
The Emerging Revival of Sacramental Healing: An Incarnational Theology

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Charles Jeffrey Helman

Ordinarius: The Revd. Canon Vincent Strudwick, D.D.

Honorary Canon of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford
Honorary Fellow and Chamberlain of Kellogg College, Oxford
The Bishop John Tinsley Professor of Anglican Theology, GTF

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ABSTRACT

A revival of sacramental healing has appeared within the Christian Church. This revival is part of healing ministries of local congregations including clerical, religious and lay pastoral visitors visiting the sick and dying, prayer group members conducting healing circles of prayer, laying on of hands and anointing, and public healing services and liturgies to create meaning and hope for those who suffer. The appeal to God's healing grace and power are important features of these healing rites. This revival has roots in the charismatic movement and renewal within Protestant, Anglican and Catholic denominations and has expanded to almost every sector of Christendom. The advancement can be seen as work of the Spirit, but the influence of healing practices within the New Age Movement, aboriginal, Native American, African and Eastern Spirituality cannot be discounted as reasons why Christians today, especially in the West, began to search and implement Christian healing rituals, prayers and traditions. The Church in the West had long buried and/or no longer practiced their healing liturgies and rituals, except those for the dying. The healing rites were surely a part of the patristic Church and now have been resurrected.

Much of the recent literature on the topic of Christian healing has been from a pastoral perspective of pastoral applications, developing pastoral healing ministries, sin and forgiveness, and liturgies to support the public worship that includes laying on of hands and anointing the sick with oil. Other theological literature has been silent on the theology of healing or has failed to address the impact of religious life on the health of the mind, body and spirit of individuals. It was pointed out that this revival of healing needed a theology, which was lacking in the Christian

tradition. This dissertation attempts to provide a framework from which a Christian theology of healing can be developed. This framework includes the following components:

- the prayer of faith;
- scripture;
- tradition;
- reconciliation, redemption, salvation and wholeness;
- meaning and hope;
- Christian unity;
- mission in the world;
- Incarnation and paschal mystery of Christ;
- love (agape); and
- God's grace.

The method or approach employed is a *via media* or by reviewing scripture, tradition and reason while applying experience as the best way to develop a theology that is receivable by all Christians. Following the introduction the author will investigate in this dissertation the following specific issues in relation to this framework, using the *via media* approach and in light of the doctrine of the Incarnation.

- **Chapter 3 “Healing: The Gospel Witness, Jesus and His Followers”** looks at the scriptural texts critically as they relate to healing, especially the physical healing miracles portrayed in the Gospels performed by Jesus of Nazareth, his followers and disciples as testified to in Acts, and hermeneutically investigates some of the recent scholarship concerning Jesus as Healer.
- **Chapter 4 “Healing: Historical Development of the Anointing Tradition”** takes up the anointing tradition and controversies surrounding the key issues of when to anoint, why anoint, whom to anoint, and who will anoint, which are important in understanding the development of the sacramental theology that influences liturgical anointing for healing.

- **Chapter 5 “Healing: Sin, Reconciliation, Redemption, Salvation”** explores the human condition of sin and how reconciliation, redemption and salvation are possible through the healing ministry of the faith community.
- **Chapter 6 “Healing: Ministry, Mission and Unity”** investigates the notion that baptism creates the minister of healing within the Church and that some ministers are given the gift of healing through a charism of the Spirit. From a discussion on healing minister’s ministry, we will move to the mission of the Church, which is to heal as mandated by Jesus Christ in the Gospel witness. Christian unity should naturally flow through ministering healing to the world by members of the ecclesial community. Since sin, disease and illness know no denominational or jurisdictional bounds, the Church’s pastoral response must be compassionate and bounded in the unity of agape love of the incarnated Christ, which knows no limits.
- **Chapter 7 “Healing: Manifestation of the Divine Healer Incarnate”** discusses healing as a component of the incarnation of God revealed in Christ Jesus. The author specifically reviews Old Testament scripture that indicates God is the healer. The Old Testament prophetically points to Jesus who is the Incarnation of the Divine Healer. Using the traditional doctrine of the Incarnation, we can answer the questions: Who is Jesus Christ and is he the physician God sent to heal and save the whole world? The author points out that the manifestation of the Divine Healer must be present in our teaching, theologizing and pastoral practice of healing through the power of the Spirit.
- **Chapter 8 “Healing: A Theology”** concludes with a synthesis of what a theology of healing can be if the theological framework proposed is utilized. A healing theology,

bridging the gaps of parochial understanding, will enliven an incarnational ministry to the suffering of this world.

