

How Does Prayer Affect God's Plan?

An Enquiry into God's Providence with Special Reference to Prayer and Healing

by

Mark Pretorius¹

Abstract

If God is sovereign and His plans fixed, why pray? Does prayer change what God has purposed to do? If not, what is the point in praying? One could take these questions even further and say: if prayer has any effect on what happens, then it would seem that God's plans are not fixed. On the other hand, if God has settled His plans and He will do what He is going to do, then does it matter whether we pray or not? Every committed Christian wants to believe that prayer makes a difference. Thus, this article has a twofold purpose. The first is to show that God's providential plans and His command for Christians to pray are consistent with His purpose to bring about His plans through prayer. The second is to answer the question: does God heal when one prays, and specifically when it comes to intercessory prayer? Bringing clarity to these questions is important as it has a direct bearing on how we will view miracles and God's willingness to answer prayer.

¹ Mark Pretorius is the Senior Assessor at the South African Theological Seminary. He holds an MA in Biblical Studies from the University of Johannesburg and is presently working towards a PhD in Systematic Theology at the University of Pretoria.

1. Introduction

The first question one might ask in a debate about the providential hand of God on His creation is: how should one, in this context, define providence? According to Tupper (1985:579), providence means that God “sees ahead” and “watches after” creaturely existence generally and each individual specifically. Williams (1996:117) defines providence as “the overseeing care and guardianship of God for all His creation.” As such, God is understood as one intimately concerned with His creation. In certain ways, God is central to the conduct of the Christian life, as it means Christians are able to live in the assurance that God is present and continuously active in their lives.

However, the role of prayer is a problem that has concerned thoughtful Christians when considering the *nature* of providence, and how it links up to miraculous events, and specifically, physical healing. Erickson (2001:430) states that the difficulty stems from the question, “What does prayer really accomplish?” On the one hand, if prayer has any effect on what happens, then it seems that God's plan was not fixed in the first place. On the other hand, if God has settled His plan and He will do what He is going to do, then does it matter whether one prays or not? Every committed Christian wants to believe that prayer makes a difference. According to Ware (2000:164): “What is the point in praying, if prayer itself turns out to be superfluous and ineffectual?”

2. Providence in Prayer and Healing

One should note from the start of this discussion that the above question is simply one particular form of the larger issue of the relationship between human effort and divine providence. Barth (1958:148) defines divine providence in terms of the sovereignty of God when he states that God ...

rules unconditionally and irresistibly in all affairs.... Nature is God's 'servant', the instrument of His purposes.... God controls, orders, and decides, for nothing can be done except the will of God.... God foreknows and predetermines and foreordains.

How Does Prayer Affect God's Plan?

Although this statement is true, it does appear from Scripture that God often works in some sort of partnership with humans. One could, in a sense say that God does not act unless humans do play their part. Thus, when Jesus ministered in His hometown of Nazareth, He did not perform any major miracles; all He did was heal a few sick people. Scripture states that Jesus “was amazed at their lack of faith” (Mark 6:6), suggesting the people of Nazareth simply did not bring their needy ones to Him for healing. Often the act of faith was necessary for the Lord to act, but it seems that this was lacking in Nazareth. To see it from another perspective, Bloesch (1978:31, 57) explains:

While God's ultimate purposes are unchangeable..., His immediate will is flexible and open to change through the prayers of His people. A personal God, who loves and cares, can be solicited in prayer. Prayer can work miracles because God makes Himself dependent on the requests of His children.

Erickson (2001:431) rightly adds that when God wills the end, He also wills the means. Therefore, prayer does not change what God has purposed to do; it is simply the means by which He carries out His final objective.

Although Thiessen (1979:129) states that some hold that prayer can have no real effect on God, since He has already decreed just what He will do in every instance, he does argue that this is an extreme position. One must not ignore James 4:2, “You do not have because you do not ask.” One could say, God does some things only in answer to prayer, He does other things without anyone's praying, and He does some things contrary to the prayers offered. In His omniscience God has already taken all these things into account, and in His providence He sovereignly works out everything in accordance with His own purpose and plan. Thiessen further argues:

If we do not pray for the things that we might get by prayer, we do not get them. If He wants something done for which no one prays, He will do them without anyone praying. If we pray for things contrary to His will, He refuses to grant them. Thus, there is a perfect harmony between His purpose and providence, and man's freedom.

