

# JOHN WESLEY & HEALING: DEVELOPING A WESLEYAN MISSIOLOGY

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## INTRODUCTION

"We can do no great things, only small things with great love."  
—Mother Teresa

The art and compassion of healing comes when we are willing to get involved in the details of people's lives. God is a God of the details.

This paper presents a (somewhat) comprehensive and inclusive perspective on the significance of healing for the global spread of the gospel. An initial goal is to offer a stabilized and detoxified version of healing that commends itself to those disciplines hoping to combat illness and brokenness, while participating in helping people to have virtuous, whole and fully human lives. In order to approach a full-orbed understanding of a biblical Wesleyan theology and practice of healing; environmental, social, physical, and spiritual, elements must be included. The salience of healing lies in its cultural universal need and avenue to spread the gospel globally, while demonstrating God's attitude and ability toward all of God's creation. In order to make sense of the conversation about healing, it is necessary to present the specialized terms and phrases used.

## DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS, AND ATTITUDES TOWARD HEALING

### *Definitions of Key Terms*

Because many of the terms have been used with different definitions, the following segment clarifies how the terms will be used in this paper.

*Wellness* refers to that quality of life that we experience lived in Christlikeness and the image of God. A right relationship with God centers us, makes us spiritually whole, and brings healing. This central relationship of love entails God justifying us,

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regenerating us, adopting us, and sanctifying us, and making us whole persons.

A *primary health care delivery system* refers to the universal, as well as the local church's ministry dedicated to the care for persons in all the needs of their lives (Yohn 383).

*Holistic medicine* is both a healing movement and practice of curing persons of illnesses by use of traditional medicines, herbs, pharmaceuticals, and prayer methodologies while discerning whether one's illness is caused by physical and/or spiritual means. It finds its roots in both secular and religious settings. This term is at home in spiritual warfare because it seeks to use the multiple facets of creation.

The words *salvation* and *save* have the same Old Latin root "salvus" (Ott 1995:181). Their intended meaning is to act in protection, deliverance, or relief from an agent of harm. The malefactor may be an assailant, sin, a mental distress, or a physical wound. John Wesley kept these words knit close together in his work for the Lord, often using medical terminology to describe spiritual healing (Ott 1995:178). Wesley believed in multi-dimensional healing and used it regularly in his pastoral practice. Wesley did not use spiritual warfare terminology as such but engaged regularly in its practice through these suggested means.

The words *wholeness* and the verb *to heal* derive from "hal" (hale), the Old English, "heil" (whole, holy), the Old German, and "shalom" (well being), the Old Hebrew.<sup>1</sup>

*Divine healing* is healing by the direct intervention of God.

*Inner healing* encompasses forgiveness of sins, and renewal for persons suffering from damaged minds, wills, or emotions.

*Worldview* is a set of presuppositions held consciously or subconsciously by individuals and societies for interpreting perceived reality that influences and is molded by core beliefs, and patterns of personal and societal behavior for relating to one another and the multidimensional cosmos.

#### EIGHT ATTITUDES TOWARD PHYSICAL HEALING

There are many responses to the question, "Does God heal?" The answers range from "God definitely does not heal," to "God definitely does heal." Here are a few representative positions:

1. God has no interest in healing, therefore does not heal.
2. Healing and healing gifts ended with the apostolic age.
3. Conversion ends the need for all healing, because God is only interested in our spirit.
4. Health professionals should do physical emotional, and relational healing.
5. Healing ministry is only for the "gifted."
6. God heals through the community of faith and health professionals.
7. Healing gifts are active in the contemporary body of Christ.
8. God is interested in our whole person and healing, therefore God heals.

#### THEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS FOR THE MISSIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF HEALING FROM A WESLEYAN PERSPECTIVE FOR SPREADING THE GOSPEL IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

##### *Biblical Accounts of Healing for the Spread of the Gospel*

Jesus preached the kingdom of God, mended broken persons, and empowered the

disciples to do likewise. However, healing is a matter of great concern throughout the Old Testament as well.

The comprehensive, although not exhaustive, annotated Scripture list below illustrates God's interest in healing the nations and individuals connected to Israel's story. Although most of the references below deal directly with the Jewish nation, enough evidence from a review of the literature demonstrates at least three generalizations concerning her surrounding neighbors. First, people of the Ancient Near East believed that good health stemmed from one's goodness and favor with a deity. The converse of this belief held that sickness resulted from sin and judgement from the god. Second, God desired for His people to know Him as Jehovah-Rophi, "the Lord who heals you" (Exodus 15:26). They saw healing as a Divine work. Third, wholeness encompassed the total person in context. God's people began to see that a right relationship with God held a key to life's harmony as they experienced it (Stanger 13).

#### AN OVERVIEW OF HEALING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- Gen. 20:7 He will pray for you and you shall live.
  - Ex. 4:6-7 Moses received restoration from leprosy.
  - 15:26 I, the Lord am your healer.
  - 23:25 I will remove sickness from your midst.
  - Lev. 13-15 Leprosy is healed.
  - 16 Healing comes by the atonement.
  - Num. 12:13 Moses prays, "Oh God, heal her."
  - 16:46 Make atonement for them.
  - 21:7-8 Moses interceded...when he looks, he shall live.
  - Deut. 7:15 The Lord will remove from you...sickness...disease.
  - 32:39 And it is I who heal.
  - Joshua 5:8 Healing comes through the natural process.
  - 1 Sam. 6:3 Philistines healed of the tumors and mice plagues.
  - 16:14-23 Anointed music puts evil to flight from Saul.
  - 1 Kings 13:4-6 A man of God prayed to the Lord, and the king's hand became normal.
  - 17:17-24 The widow's son is restored to life through Elijah.
  - 2 Kings 2:19-22 The water in Jericho is made wholesome.
  - 4:8-37 The Shunemite's son is restored to life through Elisha.
  - 5:1-14 Naaman cured of leprosy.
  - 13:21 Dead man revived through touching Elisha's bones.
  - 20:1-11 Hezekiah recovers, through prayer and Isaiah's fig ointment.
  - 2 Chron. 7:14 If they...humble, pray, seek, turn, then I will hear, forgive, heal.
  - 20:9 Judah is saved from destruction (Moabites, Ammonites and Meunites).
  - 28:14-15 Israel released prisoners (Judah), distributed clothes, dressed their wounds, returned them to their land.
  - 30:20 Hezekiah prayed and the people were healed.
  - 32:24-26 Hezekiah prayed; the Lord healed and gave a miraculous sign.
- (See also Is. 38:1-8)