The goal of this dissertation was to provide an ecumenical theology of healing that is incarnational to support the liturgical actions which create meaning, manifest God's grace and give salvific hope for the suffering world. The author wrote this theology of healing using a *via media* or middle way in order to bridge parochial differences and in an effort to put the needs of suffering, ill and dying first. The faithful healer can incarnate God in the world to those who suffer by administering the sacramental actions on behalf of the ecclesial community with love through prayer and the Spirit's power. The Christian Church's theology of healing, which is grounded in scripture, tradition and reason and manifested in pastoral practice, and the personal experience of those involved in the healing sacramentals, can serve the whole Church of Christ. As the baptized people of God, we must proclaim the gospel message to all who suffer and are in need of the healing power present in the faith community. Our proclamation of God's healing power manifested in Jesus Christ must be unified in the incarnation and paschal mystery of Christ Jesus. Our pastoral response to those in need must not be stifled by denominational differences regardless of the benefit of baptism or ecclesial affiliation. We must respond to the sinner, the sick and the dying immediately when they call upon the community of Christ and its members. Failure to respond in a loving and compassionate way in imitation of Jesus is scandalous to the gospel message and to the Church's mandated mission to heal the whole world.

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May the Healing Power of the Incarnate God bless you all!

CHUCK

The Feast of Saint Luke the Evangelist, October 18, 2007

Falls Church, Virginia

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THIS DISSERTATION IS OFFERED TO
THE GLORY OF GOD
IN PRAISE FOR
HIS INCARNATION IN JESUS OF NAZARETH
THROUGH WHOM THE HEALING OF ALL CREATION IS A REALITY.

FOR EMILY REBECCA HELMAN

I. PURPOSE

In Peter Fink's *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, Lucien Richards points out in the entry on "Healing" that:

While healing is an important element of Jesus' ministry and redemptive work, it has never been a major concern of theology. A theology of healing is quite absent from the Christian tradition. Developments in many areas of theological concern, and the re-discovery of the importance of the healing ministry in the charismatic movement, demand a theology of healing.¹

Further, Morton Kelsey in his classic work *Healing and Christianity*, remarks that John Macquarrie, one of the premier Protestant theologians of the twentieth century, basically overlooks healing in his work entitled *Twentieth Century Religious Thought*.² Not one of the one hundred and fifty theologians discussed in Macquarrie's book emphasized the effect of religious life on mental and physical health.³

These two representative examples noted above: an absence of a healing theology in the Christian tradition and theologians neglecting to discuss the impact of religious and sacramental life on healing support the impetus for this work. This dissertation will strive to move the Church forward toward developing a theology of healing to support the Church's sacramental and pastoral healing ministry in the world. Or, at the very least, I will attempt to provide a solid framework from which a theology of healing can emerge and become incarnate within the Body of Christ. In order to truly undergrid the healing ministry tradition and its sacramental expressions within and by the various ecclesial communities, this healing theology needs to rise above parochial views, jurisdictional and authority disputes. This incarnational theology needs

¹ Lucien Richards, "Healing," *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, Peter Fink ed. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 521.

² John Macquarrie, *Twentieth Century Religious Thought, New Edition*, (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 2002, 1990).

be open to a variety of ecumenical interpretations and liturgical expressions in order to enliven the healing ministry of Jesus in the world today. As witnesses to God incarnate, the Church's mission must provide compassionate comfort for all who seek salvation and wholeness through the Body of Christ.

Although this topic and undertaking seem enormous, I venture to write in order to provide an acceptable theological framework for the emerging sacramental healing revival that is present in the Church today. This revival has been studied by the various denominations as referenced later in this work and is supported by numerous public healing services, liturgies and chaplaincies. An example of how pastoral healing ministries are being incorporated and carried out in the life of the Church, especially in the Church of England, is presented in the Oxford Diocesan Handbook, which the Bishops Adviser on Healing Ministries is included among the "central" ministries raised up; and under that section the Handbook (for clergy) reads:

The Christian healing ministry is based on prayer in the name of Jesus Christ and is practised in different forms in many parishes across the diocese. In 2000 the report 'A Time to Heal' said that the Church had a distinctive role to play in ministry to the sick because it has always linked the proclamation of the good news with healing.