How Does Prayer Affect God's Plan?

In this regard, we need to consider the contentious issue concerning whether God heals when one prays.

The twentieth and early twenty-first century has seen a remarkable growth in interest in the subject of the spiritual healing of the body. This growth has arisen in three related but distinct stages of movements (see Erickson 2001:852-853). Firstly, the Pentecostal movement, which arose and grew in the United States in the early part of the twentieth century, and stressed the return of certain of the more spectacular gifts of the Holy Spirit. Then, about the middle of the century, the Neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic movement began; it had many of the same emphases. In the 1980's and onwards the "Third Wave" arose. These movements put greater stress on the miracles of spiritual healing than does Christianity in general. Often they make no real attempt to give a theological explanation or basis for these healings. As such, when one raises the question, the answer often given is that healing, no less than forgiveness of sins and salvation, is to be found within the atonement. The argument is that Christ died to carry away not only sin, but sickness as well. Among the major advocates of this view was A. B. Simpson, founder of what is today known as the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

One of the striking features of the view that Christ's death brings healing for the body, according to Simpson (1880:30-31), is the idea that the presence of illness in the world is a result of the fall. When sin entered the human race, a curse (actually a series of curses) was pronounced on humanity; diseases were part of that curse. Since illness is a result of the fall, not simply of the natural constitution of things, it cannot be combated solely by natural means. Being of spiritual origin, it must be combated in the same way the rest of the effects of the fall are combated—by spiritual means, and specifically by Christ's work of atonement. Intended to counter the effects of the fall, His death covers not only guilt for humanity's sin, but also humanity's sickness. Healing of the body is therefore part of a Christian's great redemption right. And if that is the case, then when one prays for a healing, whatever the sickness might be, healing should take place.

However, the research that has been undertaken on the relationship between prayer and healing over several decades does not confirm the above contention. The following is a breakdown of these findings.

3. Historical Aspects of Prayer and Medicine

In various interviews and surveys undertaken over several decades by prominent scientists and medical doctors (see Meyers and Benson 1992; Angel 1985; Kleinman, Eisenberg and Good 1978; and Engel 1977), it was found that most people believe that not only does the mind affect the body (a view with which most scientists would agree), but there are also supernatural forces that have an intense effect on one's physical and emotional well-being (a view with which most scientists would disagree).

From a scientific perspective, the important question is: how should one deal with reports of miraculous healings and the belief that prayer can affect healing? Is there a special connection between belief in the supernatural and physical well-being? With the accelerating technical advances of Western medicine, there are increasing patient complaints against the medical community for their exclusionary focus on the biomedical model of disease. According to these surveys, it would seem that many patients, particularly if their disease is severe, want metaphysical as well as medical interventions; that is, they want a direct link from their medical care to God.

In a later study, and in response to these findings, McCullough (1995:15-29), in a review of the prayer literature, considered the following four areas of prayer research:

- prayer and subjective well being;
- prayer as a form of coping;
- prayer and psychiatric symptoms;
- intercessory prayer.

He reported that both the frequency of prayer and the presence of mystical and religious experience during prayer were predictive of subjective well being on many indexes. It was, however, stated that several confounds in the studies reviewed rendered the data interpretation problematic. Variables such as religious commitment and socio-demographics were not controlled. Thus, if one prays often but has little commitment to religious belief, the positive affects on subjective well being may be predicted to diminish.

McCullough further observed that prayer is used more often for symptoms that have been treated with medication, and have been discussed with a physician, than those that have not. One obvious problem found is that prayer as an effective coping response is confounded with medical treatment. Thus, as one experiences the effect of the medical treatment, there may be a tendency to credit change to prayer.

What about intercessory prayer, or the act of praying for another? Sir Francis Galton (1872:125-135) was the first to apply statistical analysis in trying to determine the effects of intercessory prayer. While his data collection method was flawed, he inferred that intercessory prayer was not a significant predictor of life span or social class. Since Galton's study in 1872, there have been six empirical studies looking into the effect of intercessory prayer. Collipp (1969:201-204), Elkins, Anchor and Sandler (1979:81-87), Joyce and Weldon (1965:367-377), O'Laoire (1997: 38-53), and Wirth and Barret (1994:61-67) all studied the effect of prayer on various medical conditions and found no statistically significant effect for intercessory prayer. Green (1993:2752), however, did find positive expectancy (the belief in the effectiveness of prayer) in relation to intercessory prayer to have a significant effect on patient anxiety levels. Thus, for those patients who had a high expectancy for the effectiveness of prayer to reduce anxiety, anxiety was reduced.

