experience either sickness or death. No believer would then suffer from the ailments of old age, and no one should die anymore. Nor would this depend on our works, for otherwise it would no longer be grace. And if God had truly made our acceptance dependent on our participation in this aspect of the

Lord Jesus' work, it would follow that neither Paul, nor Peter, nor John, nor any other believer over the past nineteen centuries, would have been accepted. For all have died — even Dr Simpson and Mrs McPherson, mentioned above, who were the greatest leaders of this movement.

The consequences

Then, what is written in Philippians 1:21 (*) could not be true: “to die is gain”. Could a condition, contrary to God's will and arising from unbelief regarding what God has given us in the Lord Jesus, be better than what the Lord Jesus accomplished for us on the cross and what God wishes to give us?

(*) “*For for me to live is Christ, and to die gain*” (Philippians 1:21).

How terrible, then, must Paul's statement in 2 Timothy 4:6 have been: “*The time of my release is come*”, as well as what Peter writes in 2 Peter 1:14: “*Knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle is speedily to take place, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has manifested to me*”. And all the martyrs, beginning with Stephen, who thought they were dying for the Lord, would, according to this view, have died solely because of their unbelief.

How horribly mistaken Paul must therefore have been when, in 1 Corinthians 15, he presented the coming of the Lord as the

only event by which believers would no longer need to die. And we thought that was the inspired Word of God! But enough on this subject! To anyone without preconceptions, it will be perfectly clear that this doctrine is contrary to the Word of God and that it produces destructive consequences.

The consequences of sin

The Word of God teaches us that sickness, suffering and death are the consequences of sin. Through His work on the cross, the Lord Jesus laid the foundation by which sin will be abolished (1*), so that one day heaven and earth, the entire universe, will be purified and restored to God (2*). We are already reconciled now and have the forgiveness of our sins. The problem of sin, as regards our relationship as creatures to the Creator, is fully resolved. We are perfect for ever (3*). This is the redemption of the soul, which we already possess now (4*).

(1*) *“But now once in the consummation of the ages he has been manifested for the putting away of sin by his sacrifice. And forasmuch as it is the portion of men once to die, and after this judgment; thus the Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear to those that look for him the second time without sin for salvation”* (Hebrews 9:26–28).

(2*) *“By him to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace by the blood of his cross - by him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, yet now has it reconciled*

in the body of his flesh through death; to present you holy and unblamable and irreproachable before it” (Colossians 1:20–22).

(3*) *“By one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14).*

(4*) *“Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:9).*

Our bodies will be transformed

As far as our bodies are concerned, we still belong to this creation. And although the Lord Jesus has also redeemed our bodies (*), practically speaking, these bodies have not yet shared in salvation. We await the Lord Jesus as Saviour, *“who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory”* (Philippians 3:21).

(*) *“Ye have been bought with a price: glorify now then God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:20).*

At present, our bodies still share in mortality and corruption (1*). We groan along with all creation and await the redemption of our bodies (2*). We share in tribulations and sufferings here on earth (3*). But because the Holy Spirit dwells within us, we know that our Father uses this suffering to teach us (4*). And at the same time, Scripture gives us the glorious assurance that the Lord Jesus, as a man on earth, entered into all the sufferings in which we, as men on earth, share, so that now, as High Priest in heaven, He may sympathise with our weaknesses, come to our

aid and intercede for us, in full awareness of our position, our difficulties, our feelings, and the dangers to which we are exposed, etc. (5*). This is the explanation the Scriptures give us of Isaiah 53:4 and Matthew 8:17, insofar as we can apply these passages to ourselves.

(1*) *“Such as he made of dust, such also those made of dust; and such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones. And as we have borne the image of the one made of dust, we shall bear also the image of the heavenly one. But this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit God’s kingdom, nor does corruption inherit incorruptibility.*

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must needs put on incorruptibility, and this mortal put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruptibility, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the word written: Death has been swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:48–54).