- Job 42:10 When he prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes.  
 Psalm 6:2-9 Healing for the body, spirit, and emotions.  
 30:2 God restored health.  
 34:19-20 The Lord rescues.  
 38:3-8 Some sickness stems from sin.  
 41:4 Prayer for healing from sin.  
 103:1-5 God forgives sins, heals diseases, renews life and gives righteousness and justice.  
 107:20 The Lord heals from death, saves from distress, heals wasteland.  
 147:3 He heals the brokenhearted,  
 Prov. 3:7-8 Revere the Lord, turn your back on evil, and gain health and vitality.  
 4:22 Obedience to God's words brings life and radiant health.  
 12:18 The words of the wise bring healing.  
 13:17 Hope deferred makes the heart sick. Fulfilled dreams make us joyful.  
 15:4, 30 Gentle words bring life and health; good news makes for health.  
 16:24 Kind words are good for the body and soul.  
 Eccl. 3:3 There is a time to heal.  
 Is. 6:10 A hard heart is a root of sickness.  
 19:13, 22 Foolish counsel ruins the land. He listens to their pleas and heals.  
 30:18-26 Turn from idols and be healed and cured.  
 32:15-17 The presence of the Spirit brings wholeness to creation.  
 33:24 Forgiveness brings healing.  
 35:3-8 There is wholeness on the Highway of Holiness.  
 38:1-8 (See 2 Chronicles 32:24-26 above)  
 38:16 The Lord's discipline leads to life and health.  
 53:5 The suffering servant vicariously carries away our sin and heals us.  
 58:6-11 Healing shall spring forth from righteous lives.  
 61:1-2a Salvation and healing come through the Sovereign Spirit.  
 Jer.3:2 I will heal your backslidings.  
 8:21-9 Healing is withheld because of lies, cowardice toward the truth, indifference for God, slander, fraud, and hardness toward the Lord.  
 Hos 5:13 Israel seeks a cure from the wrong source.  
 6:1 Israel presumes the Lord will heal them.  
 7:1 God would heal the relationship, but Israel does not want it.  
 11:3 God heals through gracious love.  
 14:4 The Lord heals apostasy.  
 Neh. 3:19 Judgement is likened to a wound or sickness.  
 Zech. 11:16 Healing is withheld in judgement.  
 Mal. 4:2 The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in its wings.

Through the whole of the Old Testament healing prayer is directed to God. Healing is a provision by God with eschatological overtones. Clearly, it is God's will to open the abundant life before his people and to call all nations to participate in the flow of the milk and honey life, but even God does not always get what he wants.<sup>2</sup> The work of

divine healing serves to remind us that the God who created our spirits also created our bodies. Healing the infirmities of the body keeps us from being overly focused on either the tangibles or the intangibles of life. The individual is an integrated whole. We belong to systems and networks of people groups and depend inseparably on the ecosystem of the earth for survival. Yet, it is living in the restored image of Christ that brings life into its proper focus. Being rightly related to God, self, others and the rest of the created order is the goal of God's healing work (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7).

God has called a people into existence and given them promises of blessing in response to their faithfulness. The bases of their life and relationship with God are nothing less than God's initiative of grace. Flowing from walking humbly with their God are the attendant blessings of health and prosperity for themselves and all who associate with them, including healing of the land. Health and prosperity are not automatic. Neither does this suggest that the righteous do not suffer. However, God is about redeeming love. Love calls to the lost, the dying, the diseased, the maladjusted, the demonized, the broken, and the sick to come to the Divine Physician for healing. God is "the God who heals you," the One who heals all our diseases.

Healing is a synergistic activity. God created us whole and in harmony for mutually interdependent relationships with other persons, the environment, and with the capability of perfect communion with God. Although these relationships were marred in the Fall, God provided a Way (Jesus) to heal the brokenness through new creation power. When we accept and appropriate God's free gift, God's reconstruction project takes on vitality in our life and our sphere of influence. On this occasion of faith working by love, God is pointing us to a reality beyond just what we can see or measure by the scientific method.

The people in ancient times experienced the release of divine power, and a manifest presence of God, yet it required faith and faithfulness to experience shalom, a fulfilled potential quality of life that included health.

## AN OVERVIEW OF HEALING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

### *An overview of Jesus' healing ministry*

A survey of the New Testament reveals many illustrations for the need of various types of healing:

#	Description	Matt.	Mark	Luke	John	
1.	Man with unclean spirit			1:23-25	4:33-35	AB
2.	Peter's mother-in-law	8:14-15	1:30-31	4:38-39		BCD
3.	Multitudes	8:16-17	1:32-34	4:40-41		ABCE
4.	Many demons		1:39			AF
5.	Leper	8:2-4	1:40-42	5:12-13		BCGH
6.	Paralytic	9:2-7	2:3-5	5:17-25		BE
7.	Man with withered hand		12:9-13	3:1-5	6:6-10	BC
8.	Multitudes	12:15-16	3:10-11			A
9.	Gerasenes demoniac	8:28-32	5:1-13	8:26-33		AB
10.	Jairus's daughter	9:18-19; 23-25	5:22-24; 35-43	8:41-42; 49-56		BCE