These studies do not validate or deny the effect of prayer. The question remains unanswered: does prayer work?

4. Does Prayer Work?

One might ask, should medical doctors or psychologists advise their patients to pray? According to Sloan, Bagiella and Powell (1999:664-667), "it is premature to promote faith and religion as adjunctive medical treatments." They state that the existing research on the effect of prayer is so flawed that it simply does not warrant belief in prayer for physical and emotional well being. However, in my view, the empirical evidence strongly suggests that expectancies for desired outcomes, social connectedness, and deep religious positive expectancies may be effective buffers for the stressors associated with

How Does Prayer Affect God's Plan?

various medical conditions. As such, any intervention that improves patient well being is valuable.

It is unfortunate that many of the studies undertaken in the area of prayer and healing were based on empirical data that tended to disregard the omnipotence and omni-benevolence of God. It was also not indicated whether any of the subjects interviewed, or the scientists conducting the experiments, had a trusting faith in God, even though they did pray. To date, I have not found any major research undertaken by evangelicals to counter claim these findings. Sadly, many scholars, even those in the theological disciplines, are sceptical when it comes to anything related to healing or any miraculous events. Bultmann (1958:16), for example, asserted that miracles were "mythology." He wrote, "Modern men take it for granted that the course of nature and history ... is nowhere interrupted by the intervention of supernatural powers."

The question remains as to why the Bible would instruct Christians to pray in all circumstances, if God were not going to answer any of their prayers, especially prayers for healing. It was stated that the data presented was flawed, and that much research is still needed in this area. However, the question arises: is that a good enough answer in the light of the negative statements made within these studies regarding the relationship between prayer and healing?

In all fairness, it must be said that science deals with facts. Facts, according to Barton (1999:17), are the instruments the natural scientist uses to build a coherent framework for understanding the world. The problem is that as this framework has developed, it has come into conflict with religion and will continue to be in conflict with religion in future studies that it undertakes until common ground is reached between the two disciplines. As science is exposed to new data, it is subject to change; therefore, it is continuously evolving. There are no absolutes at this time in the scientific world, especially in its understanding of prayer. No scientist quoted in this study can claim that his or her observations have acquired the status of ultimate truth. In this vein, the following letter sums up the general consensus regarding the limitations of science.

How Does Prayer Affect God's Plan?

In a letter written to the scientific magazine *Nature*, Donald MacKay (1997:502) from the Department of Communications and Neuroscience at the University of Keele in the United Kingdom wrote:

In scientific laws we describe, as best we can, the pattern of precedent we observe in the sequence of natural events. While our laws do not prescribe what must happen, they do prescribe what we ought to expect on the basis of precedent. If by a "miracle" we mean an unprecedented event ..., then science says that miracles ought not be expected on the basis of precedent. What science does not (and cannot) say ... is that the unprecedented does not (or cannot) occur We cannot dogmatically exclude the ever present possibility that the truth about our world is stranger than we have imagined.

Although science has achieved enormous success as a way of knowing the structures and processes of the material world, natural science, it appears, leaves no place for divine action. However, it must also be stated that it is a human moral trait to seek explanations. As such, scientists could claim that they are conducting research simply for the sake of understanding how nature operates, whether that is in the field of religion or any other discipline that deals with unexplainable events (e.g., quantum physics). Thus, those who study natural science need to understand that if breakthroughs are to be achieved in the dialogue between science and religion, scientific methods, as advanced as they are, hold no intrinsic guarantee that these methods can lead to ultimate truth. This is specifically so when it comes to unexpected happenings, such as when one prays and things happen.

To expand on this statement, Bloesch (1978:58) writes:

Evangelical prayer is based on the view that a sovereign God can and does make himself dependent on the requests of His children. He chooses to realise His purposes in the world in collaboration with His people. To be sure, God knows our needs before we ask, but He desires that we discuss them with Him so that He might work with us as His covenant partners toward their solution. There is, of course, a time to submit as

How Does Prayer Affect God's Plan?

well as a time to strive and wrestle with God in prayer, but this should come always at the end of prayer and never at the beginning. Moreover, our submission is not a passive resignation to fate but a relinquishing of our desires and requests into the hands of a living God to answer as He wills.

