

Jesus Our Healer: Experience of Christians in Indonesia

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Abstract

This paper discusses Jesus as a healer in C&MA teaching and how this teaching is lived in Asian countries such as Indonesia. The goal is to understand its doctrine and relevance in the church's life, especially the C&MA churches worldwide. Divine healing is a characteristic of Simpson's teaching that should still be lived out in church life today. The Bible's teaching about divine healing is not aimed at healing from suffering solely but is aimed at glorifying God and preaching the gospel of salvation. A church that is faithful in preaching the gospel will not stop practising healing prayers for those who ask to be prayed for their healing. Likewise, the church must be an agent of healing both physically and emotionally for communities that are facing various diseases.

Keywords: A. B. Simpson, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Jesus as a Healer, Christian in Indonesia

Abstrak

Tulisan ini membahas tentang Yesus sebagai penyembuh dalam ajaran C&MA dan bagaimana ajaran ini dijalani di negara-negara Asia seperti Indonesia. Tujuannya adalah untuk memahami doktrin dan relevansinya dalam kehidupan gereja, khususnya gereja-gereja C&MA di seluruh dunia. Kesembuhan ilahi merupakan ciri khas ajaran Simpson yang masih harus dihayati dalam kehidupan gereja saat ini. Ajaran Alkitab tentang kesembuhan ilahi tidak ditujukan semata-mata untuk menyembuhkan penderitaan, tetapi bertujuan untuk memuliakan Allah dan memberitakan injil keselamatan. Gereja yang setia memberitakan Injil tidak akan berhenti mengamalkan doa kesembuhan bagi mereka yang meminta didoakan kesembuhan mereka. Demikian pula gereja harus menjadi agen penyembuhan baik secara fisik maupun emosional bagi masyarakat yang sedang menghadapi berbagai penyakit.

Kata-kata Kunci: A.B. Simpson; Christian and Missionary Alliance; Kristen di Indonesia; Yesus sebagai Penyembuh



Introduction

The C&MA Church around the world believes that Jesus is the healer, besides being the saviour, sanctifier, and king to come. The movement of A.B. Simpson brought is still continually growing around the world and fourfold Gospel continues to be the core values of the C&MA church. Today the Christian community around the world recognizes the hallmark of the CM&A church with a logo that contains four symbols, namely the cross which symbolizes Jesus the Savior, the washing vessel which symbolizes Jesus the Sanctifier, the oil jar which symbolizes Jesus the Healer, and the crown which symbolizes Jesus is the coming King.

But there are questions that need to be answered after more than 100 years of this movement starting and growing: first, is the belief in Jesus as a healer still being practiced in the C&MA church? Second, how is the actualization of this practice applied in church services? Third, what about the experience in Indonesia as an Asian country where Christianity is growing?

Method

This paper discusses Jesus as a healer in C&MA teaching and how this teaching is lived in Asian countries such as Indonesia. The goal is to understand its doctrine and its relevance in the life of the church, especially the C&MA churches around the world. We hope that this article will be a shared experience with our brothers and sisters in the C&MA church in Chile.

Jesus is the Healer to This Day

Christology addresses the works or deeds and words that Jesus conveyed. As seen in the Bible, a large portion of Jesus' ministry was healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, making the lame walk, the deaf to hear, the leper clean, and many other chronic diseases including the exorcism of demons in one's life.¹ This means that what is believed is not

¹ Richard A. Culpepper, "Jesus as Healer in the Gospel of Matthew, Part 1: Methodology," *In Die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 50, no. 1 (November 28, 2016): 8, <https://indieskriflig.org.za/index.php/skriflig/article/view/2115/4191>; Richard A.

only his teaching but all his acts or his ministries that are still relevant to be carried out today.² Richardson support that Jesus is the healer of spirit, society, mind and body.³ Barlun even said that Jesus as a healer are received by the Romans and the Greeks.⁴ Dube says that Jesus healing ministry shows the healing power of God.⁵ Beale explains that the ministry of healing itself states something important about the incarnation of Jesus into the world, namely: The restoration that Jesus was introducing involved various kinds of healings, which were prophesied to occur when Israel would undergo true end-time restoration to God (Matt. 4:23–25; 11:4–6; cf. Jesus 32:3–4; 35:5–6; 42:7, 16). Jesus's healings also represented the restoration of creation from the fallen condition of the world. The physical (and spiritual) curses of the fall were beginning to be removed by Jesus, as he was re-establishing the new creation and kingdom, which Adam should have established. This is an adequate explanation that the ministry of healing is not just something that is considered as strengthening the ministry but has a special meaning in the kingdom of God.⁶