#	Description	Matt.	Mark	Luke	John	
11.	Woman with issue of blood	9:20-22	5:25-34	8:43-48		GI
12.	A few sick people	13:58	6:5-6			C
13.	Multitudes	14:34-36	6:55-56			EI
14.	Syro phoenician's daughter	15:22-28	7:24-30			ADE
15.	Deaf and dumb man		7:32-35			BCD
16.	Blind man		8:22-26			BCD
17.	Child with evil spirit	17:14-18	9:14-27	9:38-43		ABCE
18.	Blind Bartimaeus	20:30-34	10:46-52	18:35-43		BCGH
19.	Centurion's servant	8:5-13		7:2-10		DE
20.	Two blind men	9:27-30				BCG
21.	Dumb demoniac	9:32-33				A
22.	Blind & dumb demoniac	12:22	11:14			A
23.	Multitudes	4:23	6:17-19			FJ
24.	Multitudes		9:35			FJ
25.	Multitudes		11:4-5	7:21		FJ
26.	Multitudes		14:14	9:11	6:2	H
27.	Great multitudes		15:30			FJ
28.	Great multitudes	19:2				
29.	Blind & lame in Temple	21:14				
30.	Widow's son				7:11-15	BH
31.	Mary Magdalene & others		8:2			A
32.	Crippled woman		13:10-13			BC
33.	Man with dropsy		14:1-4			C
34.	Ten lepers		17:11-19			BFGH
35.	Servant's ear		22:49-51			B
36.	Multitudes		5:15			
37.	Various persons		13:32			A
38.	Nobleman's son				4:46-53	BE
39.	Invalid				5:2-9	BG
40.	Man born blind				9:1-7	BC
41.	Lazarus				11:1-44	B

A. Drove out demons

B. Word spoken

C. Touched by Jesus

D. Prayer of another

E. Faith of another

F. Preaching of Jesus

G. The person's faith

H. Jesus moved by compassion

I. Person touches Jesus

J. Teaching of Jesus

"Out of the 3,779 verses in the four gospels, 727 or 19% relate specifically to the healing of the physical and mental illness and the resurrection of the dead" (Wimber 1986:59). Healing had a priority in the ministry of Jesus. The ministry of healing should have no less of a prominent place in the life of the church today. The Scripture table below presents the place of healing in the life of the disciples. It is significant that the book of Acts is replete with miracles and healings under the power of the Spirit of Creation who still broods over people's lives to bring order, healing, and wholeness to them out of their chaos, disease, and brokenness.

#### AN OVERVIEW OF HEALING IN THE MINISTRY OF THE DISCIPLES

#	Description	Matthew	Mark	Luke	Acts
1.	Jesus' Ministry Described	11:2-6		7:18-23	
2.	The Twelve Sent	10:1-11:1	3:13-19	9:1-11	
3.	The Seventy-two Sent			10:1-24	
4.	Disciples Attempt to Cast Out Demons	17:14-21	9:14-29	9:37-45	
5.	Power to Bind & Loose	16:13-20			
6.	Great Commission	28:16-20	16:14-20	24:44-53	1:1-11
7.	Jesus Ministry Described				2:22
8.	Signs & Wonders at Apostles' Hands				2:42-47
9.	Healing of Lame Beggar				3:1-4:22
10.	Prayer for Confidence & Healing Signs				4:23-31
11.	Signs & Wonders at Apostles' Hands				5:12-16
12.	Ministry of Stephen				6:8-15
13.	Ministry of Philip				8:4-13
14.	Ananias and Saul				9:10-19
15.	Peter Heals Aeneas (Lydda)				9:32-35
16.	Peter Heals Dorcas (Joppa)				9:36-43
17.	The Ministry of Jesus				10:34-41
18.	Magician Struck Blind by Paul				13:4-12
19.	Paul & Barnabas in Iconium				14:1-7
20.	Lame Man at Lystra				14:8-18
21.	Paul Raised at Lystra				14:19-20
22.	Slave Girl at Philippi				16:16-40

#	Description	Matthew	Mark	Luke	Acts
23.	Paul at Ephesus				19:8-20
24.	Eutyclus Raised from the Dead				20:7-12
25.	Paul Recalls Ananias				22:12-21
26.	Paul on Malta				28:1-10
27.	Galatians 3:5				
28.	Hebrews 2:4 <sup>3</sup>				

The miracles, in general, and the healing miracles, in particular, serve the purposes of authenticating the gospel and establishing the church (Wimber 1991:12). Some who hold this position use this understanding to relegate the miraculous activity of Christ to the first century, but that position does not logically follow. Since people in our postmodern, and pre-Christian global village still need to believe in an authentic gospel, and the church is still not established among every people group, that position has no real plausibility, if only for those two reasons. However, the purposes of divine healing include: revealing that Jesus is the Messiah who was promised by the Father (Matthew 11:1-6), authenticating Jesus' life, teachings and personal claims (Matthew 8:14-17 and Luke 5:18-26), highlighting Jesus' compassion and mercy, purity, and power (Matthew 14:14, 20:34 and Mark 1:41), announcing the arrival of the kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23), demonstrating that the gospel is for all people everywhere (see Luke 7:1-10), calling all people to repentance (Luke 10:8-12), illustrating in the physical sphere what God's intentions are for us spiritually also (Matthew 9:1-8), and foreshadowing eschatologically God's intention of answering the groans of all creation to be renewed in wholeness (Romans 8:22, Revelation 21:1-7, 22:1-5).

#### WESLEY'S USE OF HEALING FOR THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL

##### *Wesley's Healing Ministry as Spiritual Wholeness*

Wesley's deep spiritual piety contributed to his practice of personal prayer (and vice versa). Prayer is the avenue of open communication with God, and Wesley prayed as easily as he breathed. He regularly prayed for others, especially those who needed salvation.

As an ordained Anglican clergyman, Wesley expected to pray on behalf of the people to whom he ministered. The people naturally anticipated being prayed for by their cleric as a part of the role and function of a minister. Mr. Wesley learned to pray to God early in life because of the prayer lives of his godly parents in the home and at church. They held daily devotions in their home. He read prayers from the Book of Common Prayer and the Bible at home and at church. The liturgy of the Church of England included many written and recited prayers, yet, allowed extemporaneous prayer. During his education at Charterhouse and in his professional ministry training later at Oxford, Wesley further developed skills in prayer, especially in the ministrations and duties of religious office (Telford 1959:37-39).