As previously mentioned, some theologians are sceptical when it comes to the issue of praying for change. Moltmann, for example, broke with monotheism and embraced a Hegelian form of *panentheism* (see Heiler 1958). Panentheists believe the providential plan of God regarding prayer is more to change the one who prays than to change circumstances. Moltmann (2001:247-249) contends; one can no longer pray *to* God but only *in* God, that is, in the Spirit of God. Prayer, in many cases, has come to be reinterpreted as *soliloquy*, that is, reflection on life or meditation on the ground of being. In the same vein, others (e.g., Tillich 1957 and Schleiermacher 1963), believe that prayer should only take the form of gratitude, resignation, or meditation, rather than a petition to alter the ways of God. In some circles, prayer is understood as a consciousness-raising experience which brings one into tune with the infinite.

According to Hannah (1979:347), although prayer is a form of meditation and reflection, it is also a means of sanctifying grace. It results, in his view, in altering the person; that is, it affects the person's spiritual maturity. Calvin (1970:146-147) expands on this by eloquently arguing that prayer changes the one who prays.

The necessity and utility of this exercise of prayer no words can sufficiently express. Assuredly it is not without cause our heavenly Father declares that our only safety is in calling upon His name, since by it we invoke the presence of His providence to watch over our interests, of His power to sustain us when weak and almost fainting, of His goodness to receive us into favour, though miserably loaded with sin, in fine, call upon Him to manifest himself to us in all His perfection. Hence, admirably peace and tranquillity are given to our conscience; for the straits by which we were pressed being laid before the Lord, we rest fully satisfied with the assurance that none of our

evils are unknown to Him, and that He is able and willing to make the best provision for us.

Regarding this, Dabney (1972:716) simply writes, "Prayer is not intended to produce a change in God, but in us." To argue that prayer changes the one who prays is most likely not to be challenged. It is readily apparent that people change when they spend time with God.

This is very much in line with the findings undertaken by Green (1993:2752) and Sloan, Bagiella and Powell (1999:664-667), who stated that for those patients who had a high expectancy for the effectiveness of prayer to reduce anxiety, anxiety levels were indeed reduced and may also have been effective buffers for the stressors associated with various medical conditions.

In my view, what these scholars and researchers fail to recognise, is that prayer is an essential part of Christian living, especially intercessory prayer. Paul, writing to Timothy, states the following in 1 Timothy 2:1-2, "I urge that supplication, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions." While no sharp distinction can be drawn between "supplications" and "intercessions," petitionary prayers are to be offered on behalf of others. But this does not, unfortunately, answer the question—does God heal someone at his or her own request, or at the request of others, as in the case of intercessory prayer? To answer this question one would first need to determine how a miracle would or could take place, especially in the area of healing.

5. Miracles of Healing

Nichols (2002:711) states that miracles usually occur within a context of faith and prayer, but one would not want to limit God's miraculous activity only to contexts of faith and prayer. For example, Erickson (2001:432) writes that some theorise that miracles recorded in the Bible were probably a suspension of natural laws. An example of this is the case of the axe head that floated (2 Kings 6:6). The theory suggests that for a brief period of time, in that cubic foot or so of water, the law of gravity was suspended. In effect, God turned off the law of gravity until the axe head was recovered. The problem with such examples is that the breaking of such laws of nature usually introduces

How Does Prayer Affect God's Plan?

complications requiring a whole series of compensating miracles. For one thing, there is no hint in the narratives to explain the following question: if God suspended the laws of gravity to float the axe head, how would everything else connected to the miracle react?

From a theological perspective, one would rather say that when miracles occur (whether that is an answer to prayer for healing or any similar related requests), natural laws are countered by supernatural forces (see Lewis 1947:59-61). In this view, the laws of nature are not suspended, but continue to operate. In the process a supernatural law is introduced, negating the effect of the natural law (e.g., a sickness that has attacked the body because of the fallen state of humanity). There are two other possible ways of understanding how God may act in a miracle of healing. The first is the traditional way, namely, God responds to prayer, faith, and holiness. If a righteous person (or group of people) prays in faith to God for a healing, God may respond.

A second way is this: perhaps God's activity, or "energy," to use a modern analogy is always and everywhere available, like an extended field or supporting context. Pannenberg (1994:83), for example, argues that the Spirit of God may be viewed (analogically) as a dynamic field, a field that can be accessed only by those who open themselves to God in faith, holiness, and prayer.