So the New Testament itself clearly describes the meaning of the healing ministry as a core of Jesus' ministry, not an additional event. This assures us that divine healing is still present in these end times. In contrast to Reformed thinkers such as Calvin, Jonathan Edwards was a

Culpepper, "Jesus as Healer in the Gospel of Matthew, Part II: Jesus as Healer in Matthew 8–9," *In Die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 50, no. 1 (November 28, 2016): 9, <https://indieskriflig.org.za/index.php/skriflig/article/view/2116/4209>; Opoku Onyiah, "God's Grace, Healing and Suffering," *International Review of Mission* 95, no. 376–377 (2006): 117, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6631.2006.tb00546.x>; Richard L. Mayhue, "Cessationism, 'The Gifts of Healings,' and Divine Healing," *TMSJ* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 263–86, <https://tms.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/tmsj14j.pdf>

² Fr. James McTavish, "Jesus the Divine Physician," *The Linacre Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (February 2018): 18, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0024363918761707>

³ Robert L. Richardson, "Jesus as Healer: An Image of Holistic Care for the Sick," *Chaplaincy Today* 15, no. 2 (July 1, 1999): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999183.1999.10767116>

⁴ Richard M. Barlu, "Chapter 4: Jesus as a Healer in the Greco-Roman Context: Implications for Healing and Wellness in Africa," in *Healer: Reception of Jesus as Healer during Early Christianity and Today*, vol. 9, HTS Religion & Society Series (South Africa: AOSIS, 2021), 71–72, <https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2020.BK222>

⁵ Zorodzai Dube, "Models and Perspectives Concerning the Identity of Jesus as Healer," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 74, no. 1 (June 26, 2018): 4925, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i1.4925>

⁶ G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology* (Michigan: Baker Books, 2011), 423.

cessationist, that is, the Reformed theologians taught that the canon of Scripture was closed and the age of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit had ended.⁷ However the CMA church believes that Jesus as a healer still applies to this day.

CMA affirmed the belief in Jesus as a healer; healing continues to this day for several reasons. John F. Soper says "Healings did not end with Jesus. He told his disciples they would do greater things. In the Book of John that Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I am doing. He will do even greater things than these" (John 14:12). The apostles then continued this healing ministry. Nothing in the New Testament says or even implies that the healing ministry would stop at the end of the New Testament. In fact, it says the opposite. Healing ministry will continue in age of the Church through His Body, the Church. The apostles continued his work. So the CMA church believes that Jesus is still the healer to this day."⁸

Regarding the position of A.B. Simpson, David J. Smith says, "Consistent with Alliance spirituality is the progressive affirmation of Jesus as Saviour, Sanctifier and Healer who is willing and able to save, sanctify and heal. It is the Scripture texts that provide the ground to believe that "provision [is] made for the bodily life of a saint; that there is a decree of spirituality which insures the infusion of the life of the Lord Jesus for the demands of the physical nature."⁹

But why is divine healing not widely seen in the modern world? A. B. Simpson in the "Gospel of Healing" explains that this happens because the church was increasingly inclined to worldliness, corruption, formalism, and unbelief.¹⁰ John Soper explained: "Why don't we see it as the disciples in the Early Church did? They were full of the Holy Spirit.

⁷ Kenneth P. Minkema, "A 'Dordtian Philosophie': Jonathan Edwards, Calvin, and Reformed Orthodoxy," *Church History and Religious Culture* 91, no. 1–2 (January 1, 2011): 242–53, <https://doi.org/10.1163/187124111X557890>

⁸ John F. Soper, "Jesus Christ Our Healer," accessed July 24, 2023, <https://legacy.cmalliance.org/alife/jesus-christ-our-healer/>

⁹ David J. Smith, "The Psycho-Spiritual Dynamics of Physical Healing in Alliance Spirituality," *Alliance World Fellowship*, May 28, 2023, <https://awf.world/repository/david-j-smith-the-psycho-spiritual-dynamics-of-physical-healing-in-alliance-spirituality/>

¹⁰ A. B. Simpson, *The Gospel of Healing* (NY: Christian Alliance Publishing, 1915), 13:42.