Many people wrote letters to Wesley asking him to pray for their souls. Over the years he prayed for hundreds, if not thousands, of people concerning their relationship to the



Lord. This paper does not develop Wesley's practice of prayer except to highlight how he used it as a means to affect all that he did. He was a man of prayer.

## WESLEY'S HEALING MINISTRY AS PHYSICAL WHOLENESS

### *Wesley's Use of Medicine for Physical Healing*

One of the most controversial practices in Wesley's ministry revolved around how he used medicine to help meet the needs of sick, poor people. Every culture has people known to the insiders as the poor. Universally, people get sick and need healing. In this matter, eighteenth century England was no different from any other time, or place. However, England may have had an increased number of the poor, because the socio-economic conditions oppressed the masses.

Actually, Wesley's employment of medicine in the service of the poor is not that different from his choice of other ministry practices. It arose out of the need of the people. No sickness, pain, or suffering existed before Adam's original sin (Wesley 1986:272). However, Wesley's day-to-day experience reminded him that the pristine conditions experienced by the first pair in the Garden no longer existed in the present. Now, not only did people need their relationship to God, others, and the creation restored, they needed to have their relationship to "self" realigned. Although it is not the focus of this paper to explore fully the theological implications of this four-fold restoration, one of the spin-off consequences of the broken relationships just mentioned is the need to combat sickness in humanity (Riddell 1914:64-65). Wesley comprehended that the poor had limited means, and no real access to competent and affordable medical care. Therefore, he decided to do something about it (Barager 1928:59). Before Wesley took matters into his own hands, he went to the hospitals and the doctors to try to get them to provide some relief for the poor, but to no avail.

When Wesley became aware that the poor of society could not get adequate medical attention, and that medicinal compounds were overly complex and expensive, he provided beneficial medical advice to them and their families, and medicines at a cost they could afford (Hill 1958:12). He felt that he had no other recourse. Wesley confessed, "I saw the poor people pining away and several families ruined and that without remedy" (Wesley 1980:307). Wesley discovered that the most useful medicines were so simply composed that the average adult could make them at home without an apothecary. This seemed to be such a small effort in order to improve the physical standards of health care for the poor (Hill 1958:8, 10-11). Wesley saw their problem and wanted to provide a solution.

Wesley never attended a medical college, nor obtained a medical license from an accrediting medical society, but he learned as much about the most current ways to cure simple diseases as most of the registered practicing physicians of his day. He explained his knowledge of medicine and his desire to aid the destitute of his parish like this:

At length I thought of a kind of desperate expedient. I will prepare and give them physic myself. For six or seven and twenty years I had made Anatomy and Physic the diversion of my leisure hours: though I never properly studied them, unless for

a few months when I was going to America, where I imagined I might be of some service to those who had no regular physician among them. I applied to it again. I took into my assistance an apothecary and an experienced surgeon: resolving at the same time not to go out of my depth, but to leave all difficult and complicated cases to such physicians as the patients should choose.<sup>45</sup> (Wesley 1960:307)

Wesley worked relentlessly to relieve the suffering of the poor. He established three clinics (London, Bristol and Newcastle), orphanages, prison ministries, and a new method for visiting the sick (Ott 1980a:194). Obviously, Wesley could not attend to all the sick persons in England, but a network of stewards and leaders could. In a letter to his brother Charles, John Wesley resolved, "I am setting a regular method of visiting the sick here [London]." He perceived that his writings could circulate in some places where they could not go themselves; therefore, he published literature on curing simple diseases.

His ministry implores us to include offering the means available to all those to whom we minister healing. The marginalized of society have few options. The church needs to continue to provide them with competent therapeutic treatment to bring health into their lives.

Wesley's critics accused him of quackery. However, he amply defended both his actions and the dispensary he opened at the Foundery in 1746, by highlighting the positive results reflected in the amount of people who no longer suffered from their chronic illnesses as a result of his advice, medicines, and God's blessings (Turrell 1921:362).<sup>46</sup> Actually, Wesley did not practice medicine as a profession. Even his opponents admitted that he had no aspirations to be a doctor, but only that he earnestly labored for "the healing of disease" (*British Medical Journal* 1906:987). Wesley engaged the use of the physical medicines to promote general health in persons serving as a living reminder of the spiritual reality that lay behind.

When Wesley obliged patients "to give them the best advice I could and the best medicines I had," he grasped that the process of healing came from God at work in the created order. If we fully grasp this truth, then we can employ the means to heal that God puts before us. God often employed medicine to remedy a malady. Therefore, Wesley put together a list of the most common simple diseases along with his equally simple cures. He published the little book *Primitive Physic* in 1747. It contained no less than 829 cures (Wesley 1791:169). The book met with such popular success that it went through twenty-six editions in sixty years, in part, because it addresses almost all the diseases known to the eighteenth century (*British Medical Journal* 1902:799). Dr. Stewart suggests that it is one of the "all-time medical best sellers" which produced about \$150,000 of revenue that Wesley either gave away or used to underwrite the cost of free distribution of copies of the book (1969:34). Many people sought healing and wholeness through Wesley's ministry. Fallen and downtrodden people received help to transform their broken and miserable lives. Wesley used discernment and wisdom to direct people toward God to meet their lives' deepest and most urgent needs. Those who needed a cure for their sin sick souls gained solace from the Jesus Wesley preached. Others who suffered from various chronic physical "distempers" (illnesses) found relief and healing. Restoration and peace, "being in a state of equilibrium" called for a biblical concrete practice of health care (Ott 1995:180-81). Wesley urged them to have both inward and outward health (Ott 1980b:587).