The ministry to the sick is offered in love explicitly by prayer, visiting, services, laying on of hands, anointing and in chaplaincy; and implicitly by Christians employed in many roles in ministry to the sick.

In response to this report and to encourage this ministry in the diocese, every deanery has appointed a person to promote healing ministry in their deanery. They have details of training courses and will help to promote new initiatives.⁴

This healing theology demands an incarnational perspective in order to be receivable by the various faith communities, especially in the West. Providing an incarnational theology of

³ Morton Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 1985), 265.

healing allows for an ecumenical expression of love and compassion as faithful witnesses who are pastorally present to the sick and dying whereby the Kingdom of God can be actualized in our midst. Further, John Wilkinson's article on "Healing in the Epistle of James" emphasizes healing within the Church, which clearly supports the need to support theologically the Church's pastoral and sacramental mission of a healing ministry to the world. He clearly delineates five important aspects of healing within the Church:

1. The Church has a concern for the sick.
2. Healing is part of the normal work of the Church.
3. Healing is based in the Christian community.
4. The Healing ministry of the Church includes all methods of healing.
5. Sickness and healing always have more than a physical dimension.⁵

Therefore, an effective incarnational healing theology must be rooted in prayer, grounded in scripture, embodied by the wisdom of tradition, enlivened by the Spirit, and expressed and bounded in love (*agape*). In love, this theology can bridge the gaps between the various ecclesial communities' understandings and interpretations by basing our Christian identity in baptism. Through baptism we are incorporated into the Body as members. As baptized believers, we are called and commissioned to be witnesses of the healing compassion of Jesus Christ to each other and to the world. By basing our Christian identity and unity in baptism, the faith community can expand the ministry of healing to those in need. Oftentimes pastoral caregivers, ordained, religious or lay people, despite their denominational affiliations, are called upon to pray, to touch and to anoint those in need of Christ's healing presence regardless of these denominational

⁴ Oxford Diocesan Handbook.

⁵ John Wilkinson, "Healing in the Epistle of James," *SJT*, 24(1971): 342-343.

identities. Therefore, an incarnational healing theology will best serve the Church, individually and corporately, if we allow the Spirit to be enfleshed in our healing ministries and our liturgical, sacramental healing expressions. We can incarnate the Christ of God in the world to those to whom we minister: the sinner, the ill, the suffering, the grieving, the dying and their loved ones. In our healing ministries and sacraments, we witness to God's merciful grace. In our healing liturgies, the Church proclaims redemption, salvation and wholeness that are available to all through faithful acceptance of Him who is God Incarnate.

II. HEALING: AN INTRODUCTION

Human beings suffer. They suffer pestilence, disease, illness, emotional, spiritual and mental distress, and they suffer the consequences of sin. In the light of Christian understanding of the Fall, humans have searched for ways to mitigate suffering and heal diseases often looking for miracle cures. Some have appealed to magic, incantations, shamans, faith healers, diviners, music, crystals, herbs and potions, apothecaries and modern new age practices. Many throughout history have turned to medical doctors and midwives. Oftentimes the sick and their loved ones have turned to religion and spiritual practices to heal and to cure them. The religious practices of the Christian Church are no exception where healing rituals, rites and prayers have been implemented for the sake of the suffering, the ill and the dying. Does this plea to God and spiritual forces heal or cure them? Do they find comfort in the rituals and prayers? Do they experience a miracle? Do they find a cure? Are they restored to wholeness? Do they find salvation? Does their turn to the healing liturgy of the Church mediate meaning for their illness and suffering?