We leak. They were fully obedient. Too often, we are not. They fully expected to see Him work. We are often surprised that He does.”¹¹

The Purpose of Divine Healing

For A. B. Simpson the purpose of divine healing was not simply to bring comfort and relief to those who were suffering, but to give them the power to serve more effectively and live perfect and holy lives.¹² John F. Soper wrote that there are several purposes of divine healing for believers: First, as a bridge to the mission of salvation. Jesus knew that by answering the physical need for healing, the door would be opened to talk about Jesus’ greater mission—to bring salvation to souls. This is the same pattern throughout Jesus’ ministry. Every time Jesus made a statement about who He was, He supported it with concrete actions. He did miracles. Second, to prove that Jesus can forgive sins. In Jesus’ day people lived in a culture where sickness was the result of sin. With that assumption, then healing comes to prove that Jesus forgives sins. Third, to prove He was God. In other words, Jesus healed to prove He was the Messiah. Only One has the authority to forgive sins, that is Jesus, and He claims authority as God. Fourth, to show his mercy: Jesus healed because He cared. There is no record of Jesus rejecting anyone who asked for his help. Fifth, to show that He is Lord of all life. Jesus is a merciful Lord—not only Lord of our souls but also of our bodies. Hong says that through prophetic literature, we also can see that divine healing affirming God’s utter sovereignty over present world and eschatological alike.¹³ Six, to show that salvation begins now. Jesus’ extraordinary and merciful willingness to reach out and touch our physical needs shows that it is not only a form of the future but also of a present. Salvation starts now. He heals in this life, in this moment, in anticipation of something far more complete as eternity rolls around.¹⁴

The purpose of divine healing described above is centered on God and not on the blessing of healing alone. When someone receives healing,

¹¹ John F. Soper, “Jesus Christ Our Healer.”

¹² Bernie Van de Walle, *The Heart of the Gospel: A.B. Simpson, The Fourthfold Gospel and The Late Nineteenth Century Evangelical Theology* (Bandung: Kalam Hidup, 2021), 214.

¹³ Seong Hyuk Hong, “Divine Healing in the Prophetic Literature and Its Theological Significance,” *Korean Journal of Old Testament Studies* 22, no. 2 (June 2016): 166, <https://doi.org/10.24333/jkots.2016.22.2.166>

¹⁴ John F. Soper, “Jesus Christ Our Healer.”

he or she has a duty to proclaim God's love to a world that is experiencing a life crisis, especially during this global pandemic. There is an interesting explanation from Johnson Thomaskutty, a New Testament scholar explaining how divine healing is understood by the John Apostle in the Johanne community. He said that the implications of Jesus' acts of healing ministry had a purpose: 1) "In recapitulation, the Jesus movement and the Johannine community teach us the following lessons in managing the crisis situations...; 2) the church should be involved as a community to comfort and heal people who are in quarantine; 3) the people of God should get involved in the transforming mission to rescue the secluded and to feed the hungry; 4) the church should remain as a community of healing both in the physical and in the emotional or psychological areas of human life; 5) the community of God should teach the afflicted to trust in God even in the midst of deficiencies and promote charity and protection of life; 6) the believing community should remain as an agent of sanctification both in the physical and in the spiritual levels of human life; and 7) the members of the body of Christ should reiterate the voice of God in the world to protect human life and to spread the good news of abundant life in Christ."¹⁵

The Uniqueness of A. B. Simpson's Teaching of Divine Healing

For A. B. Simpson's healing is not the end goal but has a greater purpose namely a close relationship with Jesus as the primary source of healing. That's why A. B. Simpson used the term "divine healing" and not "faith healing." It affirms that the power comes from Jesus and not from our faith. Regarding this issue, Soper explains, there is interaction with faith. Jesus challenged people to have faith. He even said, "Your faith has made you whole." But faith was a response to the person of Jesus. It was power of Jesus and not individual faith that brought healing. If someone believes the power comes from faith, there's a problem. Faith is a necessary component but not what heals. Furthermore, Simpson believes that healing does not come from within us. It is not a matter of getting everything in balance. A great, satanic error of our day teaches that

¹⁵ Johnson Thomaskutty, "Reading the Fourth Gospel in the COVID-19 Pandemic Context," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (August 3, 2021): 8, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.6355>

healing flows from inner peace or balance, some resource inside us, even if God put it in us. That simply is not true. Healing comes only from the hand of Jesus. Another thing to emphasize is that healing does not come from faith healers. There are gifts of healing. God uses prayer to raise up people who need a touch by Him. But the power is in Jesus and there is no need to look to a faith healer. It is also emphasized that healing does not come through amulets or objects even if they are prayed for as is done in some old church traditions, such as necklaces of crosses or other objects which were called "Christian."¹⁶ So it can be concluded that divine healing comes from God. We must ask for healing from God in earnest prayer and born of a close relationship with the Lord Jesus.