However, medicine did not, and does not work by itself apart from the grace of God. Charles Wesley provides a poetical insight to this theological position in "a hymn for one about to take his medicine:"

Hail, great Physician of mankind,  
Jesus, Thou art from every ill.  
Health in Thine only Name we find,  
Thy name in the medicine doth heal.  
(Rattenbury 1929:300)

Hear Wesley address one patient: "William Kirkman, what complaint have you?" "O Sir, a cough, a very sore cough." "How long have you had it?" "About three score years." "I looked up to God and said: 'Take this three or four times a day. If it does you no good it will do you no harm'" (emphasis mine) (Wesley 1980:307). Wesley records that within two or three days the man was cured completely of the cough. In the same paragraph he further comments that within five months over five hundred people passed through the clinic, and 71 "were entirely cured of distempers long thought to be incurable" (Wesley 1980:307). For those who still derided Wesley, he challenged his physician detractors to see who had more cured patients.

To say God granted success to his medical endeavors understates the case. However, the point is not merely to defend Wesley's use of medicine for its own sake. The point is that, simultaneously, people are drawn to a gospel that provides for their spiritual wellbeing, and relieves their physical suffering without placing an economic burden on them. The gospel presents God as the Source who provides, motivates and sustains this work of love that beckons them to come to God for wholeness. Mission endeavors to mediate salvation through all viable means that demonstrates its theology and strengthens its ethic, while renewing persons in the image of God. This practice of "the cure of souls" is comprehensive in scope.

Wesley did not take this role of curing of souls and bodies lightly. Nor did he just treat illnesses as some of his critics suppose, but he treated whole persons.<sup>7</sup> He responded to the physicians who accused him of quackery to look at the results of his works. Expressed in a letter to John Smith, dated March 1747, Wesley firmly defended his stance in regard to (the use of lay preachers and) his use of medicines (Ott 1980a:195). His authority "to do all the good you can" came from God mediated through Christ (Wesley 1980:307). Wesley understood the good news that Jesus preached holistically, and the ministry of Jesus as "destroying the works of the devil." Jesus, in ministering to the seekers who came to him, touched them at their points of need. He forgave their sins and healed their diseases. However strong this model for ministry may have been in motivating Wesley to imitate it, he grounded the action of doing "good to all" in an event earlier than Jesus' earthly ministry, namely, the Creation. No evil existed in the original creation. God made the world good. Therefore, Wesley suggests that God is at work bringing the end of all things to a better conclusion, than if sin had not entered the picture (Wesley 1985:482-83).

The present condition of the world still reflects the consequences of the Fall. Bodily infirmities attend every waking moment of people around the world in all cultures. Sin

precipitated the necessity for practicing the relief of hurting persons. Wesley's prescription of medicine and practice of curing people of their chronic diseases proceeded naturally from his theology and sense of compassion (Wesley 1980:307). God's grace is also at work in the world to reconcile the world unto God. Because God is working, so we who are called by that Name must share in the responsibility and privilege of the endeavor. Therefore, Wesley boldly exercised his clerical privileges in the spirit of the gospel conferred upon him at his ordination, when the Archbishop of Canterbury laid hands on him and commanded, "Take thou authority to preach the gospel" (Hill 1958:14). This fits well with Bosch's understanding of how Christians should use the authority that God gives. Wesley's wide interpretation of the social implications of the gospel led him to practice a physical gospel of deeds, as well as a gospel of words, freely using the deplorable circumstances of the poor to vindicate his actions and to strengthen his position of providing medicine for their needs. His motivation, works, and words flowed from his theological bedrock of "faith working by love."<sup>8</sup>

Viewing the world from this Mt. Everest gospel principle, Wesley looked and beheld the needs of the wretched and the lowly; thus, the biblical principles also found in Matthew 25 compelled him to act. He justified his actions by asserting

For more than twenty years I have had numberless proofs that regular physicians do exceeding little good. From a deep conviction of this I have believed it my duty within these four months last past to prescribe such medicines to six or seven hundred of the poor as I knew were proper for their several disorders. Within six weeks nine in ten of them who had taken these medicines were remarkably altered for the better and many were cured of diseases under which they had laboured for ten, twenty, or forty years. Now, ought I to have let one of these poor wretches perish because I was not a regular physician? To have said, 'I know what will cure you, but I am not of the College: You must send for Doctor Mead?' Before Doctor Mead had come in his chariot the man might have been in his coffin. And when the doctor was come, where was his fee? What! He cannot live upon nothing! So instead of an orderly cure the patient dies and God requires his blood at my hands. (Wesley 1980:95)

Wesley trusted God to heal persons. Regularly this required medicines. He used a "deconcoction" to restore a person to health as easily as he prayed for their recovery.<sup>9</sup> He believed bodies and souls depend upon one another. Unless these dimensions of the person received attention, the cure was not complete. Wesley noted that "healing could be natural or supernatural, and it could occur through both medication and prayer (Holifield 1958:28)."<sup>10</sup>

#### WESLEY'S USE OF PHYSICAL HEALING IN THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL

Wesley learned to pray for the healing of the ailing from biblical examples and from his mother praying for her sick children. Especially after his Aldersgate experience, Wesley joined evangelical faith to the prayers offered on behalf of the sick, expecting to glorify God, either by their full recovery or by their death—signaling their end of pain and suffering

(Wesley 1985:407). The prayer for divine healing, for the cure of souls, had a double edge for Wesley. Although he strove preeminently for the healing of the spirit (salvation) for the individual, Wesley believed that the body played an equally important role in this life.

In his sermon *On Eternity*, Wesley urgently called the people to connect with the Lord in such a way that their entire lives would be transformed to reflect the divine quality of life in the present and in eternity (1986:371-72). He concerned himself with making the quality of life for each person crescendo to its best possible harmony with God in this life. For him, prayer played a key role in the attainment of a blissful existence. One could argue that Wesley's favorite combination for healing included the practice of his regimen of suggestions on health "and the faithful use of 'that old unfashionable medicine, prayer'" (Ott 1995:180).

Neither the use of prayer, nor the dispensing of medicines to heal people's afflictions bothered Wesley. To him, there was no controversy in either. Medical science cannot fully overcome human sickness, because all causes do not lie within its borders. To bring about wholeness in a person's life there must be cooperation between the physical and the spiritual, because the battle lies in both realms. Wesley's view on healing suggested that a person might be healed by ordinary (the natural processes of the body with (or without) the aid of medicine) or extraordinary (a sovereign act of God) means. Whatever the case, it still was divine healing.<sup>11</sup> God's healing grace is at home in the processes of the body.