The revival of sacramental healing practices appears to be emerging within Christianity of the early twenty-first century. These sacramental and liturgical practices are visible throughout the Church without regard to each denomination's traditional, historical, doctrinal and cultic practices. From a global perspective of Christianity, the Church -- as the Body of Christ incarnate in the world -- requires a theological framework to support these liturgical and sacramental healing expressions. This sacramental theology must be incarnational in order to have broad appeal across denominational lines and provide a reasonable explanation for the work

of the Spirit throughout the Church. This incarnational theology of sacramental healing must be based in Christian love (agape) as a proper and compassionate response to all persons who seek the support, consolation and healing power present in the faith community. The framework for this theology must be built upon doctrinal points where Christians and their parochial views can bring a unified response to the sick and suffering in this world allowing the kingdom of God to be brought among us and realized. Thus, the love of the faithful will build up and strengthen the Body of Christ. Christian unity is essential to being an effective witness in the world for those who seek the healing power present in the Church. The members who are the healers and the ministers of the healing sacraments can reveal this power in loving compassion to the world through their healing sacraments, liturgies and ministries.

The Catholic and Orthodox position of the Church's sacramental healing practices have been based upon scripture and tradition. The Protestant communities ground their understanding of sacraments and healing more upon scripture and less upon tradition, yet other Protestants place more emphasis on their experience and the revelatory work of the Spirit and spiritual charisms. These sacramental healing practices and rituals are becoming more mainstream in Protestant circles and more accessible to all in Catholic communities. Christianity can benefit from a sacramental healing theology as witness to the healing and salvation promised by Christ Jesus and mandated to His followers. In order for this healing sacramental theology to be acceptable and receivable by the Body of Christ, this healing theology demands an incarnational approach.

The basis of unity is the baptismal covenant all members of the Body share equally. Through the sacrament of initiation, Christians profess that God was enfleshed in humankind in the man Jesus of Nazareth. God became man and lived among us. Through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, God experienced all human suffering yet was without sin in order that we who believe may follow Christ's path to resurrection and life eternal with God. Through the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, Christians can have a further understanding of God as the Divine Healer.

The development of Christian dogma and doctrine is always rooted in prayer. The prayers of individuals and the prayers of the faithful gathered in community create an environment in which the Holy Spirit operates and incarnates the will of God. The sacramental and liturgical practices being observed today with regard to healing in Christian communities enliven the age old doctrine of *lex orandi; lex credenti*. The rule of prayer is the rule of belief. Thus, the prayer practices of the faithful become the rule of beliefs or doctrines of the community. The emergent revival of these prayerful healing practices -- both within the context of communal worship services and within the context of private visitations of the sick -- provides evidence for the communities' experiences of their understanding and beliefs in God's presence in human suffering. As these healing practices become ritualized, they create a common liturgy for healing for the individual, the faith community and the world. As a result, "the *lex orandi* has its quiet and unobtrusive effect upon *lex credenti*."⁶ Therefore, the first principle on which sacramental healing theology can be grounded is the agreed upon principle of *lex orandi, lex credenti*.

⁶ Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, *An Era in Anglican Theology: From Temple to Gore*. The Hale Memorial Lectures of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, (New York: Charles Scribner & Son, 1960), 164.

The prayer life of the faithful is supported by the authority of scripture. Flowing from the faith communities' experiences in prayer for healing, the Body of Christ can solidly build a sacramental system of doctrine based upon scripture. The Gospels give witness to Jesus of Nazareth's healing ministry. Other parts of the New Testament canon provide evidence of Jesus' early followers performing healings. Therefore, prayer and scripture demonstrate the unequivocal basis for sacramental healing practices experienced within the Christian community throughout history and its revival today.

The Christian Church has responded to people affected with sickness and disease. During the patristic period of the early Church, healers responded to the imitation of Jesus of Nazareth by laying on of hands, prayer and by following his command to anoint the sick with oil. Many were healed and restored to health. Over the centuries these "miraculous" healings seemed to dissipate. Church leaders, especially those of the Reformation period in the West, stated that miraculous healing ended with the patristic age.⁷ They moved to more ritualized formulas and liturgical responses to mediate healing in the world. Eventually, these responses were reserved solely for the dying. And, in the West, the Protestant reformers of the Church moved their congregations away from the more formalized healing liturgical practices found in the Roman tradition. Today, congregations around the world are conducting healing services, employing healing liturgies and visiting the sick. The ministers of these services, liturgies and

⁷ Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* IV.18 (1953), 2:636 he writes, "The gift of healing disappeared with the other miraculous powers which the Lord was pleased to give for a time, ... administered by the apostles, it pertains not to us, to whom no such powers have been committed. Or, Martin Luther's view, the time of miracles is past, "now that the apostles have preached the Word and have given their writings, and nothing more than what they have written remains to be revealed, no new and special revelation or miracle is necessary. *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John*, chapters 14-16, Luther's Works, 24:367. However, later in his life Luther seems to have revised his earlier thinking by adding another view to the experience of healing. (See pp. 233 and 221-22).

visitations -- whether lay, religious or ordained -- are praying, touching, anointing and invoking the Word of God to those to whom they minister. In order for these actions and ministries to be effective, they need to convey the grace of God, manifest the incarnated and Risen One, and be empowered by the Spirit. On a more practical side, these healing ministries must mediate and create meaning symbolically for those who suffer in sin and/or illness.