(2*) *“Not only that [= creation], but even we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, we also ourselves groan in ourselves, awaiting adoption, that is the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23).*

(3*) *“And not only [that], but we also boast in tribulations, knowing that tribulation works endurance; and endurance, experience; and experience, hope; and hope does not make ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us: for we being still without strength, in the due time Christ has died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:3–6).*

(4*) See (3*) and read Hebrews 12:4–14 in your Bible; the text is too long to reproduce here.

(5*) *‘It was fitting for him, for whom and through whom all things exist, that, in bringing many sons to glory, he should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering’* (Hebrews 2:10).

“He that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Hebrews 2:11).

“In that himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to help those that are being tempted” (Hebrews 2:18).

“We have not a high priest not able to sympathise with our infirmities, but tempted in all things in like manner, sin apart” (Hebrews 4:15).

“Let us approach therefore with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace for seasonable help” (Hebrews 4:16).

“Who [= Jesus] in the days of his flesh, having offered up both supplications and entreaties to him who was able to save him out of death, with strong crying and tears; (and having been heard because of his piety;) though he were Son, he learned obedience from the things which he suffered” (Hebrews 5:7-8).

“Having been perfected, became to all them that obey him, author of eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:9).

“Whence also he is able to save completely those who approach by him to God, always living to intercede for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

“Such a high priest became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become higher than the heavens” (Hebrews 7:26).

Etc...

The prophecy

We must not forget that Isaiah 53 is a prophecy. It expresses, in a prophetic manner, the feelings of the believing remnant from the two tribes (Judah), when they see the Lord Jesus coming from heaven and recognise that they have rejected and crucified their Messiah (1*). If we read Isaiah 52, 53 and the beginning of chapter 54 (2*), this becomes clear. Now, this concerns the beginning of the Millennial Reign, when the curse on the earth will effectively be lifted, and men will die only by a public judgement of God, when they have sinned openly (3*).

(1*) *“And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look on me whom they pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart: the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart”* (Zechariah 12:10–14).

“And one shall say unto him, What are those wounds in thy hands? And he will say, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, even against the man [that is] my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered, and I will turn my hand upon the little ones. And it shall come to pass

in all the land, saith Jehovah, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part into the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on my name, and I will answer them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, Jehovah is my God” (Zechariah 13:6–9).

(2*) The text is too long to transcribe here; please read Isaiah 52, 53 & 54 it in your Bible.

(3*) *“And I will rejoice over Jerusalem, and will joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thenceforth an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not completed his days; for the youth shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof: they shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for terror; for they are the seed of the blessed of Jehovah, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent`s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah” (Isaiah 65:19–25).*

The same applies to Psalm 103 (1*), which is often used to justify so-called faith healing. Here too, we find the remnant of Israel who look forward to the glorious day of Christ’s reign. When He destroys the wicked of the land every morning (2*) and His reign rules over all things (3*). Then Jacob’s iniquity

will be forgiven (4*) and his diseases will be healed. Then his life will be redeemed from destruction (5*), as we have seen in Isaiah 65.

(1*) The text is too long to transcribe here. Read Psalm 103 in your Bible.

(2*) *“Every morning will I destroy all the wicked of the land: to cut off all workers of iniquity from the city of Jehovah”* (Psalm 101:8).

(3*) *“Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all”* (Psalm 103:19).

(4*) *“So all Israel shall be saved. According as it is written, The deliverer shall come out of Zion; he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob”* (Romans 11:26).

(5*) *“Who [= Jehovah] forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from the pit, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thine old age with good [things]; thy youth is renewed like the eagle`s”* (Psalm 103:3–5).

Final remark

If the proponents of so-called faith healing had cut *“in a straight line the word of truth”*, they would not have had cause to blush and would have stood approved before God (*). Then they would not have come up with this deplorable doctrine, which is entirely contrary to Scripture, by which many simple souls are led astray and much harm is done to the life of faith of many believers.

(2*) *“These things put in remembrance, testifying earnestly before the Lord not to have disputes of words, profitable for nothing, to the subversion of the hearers. Strive diligently to present thyself approved to God, a workman that has not to be ashamed, cutting in a straight line the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:14-15).*