God's direct healing modality works synergistically with the natural processes of the body, medicines, and medical procedures, psychotherapeutic methods, and healing prayer couched within a loving and supportive Christian environment and community (Sperry 50).

Although divine healing has its opponents, Wesley believed that the Bible teaches plainly that God still works miracles. In a lengthy letter to Dr. Conyers Middleton, Wesley refutes that the extraordinary gifts and miraculous powers given to the Christian body to plant the gospel, "to enable them to overrule the inveterate prejudices of the Jews and Gentiles, and to bear up against" persecution were no longer at work. Wesley understood that the spiritual gifts conferred on the church have been designed for the benefit of the church and the conviction of "the Jews and the Heathens" (Works 1986 10:4-16).

Wesley found a wealth of Scriptures referring to prayers for healing, especially from Jesus and His disciples. The Book of Common Prayer suggested specific prayers for the sick to be healed. Further, Wesley reasoned "God has more than one method of healing either the soul or the body" (Holifield 28). He saw with his own eyes that God sometimes used physical elements to cure the sick, and sometimes God healed them directly by divine might. Holifield confirms this view when he points out that on one occasion "an eminently pious woman" became ill and was confined to bed. John Wesley came at her request (1986:28). Wesley adds, "She desired us to pray, that the chain might be broken. A few of us prayed in faith. Presently she rose up, dressed herself, came downstairs, and I believe had not any farther trouble" (Holifield 1986:28).

Wesley trusted God to heal in answer prayer. He prayed regularly as a primary means of accomplishing God's kingdom work in persons, in the church and in the world. Prayer helped to soften people who were hard against God. In *On Visiting the Sick*, Wesley hailed public and private prayer as two of "the ordinary channels which convey the grace of God to the souls of men" (Works 1986:385). When Wesley faced angry mobs on

numerous occasions, he prayed before he spoke. Then he encouraged people "to fear God and to flee the wrath to come." Those who responded to this message enrolled in a class to learn more about God. The seekers often responded to the teaching of the class leaders, accepted Christ, continued to grow in inward and outward holiness through the discipleship groups (bands and select societies), and found healing for their souls. Since the Methodists worked among the poor, the Methodists discovered that the poor not only needed a cure for their souls, but for their bodies, the social structures that created much of their circumstances as well as their physical environment. Compassion continually motivated Wesley. He sensed "the symbiotic relation between body and spirit" and advocated a lifestyle to promote health (Ott 1991:43). It may be argued that Wesley's view of healing reflects the biblical sense of *shalom* more than that of any other evangelical leader.

Above we have briefly noted Wesley's use of prayer for the cure of souls in salvation and physical illness. The next part of the paper discusses healing as it relates to mission through the local church.

#### HEALING MINISTRY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH—THINK GLOBAL; ACT LOCAL

The local church as an intentional means for spreading the gospel should practice healing ministry (Yohn 353). This does not negate other pastoral functions, but keeps the needs of the person in view. The sick and infirmed not only need their bodies reformed, but also need their spirits renewed (See Mark 16:15-20). If healing ministry is to be effective through the local church, then the church must be convinced of the necessity and efficaciousness of healing in the lives of ordinary people. God really does heal in response to prayer (James 5:14-16). Healing opens the door for the church's outreach to the community. Healing demonstrates in tangible ways the power of God to do something about people's wretched situations, signals the arrival of the kingdom of God and forces the enemy into recession. Healing addresses the fundamental brokenness experienced by people (Acts 4:9-12). Healing is for the restoration of relationships, between someone and God, the person and himself or herself, the person and others, and the person and the environment. When the world sees transformation in these areas in someone's life, it is clear that a powerful force is at work. This arouses interest and opens the door for the opportunity to tell the story of what God is doing. Healing is for the whole person (II Corinthians 1:3-5, James 5:14-16, John 7:23).

The local church is the community of the healed, yet functions as wounded healers (Nouwen 90). They have been where the sick are and know the cure. They are called to administer the medicine to help others. Just as Jeremiah and Ezekiel were examples to Israel for their healing, Israel was the example to the rest of the Ancient Near East. As Jesus fulfilled Isaiah 53:4 and became the healing balm, so now the church is commissioned to be the wounded healer to the nations. Herein lies the deeper need of the world only dimly recognized.

Non-Christians around the world are likely to see their immediate needs and draw toward those who can make a difference in their life in tangible ways. However, this is where the postmodern world gives an open door to our advantage of spiritual power in the Holy Spirit for whole life transformation. They may be attracted to the light of the candle, but when they come close enough they will experience the heat also. It is here

that the healing of the nations begins. Societies transform nations. Groups transform societies, and individuals transform groups. God transforms individuals and works for the healing of all peoples.

The authority for practicing healing comes from God, but lies within the nature of the believing community itself. God created the community of believers to be an overcoming community (Bosch 380, Kraft 259-60). In religious language and categories, that refers to overcoming sin. The ultimate healing for sin culminates in the resurrection, of which Jesus was the first fruit. The practice of healing demonstrates that God is love and is able to act in a world of brokenness and bring wholeness out of it. The tangibility of physical healing openly displays the multi-dimensionality of the power of God to whom the act of healing testifies. Soon after John Wimber started the Vineyard Christian Fellowship, he began teaching from the gospel of Luke on the healing ministry of Jesus, not because he had seen the sick healed as much as he believed that it was a work "the scriptures taught Christians to do" (Wimber 1986:53). These works "tell the truth" that there is no place that a believer cannot go clothed in the Holy Spirit, the armor of God, where compassion for the people where love will not win the day. The consequences of slipping into places controlled by the enemy of our souls and touching people in ways that make them whole serves notice that the kingdom of God has prevailed against another gate of hell to bring healing to the weary, and the land groaning and crying for reclamation.

