**Book Reviews**

J.D. King


*Regeneration* is a massive project, both in scope and page count. Over the course of sixteen years, J.D. King has researched and written a book with an ambitious subtitle: *A Complete History of Healing in the Christian Church*. King is personally invested in this topic. His own first-hand experience with healing kept him from abandoning the faith (i.9). He conducts his research and writing not only as an academic but also as a practitioner. Academically, he “set out to develop an overview of the healing streams and their associated methodologies” (1.21). This pursuit was motivated by a desire not just to understand, but to “learn to operate similarly” (1.9). Structurally, King follows the narrative of healing chronologically, beginning in the post-Apostolic era and following the theme through two millennia to the ongoing Third Wave movement. In the early chapters, King gives an overview of the church before examining the lives and healing accounts of various key leaders. In the later chapters, he spends more time describing the theological perspective that undergirds the practice of healing. King casts a wide net, even going beyond textual sources to the world of art (1.86–88). Notably absent from King’s chronology is the Eastern Orthodox tradition, aside from a footnote. While this does not take away from the work King has done, it does add a significant qualification to the “complete history” this multivolume work chronicles.

This broad historical approach to healing gives perspective to the practice. Themes and trends repeat over the years. Take, for example, the tension between what the local church experiences versus what the leadership structures teach. This is particularly evident in the case of Martin Luther. Under the growing influence of a “rationalistic and materialistic worldview” (Althouse
in King 1.167), along with a desire to be rid of Roman Catholic superstition (1.182), Luther’s teaching often downplayed divine healing (1.168). However, when the need arose, he was quick to take his associate Phillip Melanchthon’s hand and pray for a healing that delivered Melanchthon “from death to life by divine power” (Luther in King 1.173). This tension between official policy and the practice of the laity is characteristic of many eras, including our own.

In the second volume, King’s chronological tour slows down and focuses in on the variety of overlapping movements which characterized the twentieth century. It is particularly interesting to see how King, a man with Classical Pentecostal roots (1.20), elucidates the various theological themes and inter-relationships between the various healing movements. King describes how the Faith-Cure movement with its emphasis on unhurried personal ministry in healing houses gave way to the more entrepreneurial spirit of the Radical Holiness movement which formed the context of the Pentecostal revival. He writes that “in its amalgamation of fundamentalism, millenarianism, and Restorationism, Pentecostalism drew heavily upon the radical fringes of the Holiness movement and ultimately transformed the milieu of divine healing in the twentieth century” (1.382–383). In time, the Radical Holiness and Classical Pentecostal movements “moved away from healing after an early period of fervor” (11.466). The Charismatic Renewal, the Word of Faith movement, and the Third Wave all picked up the theme of divine healing while adding their own unique spin to the underlying theological assumptions.

Perhaps the greatest strength of Regeneration is the sheer number of sources that King integrates into the narrative. King has done the academy a great service in the third volume by providing a four-hundred page annotated bibliography of “the most significant works on healing in the English tongue” (111.312). This will surely become a foundational resource for anyone studying healing in the future.

Citing the sources is one thing—verifying them is another. It is easy, especially for the educated (1.24), to question the truth of a source. This is especially problematic with the more radical accounts of cancerous tumors falling off (11.333), prosthetic eyes gaining sight (1.8), and the dead being raised (11.443). While King admits that “framing up imperfect narratives is what historians are obliged to do” (1.27), he does not to evaluate the testimonies he cites. Instead, he simply confesses that “no matter how much one insists on the scientific method, spiritual realities can never be fully dissected” (1.27). King keeps the domains of science and religion separate, acknowledging that physical restoration can be viewed through either lens (11.474). This epistemological approach, while simple, has significant benefits. It challenges the Western scientific mind-