The Church continues to revive her role as reconciler and healer in the world as mandated by Christ. From this revival, healing sacraments (or sacramentals) have re-emerged into the forefront of congregational life. What the ministers or representatives of the community do sacramentally must symbolically convey meaning for the ones who are suffering and who seek the loving compassion of God's grace. The Church needs to manifest a theology of healing in story, worship and pastoral care that incarnates Christ. In doing so, the sick and suffering, as well as the world, can experience the loving grace of God, which was brought among us through Jesus of Nazareth and is now actualized through the Spirit in the Christian community. The Church, in lovingly caring for the sinner and suffering of the world, can incarnate the Divine through prayer, word, touch, and oil. To support these sacerdotal expressions a theology of healing is required. My argument is this, a theology of healing must:

- Be rooted in the prayer of faith;
- Be founded upon the Scriptural witness;
- Be bounded by the healing tradition of the faith community;
- Proclaim reconciliation, redemption, salvation and wholeness;
- Mediate meaning and hope to the world;
- Promote the unity of the Church;

- Support the Church’s mission in the world;
- Profess the incarnation and paschal mystery of Christ;
- Be loving and compassionate; and
- Reveal God’s love and grace.

From this framework, I will attempt to provide the Church with a viable theology on which to base our pastoral and liturgical responses. Specifically, the outline of “must haves” for a theology of healing will be addressed in the subsequent chapters.

In chapter 3, I will address “Healing: The Gospel Witness, Jesus and His Followers” looking at the texts critically as they relate to healing, especially the physical healing miracles portrayed in the Gospels performed by Jesus of Nazareth, his followers and disciples as testified to in Acts, and hermeneutically investigate some of the recent scholarship concerning Jesus as Healer.

In Chapter 4, “Healing: Historical Development of the Anointing Tradition,” I will take up the anointing tradition and controversies surrounding the key issues of when to anoint, why anoint, whom to anoint, and who will anoint, which are important in understanding the development of the sacramental theology that influences liturgical anointing for healing.

In chapter 5, “Healing: Sin, Reconciliation, Redemption, Salvation,” I will explore the human condition of sin and how reconciliation, redemption and salvation are possible through the healing ministry of the faith community.

In chapter 6 “Healing: Ministry, Mission and Unity,” I will investigate the notion that baptism creates the minister of healing within the Church and that some ministers are given the gift of healing through a charism of the Spirit. From a discussion on the healing minister’s ministry, we will move to the mission of the Church, which is to heal as mandated by Jesus Christ in the Gospel witness. Christian unity should naturally flow through ministering healing to the world by members of the ecclesial community. Since sin, disease and illness know no denominational or jurisdictional bounds, the Church’s pastoral response must be compassionate and bounded in the unity of agape love of the incarnated Christ that knows no limits.

Chapter 7 “Healing: Manifestation of the Divine Healer Incarnate” will explore healing as a component of the incarnation of God revealed in Christ Jesus. Specifically I will look at Old Testament scripture that indicates God is a healer and prophetically points to Jesus as the incarnation of the Divine Healer by looking at the tradition of the Christological doctrine of the Incarnation. That answers the question: Who is Jesus Christ and is he the physician God sent to heal and save the whole world? I will point out that the manifestation of the Divine Healer must be present in our teaching, theologizing and pastoral practice of healing through the power of the Spirit.

Finally, in chapter 8, I will conclude with a synthesis of what a theology of healing can be. A healing theology, bridging the gaps of parochial understanding, will enliven an incarnational ministry to the suffering of this world.