We are not disconnected from the land. This visible display is salient for many peoples and worldviews around the world. For example, Bill Musk in *The Unseen Face of Islam* asserts that the ordinary Muslim sees certain areas of the neighborhood, and even his or her own home as occupied by evil spirits (169). The display of Christ's resurrection power in healing is attractive, because it allows Muslims to be free from the fear of evil, and shows them that the high creator God is near to cleanse, to make ordinary life safe and livable, even providing for sanctifying their own body. This is because God, who was in Christ reconciling the world to the Divine Self, and is now present in the body of the Church, touched them in a salient way. The focus is not on the act of healing, but on the Lordship of Jesus Christ who reclaims all life (Nouwen 89). There is no aspect of the created order that does not interest God. In the act of healing, the participants and recipients are reminded of the transfer of the "territory" back into the hands of the One who created it in the first place, not unlike the bread and wine at the last supper.

This is the transforming, sovereign, sanctifying work of God that every person, group of people, culture, nation, and the physical environment really needs. The healing act performed through the meek hand of the Christian is a bastion of heaven peeking in on Earth. The tenants of the diseased, wounded, and troubled world receive divine rescue. In the work of healing, even a miracle needs a hand. In the hands of those who are called by God's name, they go to proclaim the arrival of the kingdom to its recipients and freely offer healing like they received it (Luke 9).

The ministry of healing calls for persons who have a compassionate and merciful heart for the needy. The minister needs to: hear and obey the Father, depend on the Holy Spirit, follow God's lead, minister in the authority of Jesus' name, and believe that God still works miracles through and in the lives of people (Wimber 1986:114). Perhaps there

is no better way to present the material than in the stories of persons who have been transformed by the healing touch of God. The next section presents two of their stories.

#### CASES DEMONSTRATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HEALING FOR SPREADING THE GOSPEL IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT.

Terrie L. Lillie, a Fuller Theological Seminary student, documents this story from a village in Kenya. He relates the account of the healing of a child who was dying of malaria. Many in the village had gathered outside the home of the family of the child. In this instance there was no medical treatment available in the immediate area, nor would the family allow the child to be taken out of the village. A Kenyan Christian man held the child. The man's wife and he prayed for the child to be healed. Immediately, God healed the child. As a result of the child being healed, the whole village turned to Christ. In this case the power of God to heal the sick unlocked the door for the villagers' faith to embrace Christ (Wimber, 1986: 30-31).

C. Peter Wagner affirmed in 1984, "What I'm seeing, as the picture is beginning to emerge, is that worldwide there is a remarkably close relationship between growth of the churches today and the healing ministry—particularly, but not exclusively, in new areas where the gospel has just penetrated, where the devil has had complete reign for centuries or millennia." He adds the following statistic: "In Brazil, 40 percent of the population are practicing spiritists and another 40 percent have had some direct experience with it. The way the gospel is spreading there is by a confrontation: healings, miracles, signs and wonders" (Wimber 1986:51).

A key to exercise faith for healing or other miracles, as perhaps referred to in I Corinthians 12:9, is learning how to discern when God's unction or anointing has come for the task of healing in a particular case (Wimber 1986:54). Openness to healing in his ministry led the laity to take healing to the streets "leading many, who otherwise would not be open to the message of the gospel, to Christ." Wimber supported the idea that healing, as a part of the spiritual gifts is "employed in reaching the lost" (Wimber 1986:55).

Often human misery can become an avenue to salvation for an individual or whole group. In 1984, when John Wimber was in Johannesburg, South Africa, he encountered a 14-year-old Zulu boy who was developmentally the size of a seven-year-old. He recounted, "his fingers and toes were practically missing; his jaw broken, and teeth ruined; he was incapable of speaking or walking (his mother carried him to the meeting). When I spoke to him, he responded—in perfect English"—a language the boy had never learned (Wimber 1991:102-103). They discerned that the boy was under a curse and demonized. They prayed for deliverance and broke the curse. Within two days the boy walked to the meetings under his own power and could recognize Wimber. They prayed for him again and many of his sores were healed. "Many of the people who attended the meetings were converted to Christianity because of the boy's healing" (Wimber 1991:103).

#### MISSIOLOGICAL DATA FOR HEALING FROM A WESLEYAN PERSPECTIVE FOR THE GLOBAL SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL

Although concern for the people may set the context of our ministry, (as it did for



Jesus, the Church, and leaders like Wesley), theology explains why we are doing it. We respond to the needs of the broken people precisely, because God is concerned about the circumstances of every person, every society and the world.

A theology of grace gives content to our understanding of the Creator God, God's relation to all of creation, and to people in particular.

Christian mission must reflect the same tension by focusing successfully on the whole mission. In order to help people discover inner healing (salvation) and outward health, we love the person as a united being no matter where he or she is. We demonstrate this kind of love by providing hands of healing to the sick, the poor and the despised. We model Jesus' ministry in that where we find brokenness, we reach out and touch it in a way that brings healing. The good news for us is that God is concerned enough to do something about our wretchedness, both present and future. God provides a remedy for sin and cures for our bodily diseases.

Wesley's intimate involvement with the problems of the society and the hurts of the people transformed lives in such numbers that it created a shift in eighteenth century English society, lifting the quality of physical life, improving national health care and creating a more positive spiritual climate. In short, Wesley affected England the way the use of healing can affect anyplace, at the worldview level, through his multi-modal ministry that leaned heavily on relieving the suffering of the poor through the practice of healing. Although it is not proven in this paper, there are indications that the success of Wesley's dispensaries in London, Bristol, and Newcastle aided the revival of the 1740s and 1750s, and may have been a significant flourishing cause. The Christian gospel makes a difference in the physical world.

Likewise, people in the 19th and 20th centuries recognized that some of the holiness campmeetings emphasized healing as a part of the gospel. As a result hundreds came to the conventions of A. B. Simpson and Charles Cullis.<sup>12</sup> The earnest seeker did not go away empty. Many people found the healing they sought and deeper healing beyond their ruminations. Often people who attended to obtain physical healing found both salvation and physical cure (Chappell 1983:134).