The first model, in the view of Nichols (2002:712), envisages God's action in terms of personal response; the second represents it as a field or context phenomenon; the field is always present but only some access it. One could say that both of these models are necessary to understand miracles, just as both particle and wave models are necessary to understand subatomic particles or the nature of light. The models are complementary, and either one without the other is incomplete. The first model explains the fact that many miracles do seem to be responses to prayer, but by itself it is open to the objection: why God does not heal everyone who prays? The reason may be that to access the divine energy, a person must surrender to God in faith and prayer. If few people are doing this, it underlines the importance of my earlier question: "Did the people involved in the experiments have a trusting faith in God?" It is not that God plays favourites and rewards those who grovel. It is rather that those who are not deeply surrendered to God cannot access God's power because

How Does Prayer Affect God's Plan?

they are not “tuned in.” For God to act fully in one's life, one would need to be receptive.

If there is divine activity in miracles, however, can one explain how it influences physical processes?

Unfortunately, it is difficult at present to understand the mechanism of physical processes. According to Nichols (2002:712), it may be that God acts at the quantum level as the determiner of indeterminacies. Quantum states, which are indeterminate, are determined by divine activity to influence physical processes. Robert Russell (1998) has proposed this model of divine activity as a way of explaining theistic evolution and special providence. Although this might account for an accelerated healing, it is hard to see how it could account for more dramatic miracles like the resurrection.

One could answer this question in broad terms by saying that theologically, and even logically, God cannot be completely separate from the created order. If God were transcendent, He could not influence the world and the world could not influence Him. This is not the Christian idea of God; rather, it is the Deist idea, a result of viewing the universe as a self-enclosed mechanical system that leaves God on the outside. God's essence is to exist; God is the *act of existence* from which all other existent things draw their existence. There is therefore continuity as well as a discontinuity between God and creation. Rahner (1965:53–61) has advanced the notion that matter/energy and what theologians call *finite spirit* exist in a kind of continuity. If so, (finite) spirit (such as the soul), could influence matter directly, and God, in turn, could influence the soul. (This is how Aquinas explains the resurrection.) Nichols (2002:713), however, argues against this, and states that God never acts as one force alongside other physical forces. Rather, God acts in creation immediately, to empower nature to transcend itself. Therefore, according to Erickson (2001:434), there should really be no problem when one faces events that run contrary to what natural laws dictate. Twenty-first century science is more likely than was the twentieth century to recognise natural laws as merely statistical reports of what has happened. From a purely empirical standpoint, one has no logical grounds on which to base whether the course of nature is fixed, or whether it can be successfully opposed.

It was stated in the beginning of this paper that God, in His omniscience, has taken all these things into account, and in His providence, He sovereignly works them out in accordance with His own purpose and plan. Regarding this, Hodge (1976:91) aptly argues,

The scriptures assure us, and all Christians believe, that prayer for material as well as for spiritual good is as real a means affecting the end sought as is sowing seed a means of getting a crop, or as is studying a means of getting learning, or as are praying and reading the Bible a means of sanctification. But it is a moral not a physical cause. Its efficiency consists in its power of affecting the mind of God and disposing Him to do for us what He would not do if we did not pray.

Furthermore, Packer (1997:29) clearly and rightly addresses this contentious area of God's providence and healing in the following way:

Petitions for healing or anything else are not magic spells, nor do they have the effect by putting God under pressure and twisting His arm.... Non-Christian prayers for healing may surprise us by leading to healing; Christian prayers for healing may surprise us by not being answered that way. There are always surprises with God. But with God's children 'ask and you will receive' is always true, and what they receive when they ask is always God's best for them long-term, even when it is a short-term disappointment. Some things are certain, and that is one of them.

6. Conclusion

In concluding, one might again ask the question: how does prayer affect God's providential workings in creation—whether that is in the area of healing or any other suspension or alteration of natural laws? To a scientist and to a theologian, miraculous events might, of course, simply be illusions; events that are really fabrications, coincidences, or the results of some mysterious power of the mind or even an unknown law of nature and not of any divine activity. In other words, there are no miracles; theologically speaking, there

How Does Prayer Affect God's Plan?

are only unusual events. This, of course, is a hypothesis that remains to be proven. But, if part of the cause of a miraculous event is divine providence, then to a scientist, a miracle, whether it is a supernatural causal event or a healing taking place within a person, will appear simply as an inexplicable event, a mystery that seems to go beyond what can be explained by natural causality.