In practice for the ministry of healing, there are several steps that A. B. Simpson wrote in "The Gospel of Healing": First, believers must have complete confidence in the Word of God that the promise of healing exists. The healing ministry failed because they did not believe in the Word of God. Second, believers must fully believe that it is God's will that He will heal. Many believers say, "If God wills", we should already know God's will and not just say if God wills. We have to believe there is healing. Third, believers must do a self-examination before praying for healing. If we have sin before God, then we should confess our sin before praying for healing. Fourth, after admitting our mistakes, it's time to claim God's promise of healing and not just asking for healing. Fifth, act according to our faith. If we believe He heals then act according to what we believe. Sixth, be ready to face the challenges of faith where we cannot expect immediate healing and all diseases will immediately disappear. Even though we are not healed in the end, our hearts are always renewed and healed. Seventh, if you have received healing, then the strength and healing are used to glorify God and become something that is returned to God and becomes a "a living sacrifice."¹⁷ From Simpson's teaching, we must realize that he strongly believed in divine healing and was not an ordinary teaching but a teaching that was lived and practiced. Many servants of God today teach divine healing but may not practice it.

¹⁶ John F. Soper, "Jesus Christ Our Healer."

¹⁷ A. B. Simpson, *The Gospel of Healing*, Chapter II: 1-7.

Healing Practices: Experience in Indonesia

In understanding Simpson's teaching, divine healing is coming from God. We must ask for healing from God in earnest prayer and born of a close relationship with the Lord Jesus. However, the issue of divine healing has become a controversial teaching in the church, namely, if we have asked for divine healing, can Christians go to the doctor again to seek help? As of today in Indonesia, there are some C&MA churches that do not allow its congregation to go to the doctor or to the hospital to get some help medically. It's enough just to pray. A.B. Simpson, according to Bernie Van de Walle, had slightly different views on this from time to time. At the beginning of his writing he stated that he had no problem using medicines, but in another part of his writings he emphasized that using medicines and doctors is a sign that people do not believe with Jesus as their healer.¹⁸ For us as the successors of the C&MA church, God uses doctors and medicines to receive divine healing. Usually we teach that before going to the doctor, believers must pray for healing from God and after that go to the doctor. This is not a sign of lack of faith but God allows the wisdom of the world to be used by God to heal. Can this practise be called divine healing? Yes it can, because God uses the wisdom of the medical world and God gave that wisdom to them. Even so, we still believe in divine healing directly from God and also are not wrong to use medicine and go to the doctor for treatment. We believe both come from God.

To see the practice of divine healing in Indonesia, we must remember what Simpson said about our goal of practicing divine healing. It is true what Simpson said that divine health is not for human pleasure to be free from pain and enjoy this world. The purpose of divine healing is that we can visit slums, narrow alleys, homes of the poor. There are sick people who need to be healed.¹⁹ This is not just a divine message, but proclaims a Messenger who is blessed with divine power. We are not healed so that we will be amazed by God alone, but with our health, we are faithful to preach the gospel to others in which we also proclaim divine healing. In the course of the history of evangelism by C&MA US in Indonesia, we found that the gospel spread because evangelists

¹⁸ See more on this topic in Van de Walle, *The Heart of the Gospel*, 206–13.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 214.

preached the gospel and also prayed for the sick. Many miracles occurred in this ministry and thousands of people were converted in the few years since the start of the CMA US ministry in Indonesia. The history of this mission proves that evangelists and pastors are still expected to practice divine healing prayers in their ministry today.²⁰

Conclusion

Divine healing is a characteristic of Simpson's teaching that should still be lived out in church life today. The church must have the courage to pray for the sick and convey the news that divine healing is still valid today. What distinguishes Simpson's teachings from the evangelical movement of his day is that many Christians focus on healing and idolize preachers who have divine healing gifts. But A. B. Simpson explained the importance of focusing on the healer and not solely on the blessings of healing. The Bible's teaching about divine healing is not aimed at healing from suffering solely, but is aimed at glorifying God and preaching the gospel of salvation. A church that is faithful in preaching the gospel will not stop practicing healing prayers for those who ask to be prayed for their healing. Likewise, the church must be an agent of healing both physically and emotionally for communities that are facing various diseases, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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²⁰ See Rodger Lewis, *Karya Kristus di Indonesia: Sejarah Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia Sejak 1930 (The Work of Christ in Indonesia: History of the Indonesian Gospel Tabernacle Church Since 1930)* (Bandung, Indonesia: Kalam Hidup, 1995), 103-105.

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