A universal principle is that all people everywhere need some type of healing. The power of prayer as faith working by love sustains the work of healing. Without it, full Christian healing does not happen. This is the message of life: The Heavenly Dove has healing in his wings and still calls for his children to participate in dispensing it to a hurting and broken world.

Wesley's practice of health care for the dis-empowered of society in England, in the Georgian colony, and in Ireland demonstrated the ability to meet a need for social wholeness so badly lacking in his day. His personal example for us is that we are not as helpless as we sometimes think we are. If the church joins together in the task, then whole communities can experience transformation by the healing power of God in every aspect of life.

The healing work clearly demonstrates the need for the church to be a presence within a community. By being with the sick, we remind them that God does not forget them and views them as important enough to come to them. Although God's Spirit is at work in the world where the church is not yet present, it is God's desire that the church be in each community and be a visible witness of love to each community. The body of believ-

ers can demonstrate who God is in visible and tangible ways within and across cultural lines. The healing hands of the Savior can be felt in the touch of a caring and loving Christian who allows faith to work by love.

The use of medicines as a "non-natural" agent of God to assist the body in its natural process of healing itself kept a unity of life that those outside of the faith often let unravel (Ott 1980b:580). Those in the professional medical field who ridicule and oppose divine healing take on the persona of the Pharisees. Wesley, like Jesus, bucked the established order and the devil to bring the kingdom of God to whomsoever wanted to receive it. Those who responded to his words and works found a balm for their souls and abundant wholeness for their lives.

The significance of healing for the work of mission is basic to the message and tasks of the church because wholeness is its goal (Beuoy 101). Wesley revised Primitive Physic as he discovered better ways to bring health and wholeness to the people. His healing practices reflected an openness to allow God to do a better work through him to reach others in Jesus' name. As he challenged his leaders "to follow his example in following Christ and no further," the challenge remains the same for the church today: find the practical ways to touch lives and lead them to wholeness in Christ. The practice of healing is one of those prime ways.

## CONCLUSION

We understand the message of the Bible. Christ, the Great Physician, came to bring wholeness to persons and provide the great cure for all humanity. On the one hand, He came for the destruction of sin and the destruction of works of the Devil. On the other hand, Jesus came to usher in the kingdom of God. Wesley recorded in his sermon, *The New Creation*, that part of the experience in heaven the Apostle John provided by way of Revelation 21:3-4 notes, "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be no more pain: for the former things are done away" (1986:296).

We observed in the ministry of Jesus the in-breaking of the kingdom of God in the present. The poor received healing for their souls and healing for their bodies in the gospel. The kingdom of God came in the person of Jesus and in the ministry dispensed to and through the church at Pentecost flowing down to the present. Therefore, we insist that the Spirit still works through the lives of individuals and the church collectively. Wesley offered proofs of the activity of the Spirit to cure souls of their sin and heal their diseases.

We understand the gospel as conveying the recovery and restoration of persons in the image of God (Yohn 74). This signifies wholeness in body and soul in a restored four-fold relation. Thus, we are divinely empowered by God and through the study of the means of curing diseases to act in favor of the patient in the healing name of Christ, the Divine Physician (Hill 1958:19).

We need not doubt in exercising a God-given ability to relieve the suffering of the sick (in body or soul). In one sense, no real distinction can be made. That is not to say that there is no distinction between body and soul, because there is. The soul is "infinitely more important" than the body. The soul lives on after "what was mortal" is buried. However, we only speculate as to its condition until the day when the soul is given a glo-

rified, incorruptible body like Jesus' glorified body. Nonetheless, the body plays a key role in the work of the kingdom. Bodies without spirits are corpses and spirits without bodies are ghosts, separately, neither can do the work of the ministry on Earth.

Since Wesley had the acumen, the theological training, the doctrinal support, and a critical in-depth knowledge of medicine, he freely practiced this premise: if his medical advice did not help someone, it would do them no harm either.<sup>13</sup> Wesley's sermons, journals and letters are replete with hundreds of references to persons whom he cured by "touch of the Master's hand," albeit through medicine, prayer or whatever other method(s) God implemented in that case. He sets an example for us about what reality can be for the broken, downtrodden and marginalized of society if we will let our "faith work by love."

In the global mission activity of God, we follow what the natural course of the out-working of inward and outward holiness and happiness brought by the activity of the Spirit of God. Therefore, in a global context, healing from a Wesleyan perspective offers a prime opportunity for the spread of the gospel into and through many lands. Our prayer is, "Let the healing continue."

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## NOTES

- Ott reveals that this understanding supported by Kenneth L. Vaux in *This Mortal Coil* (1985:164-172) and Leon Kass in *Toward a More Natural Science* (1978:104ff) suggests that this understanding is the classical concept of health.
- Hosea 7:1 serves as one of many examples of God's unfulfilled desire for the people of Israel.
- I am dependent on John Wimber *Power Healing*, appendices C, D, and E for the arrangement of the materials found in the tables in this paper on the Old and New Testaments.

4. Martin Schmidt names this man as John Reinier, a descendent of French Huguenots. Reinier helped Wesley study anatomy in preparation for his missionary service in Georgia (1962:158-59).

5. *Physic* is the eighteenth century word for *medicine*.

6. Wesley's clinic was so successful that within two months, he opened a second one in Bristol.

7. "Some of his letters are, in effect, emotional and psychological counseling"—Howard Snyder.

8. Galatians 5:6

9. This is Wesley's term for a medicinal mixture.

10. God sustains the natural order since the time of creation and the processes of the natural order flow from God's hand. Wesley did not intend for anyone to understand a secular breach by the term natural. It is more precise to understand him as meaning indirect (natural) and direct (supernatural) activity of God.

11. D. Dayton notes that later understandings saw the use of medicine as a "lack of faith." Wesley knew of no such bifurcation.

12. Dr. Charles Cullis, M.D. founded the Willard Tract Repository that published the early writings of the divine healing movement.

13. Wesley had the Hippocratic Oath in mind concerning this principle. The other half of this equation is that Wesley referred complicated and acute cases to professional Christian doctors. He knew his limits.