If, on the other hand, divine providence is suggested as the main factor in Divine activity, then miracles should be of interest to all those who are trying to understand how God acts in the world. To the believer, then, the providence of God is not an abstract conception. It is the believer's conviction that he or she is in the hands of a wise and powerful God, who will accomplish His purposes in the world—whether it be through the answering or not answering of the prayer for healing or for any other need.

Works Cited

- Angel M 1985. Disease as a reflection of the psyche. *New England Journal of Medicine* 312:1570-1572.
- Barth K 1958. *Church dogmatics, vol 3*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.
- Barton A 1999. *Questions of science exploring the interaction between science and faith*. Eastborne: Kingsway.
- Bloesch DG 1978. *Essentials of evangelical theology, vol 2.: life, ministry and hope*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.
- Bultmann R 1958. *Jesus Christ and mythology*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Calvin J 1970. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. Translated by H Beverege. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Collipp PJ 1969. The efficacy of prayer: a triple blind study. *Medical Times* 97:201-204.
- Dabney R L 1972. *Lectures in systematic theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Elkins DK, Anchor N and Sandler H M 1979. Relaxation training and prayer behavior as tension reduction techniques. *Behavioral Engineering* 5:81-87.
- Engel G 1977. The need for a new medical model: a challenge for biomedicine. *Science* 196:129-135.
- Erickson M 2001. *Christian theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker.
- Galton F 1872. Statistical inquiries into the efficacy of prayer. *Fortnightly Review* 12:125-135.
- Green WM 1993. The therapeutic effects of distant intercessory prayer and patients' entranced positive expectations on recovery rates and anxiety levels of hospitalized neurosurgical pituitary patients: a double blind study. *Dissertation Abstracts International* 54 (5-B), 2752.
- Hannah JD 1979. Prayer and the sovereignty of God. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136:344-353.
- Heiler F 1958. *Prayer: history and psychology*. Edited and translated by S McComb New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hodge AA 1976. *Princeton sermons*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth.
- Joyce CRB and Weldon R M C 1965. "The objective efficacy of prayer: a double-blind clinical trial: *Journal of Chronic Diseases* 18:367-377.
- Kleinman AEL and Good B 1978. Culture, illness, and care: clinical lessons from anthropologic and cross-cultural research. *Annals of Internal Medicine* 88:251-258.
- Lewis CS 1947. *Miracles*. New York: Macmillian.
- MacKay D 1997. Letter to the editor. *Nature* 311:502.
- McCullough ME 1995. Prayer and health: conceptual issues, research review, and research agenda. *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 23:15-29.
- Meyers SS and Benson H 1992. Psychological factors in healing: a new perspective on an old debate. *Behavioral Medicine* 18: 5-11.
- Moltmann J 2001. *The coming of God* Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Nichols TL 2002. Miracles in science and theology. *Zygon* 37:703-715.

How Does Prayer Affect God's Plan?

- O'Laoire S 1997. An experimental study of the effects of distant, intercessory prayer on self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. *Alternative Therapies* 3:38-53.
- Packer JI 1997. When prayer doesn't work. *Christianity Today* 41:6.
- Pannenberg W 1994. *Systematic theology*, vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Rahner K. 1965, *Hominisation*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Russell RJ 1998. Special providence and genetic mutation: a new defence of theistic evolution. In RJ Russell, W Stoeger and F Ayala (eds), *Evolutionary and molecular biology*, 191–223. Vatican City: Vatican Observatory Publications.
- Schleiermacher F 1963. *The Christian faith*, vol 2. New York: Harper Torch.
- Simpson AB 1880. *The gospel of healing*. New York: Christian Alliance.
- Sloan R, Bagiella E and Powell T 1999. Religion, spirituality, and medicine. *The Lancet* 353: 664-667.
- Thiessen HC 1979. *Lectures in systematic theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Tillich P 1957. *Systematic theology*, vol 2. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Tupper FE 1985. The providence of God in Christological perspective. *Review and Expositor* 82:493-595.
- Ware AB 2000. *God's lesser glory: the diminished God of open theism* Wheaton: Crossway.
- Williams JR 1996. *Renewal theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Wirth DP and Barrett MJ 1994. Complementary healing therapies. *International Journal of Psychosomatics* 41:61-67.