CHAPTER EIGHT

HEALING IN THE LARGER SCHEME OF THINGS

Having surveyed the ingredients the message of healing proclaimed by Bosworth, Hagin, Sanford, and MacNutt consists of, a few interrelated questions still need to be posed: Where does their proclamation of divine healing fit in their overall worldview? How do they correlate their doctrine of divine healing with other major themes in their teaching? Do they speak of healing in any broader sense beyond the restoration of individuals? Why does divine healing matter to them so much? Due to advances in the medical science, many a dreadful disease is nowadays under control. So why divine healing? It will be shown that the ministers of healing are interested in more than the promise of a long and enjoyable life. This final chapter is intended as a reminder of the religious significance of healing in their respective belief-systems.

Healing Evangelists

Bosworth

Fred F. Bosworth’s proclamation of the good news issues in a call to faith and repentance. The conversions he advocates, however, pertain to individuals only. His audience is exhorted to receive Christ as the Savior of their souls and Healer of their bodies. Sin is to be repented of, but, again, at the personal level only. We hear nothing from Bosworth about social sins. Were it not for an account of his gang-beating, we would never learn from him that there was racial inequality and friction in Texas at the outset of the twentieth century. Even when reporting about his assault, Bosworth is preoccupied with the incident itself (how it transpired and how he forgave the assailants). He does not reflect on the broader social context of which his beating was an outgrowth. Bosworth did not become a victim of an attack on account of his advocacy of social justice. The incident took place after he preached to white and black audiences separately. In fact, he assured the white assailants that he “came with no thought or desire of putting them
on a level with anyone [i.e. with African Americans].” 1 Based on this incident, Grant Wacker concludes that Bosworth “unselfconsciously reproduced the white racial prejudices of the day.” 2 Although Wacker may be right, it is fair to mention that Bosworth made the statement when a gun was pointed at him. Even though he complied with the social boundaries in place, on the spiritual plane he must have seen the African-Americans as equals, since he ministered to them as worthy candidates of Spirit-baptism. Bosworth further gave a radio-speech on Anglo-Israelism. Nevertheless, his address names neither the Anglos nor the African Americans. It merely dwells on the distinction between Israel and Judah, identifying the Jews as descendants of the latter, while the tribes of Israel as unspecified people other than the Jews. 3

A theme of incomparably greater significance for Bosworth is his understanding of the present day in light of the second coming of Christ expected soon to occur. 4 On the timetable of the salvation-history, as Bosworth sees it, the age of the Holy Spirit spans the first and second advents of Christ. Although the Holy Spirit had been operative in the world prior to the Pentecost, only at the Day of Pentecost did the Spirit enter “the world officially for His own dispensation.” 5 It follows that the present era is especially conducive to miraculous works, “The age in which we live was intended by our heavenly Father, to be the most miraculous of all because it is the miracle Worker’s, the Holy Spirit’s age or dispensation.” 6 Within the age of the Holy Spirit, Bosworth distinguishes between the current “Laodicean or lukewarm period” and the normative example of the early church to which we are to conform. 7

According to Bosworth, divine healing is an amazing evangelistic tool. By no means does it detract from soul-saving. To the contrary, he says, “[W]e have seen more happy conversions in a single week

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1 Fred F. Bosworth, “Dear Mother and All,” Dallas, Tex., Aug. 21st, 1911. A copy of the letter has been made available to the author by Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, Springfield, Mo.
3 F. F. Bosworth, The Bible Distinction between the House of Israel and the House of Judah (Owasso, Okla.: Truth in History Ministries, 2002).
4 Eunice M. Perkins, Fred Francis Bosworth (The Joybringer), 2nd ed. (River Forest, Ill.: F. F. Bosworth, 1927), 113, 118.
5 Bosworth’s untitled sermon in Perkins, Bosworth, 208.
6 Perkins, Bosworth, 208.
7 Perkins, Bosworth, 209.