Before I continue, I need to clarify some of my biases, which will become immediately apparent, if they are not already. These biases can also provide the context and method for which I undertake the present investigation. I hope these views do not limit attaining my goal of an ecumenical theology of healing that is incarnational to support the liturgical actions which create meaning, manifest God's grace, and salvific hope for the suffering world. I am writing a theology of healing that is *via media* or middle way and can bridge parochial differences in an effort to put first those to whom the community ministers. In lovingly ministering to these persons, the faithful healer of the sacramental actions on behalf of the ecclesial community through prayer and the Spirit's power can incarnate God in the world. The Christian Church's theology of healing, grounded in scripture, tradition, and reason; manifested in pastoral practice; and the experience of those administered to, can serve the whole Church of Christ. As the baptized people of God, we must proclaim the gospel message to all in the faith community who suffer and are in need of the healing power. Our proclamation of God's healing power manifested in Jesus Christ must be unified in the incarnation and paschal mystery of Christ Jesus. Our pastoral response to those in need must not be stifled by denominational differences regardless of the benefit of baptism or ecclesial affiliation. We must respond to the sinner, the sick and the dying immediately when they call upon the community of Christ and its members. Failure to respond in a loving and compassionate way in imitation of Jesus is scandalous to the gospel message and to the Church's mandated mission to heal the whole world.

III. HEALING: THE GOSPEL WITNESS, JESUS AND HIS FOLLOWERS

Jesus had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were blind.... 'Go and tell ...what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them.'

- Luke 7:21-22, NRSV

Introduction

The Christian Church bases its healing ministry upon the witness provided in the Gospels that Jesus of Nazareth performed healings. The Church also uses the accounts recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles that Jesus' followers healed and had been given the charism of healing. This New Testament evidence continues to support the practice of healing within the faith community. Both Christians and non-Christians today think that the faith of the first Christians depended upon these miracles.⁸ Many people continue to believe the faithful must accept these miracles as proof of Jesus being the Son of God. Yet, Sanders indicates that the Jews of first-century Palestine and Jesus' first followers would not necessarily have relied on this evidence alone to interpret who Jesus was. As the Christian Church grew and developed its dogma and doctrines, the Church leaders used Jesus' healing miracles as evidence to support a theological interpretation that he is God's Son and anointed Messiah. However, this interpretation may not have been the understanding experienced by those who encountered the historical Jesus. Sanders points out that in the first-century Jews believed in miracles. Their cultural norms widely accepted people who could perform miracles including healing, especially those believed to be religious, spiritual, close to God and righteous.⁹ Additional evidence exists that miracle workers and healers had lived before and after Jesus' earthly life. These healers

⁸ E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, (London, UK: Penguin Classics, 1993), 134.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 135ff.

were attested to by others.¹⁰ As twenty-first century people studying the world and culture of the first century, we need to be ever cognizant that they did not have our modern, scientific explanations for maladies, ailments, sickness and illness. As is evidenced by modern exegetical studies of the healing narratives in the Gospels, illness was often interpreted within the Jewish cultural understanding of social standing in the community and one's ritual purity regarding sin. Eventually, the Christian Church came to interpret the Jesus of history theologically in light of the resurrection rather than historically.

The Gospels answer how God would become a physician, healer and savior of his people as promised in the Old Testament canon. These sacred texts provide the impetus for the dogma of the incarnation and the orthodox Christological perspective. The Gospel texts provide insight into the Jesus of history, who he was, and his ministry of preaching, teaching and healing. This chapter will investigate Jesus' healing ministry within the Gospels and how cultural contexts of the first century influence our understanding of the healing actions Jesus performed. Within the cultural context of his time, Jesus performed symbolic actions to create and to mediate meaning for the ill and those around them. In this chapter I will discuss Jesus as Healer using two healing stories from Mark's Gospel, which have parallels in Matthew and Luke: the man full of leprosy and the man with the withered hand. The Gospels indicate that Jesus commissioned his disciples to follow his example and use their God given power to heal others. The followers accepted this commission and continued to heal as part of their Christian ministry within the apostolic Church following the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Through this study, we will be better able to understand Jesus' healing actions, the attestations of his followers and the development of their own healing ministries.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

The Gospel Witness to Jesus' Healing Miracles

References to Jesus' healing activities are found in every Gospel source (Mark, Q, L and John), plus Josephus' attestations in his works,¹¹ and in multiple literary forms (narratives about Jesus and sayings of Jesus) including whole stories.¹² In using the criteria for historicity of multiple attestations of sources and forms, Meier suggests these data give rise to reasoned argumentations and judgments that Jesus performed miracles including healings in his ministry.¹³ Meier is not arguing that every Gospel story of healing goes back to the historical Jesus. He does point out, however, that if one accepts the general tradition that Jesus performed exorcisms, then one could draw a similar conclusion regarding the tradition of Jesus as healer of illnesses and physical infirmities.¹⁴ Meier concludes that the healing of leprosy goes back to the life of Jesus himself and is not a creation of the early Church.¹⁵ Noting the limited number of stories of Jesus curing lepers, Meier's argument for this conclusion is paraphrased as follows:

1. Luke 17:11-19 (a story unique to Luke) represents an independent tradition and not just a redaction of Mark 1:40-45 based upon a passing reference of cleansing lepers in the Q saying in Matt 11:5 par. Thus, we have multiple attestations of both sources and forms affirming Jesus healed lepers during his lifetime.
2. Rudolph Pesch, a critic who, according to Meier, typically supports the healing tradition going back to the historical Jesus, does not support the healing of leprosy. Pesch's theological interpretation believes that the healing tradition was created by the early Church, echoing the Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elisha cleansing Naaman's leprosy. However, Meier points out the picture of Jesus as the miracle working eschatological prophet is rooted in the tradition going back to Jesus himself.
3. The meaning of the terms "leper" or "leprosy" are not definitively defined during this period or in scripture. Today, when one speaks of leprosy, one typically is referring to Hansen's disease caused by *mycobacterium leprae*. However, the

¹¹ Flavius Josephus. *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 18, Chapter 13. In *The Complete Works of Josephus: New Updated Edition*, trans. William Whiston. 13th Printing, (Peabody, MA: Hendricks Publishers, Inc., 1987), 480.

¹² John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. II *Mentor, Message, and Miracles*, (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 619.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 622, 678, 706.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 678-679.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 706.

translations of the Hebrew word *sāra 'at* in English Bibles are usually rendered as leprosy. According to Old Testament legislation on Leviticus 13-14 *sāra 'at* refers to fungal growth or mold in fabrics and houses, as well as various skin infections in humans. Therefore, leprosy is a concrete example where the Gospel stories of healing cannot posit a precise and detailed diagnosis of the diseases claimed to be cured by Jesus.

4. Mark 1:40-45 has a curious mixture of standard form-critical patterns with few additions that stress attitudes and emotions, and redactional touches by Mark. Meier does not believe this to be a pure Marcan creation and, given the expressions of emotion by the leper and Jesus, this narrative exemplifies the bare bones of what would be needed to tell the story of cleansing a leper.

5. More from Luke 17:11-19. Through his exegetical analysis of this pericope, Meier concludes the L tradition contained stories of Jesus healing lepers independent of the Marcan tradition. This deduction is based upon the words chosen and the word forms used by Luke when expanding upon the tradition he inherited in writing his Gospel. Some of the terms and words chosen appear nowhere else in the New Testament. Further, why would Luke go out of his way to create the scene of where the healing took place if he were redacting the tradition handed down to him? It is not Luke's redactive style. Another example is why would Luke have Jesus leave Galilee travel, south through Samaria (where the healing occurs), up to Jerusalem (the city of destiny), and in the midst of his travels return to Galilee? Jesus returning to Galilee once his final journey to Jerusalem has begun is not supported by the tradition or other sources.¹⁶

Therefore, these sources and forms (particularly Mark, L and Q) support the premise that during his earthly ministry Jesus claimed to heal lepers and was thought by others to have done so; however, the sparse evidence does not allow Meier to go any further.¹⁷ Coherence is an additional criterion for determining historicity. The same conclusion that Jesus was a healer and miracle worker can be gained by applying the coherence criterion to the multiple sources and forms:

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 698-706. This is a summation of Meier's main points, I refer you to his text for the finer details of his thinking and logical deductions.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

What is remarkable in all this is how deeds and sayings cut across different sources and form-critical categories to create a meaningful whole. This neat, elegant and unforced ‘fit’ of the deeds and sayings of Jesus, coming from many different sources, argues eloquently for a basic historical fact: Jesus did perform deeds that he and some of his contemporaries considered to be miracles.¹⁸

Investigating the 17 physical healing narratives in the Gospels provides a strong case for the history of the tradition that Jesus healed those who suffered physical ailments, as presented in Table 1 below. The Gospels also report three specific accounts of Jesus raising the dead and six accounts of exorcism of demon possession or healing epilepsy, to apply a modern medical diagnosis upon the text. Although these accounts, which seem to have a more supernatural connotation, are important in Jesus’ healing ministry, I will focus only on the physical healings. To illustrate Jesus’ healing as reported in the Synoptics, I will look at two specific passages, the leprous man and the man with the withered hand, which both have a Marcan source and are highlighted in the table below. Limitations and intent of this research do not allow for a complete exegesis of these passages.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 623.

Table 1. Physical Healing Narratives in the Gospels¹⁹

| Physical Healing Accounts | Matt | Mark | Luke | John |
|---|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| In three Gospels (In Marcan order) | | | | |
| 1. Peter's mother-in-law | 8:14-15 | 1:30-31 | 4:38-39 | |
| 2. The man full of leprosy | 8:1-4 | 1:40-45 | 5:12-15 | |
| 3. The paralyzed man | 9:1-8 | 2:1-12 | 5:18-16 | |
| 4. The man with withered hand | 12:10-13 | 3:1-5 | 5:18-26 | |
| 5. The woman with the flow of blood | 9:20-22 | 5:25-34 | 6:6-11 | |
| 6. Blind Bartimaeus | 20:29-34 | 10:46-52 | 18:35-43 | |
| In two Gospels | | | | |
| 7. The centurion's servant | 8:5-13 | | 7:1-10 | |
| In only one Gospel | | | | |
| 8. The two blind men | 9:27-31 | | | |
| 9. The deaf mute | | 7:31-37 | | |
| 10. The blind man of Bethsaida | | 8:22-26 | | |
| 11. The woman with a spirit of weakness | | | 13:11-17 | |
| 12. The man with dropsy | | | 14:1-6 | |
| 13. The ten leprosy patients | | | 17:11-19 | |
| 14. The ear of Malchus | | | 22:50-51 | |
| 15. The nobleman's son | | | | 4:46-54 |
| 16. The Bethesda paralytic | | | | 5:1-16 |
| 17. The man born blind | | | | 9:1-41 |

The Gospels serve as a witness to Jesus' miracles of healing as recorded by Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. In the first chapter of Mark, the characteristics of Jesus' ministry become evident. Jesus lives among the people to preach, to teach and to heal.²⁰ In fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, the anointed one would administer healing to those in need of God's healing power. The Gospel writers present Jesus' healings as the product of his charismatic power.²¹ Kelsey indicates that nearly one-fifth of the Gospels' content is devoted to Jesus' healing ministry.²² Wilkinson's study indicates that the narratives of healing miracles comprise a significant proportion of space in each of the Gospels' content respectively: in Mark 20 percent

¹⁹ Adapted from John Wilkinson, *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 66-67.

²⁰ Morton Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1995), 42.

²¹ Lucien J. Richard, O.M.I., "Healing" in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, Peter Fink, S.J. ed., (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, A Michael Glazer Book, 1990), 520.

²² *Ibid.*

or 139 verses; in Matthew 9 percent or 99 verses; in Luke 12 percent or 134 verses; and in John 33 percent or 112 verses.²³

The Gospel of John presents Jesus' healing activity as distinctively different from the presentation of the Synoptics. John's Gospel presents only three healing pericopes (excluding the raising of Lazarus), which are additional to those presented in the Synoptic narratives. John's Gospel does not report any exorcisms or cleansing of leprosy. In John, the healings are referred to as signs (*semeia*) or works (*erga*) and not "mighty deeds" (*dunameis*).²⁴ In each of these signs, individuals are healed; no group healings are reported by John.²⁵ The healing stories selected for inclusion support the evangelist's intent to lead people to a belief in Jesus as Messiah, and to find life in Him,²⁶ and to underscore the Divine power as Jesus' source for healing.²⁷ While the Synoptics illustrate that faith or belief is a precursor to the healing, John places faith or belief as the response to or produced by the healing.²⁸

Both Kelsey and Wilkinson point out that the healing activity of Jesus relates directly to his preaching and teaching concerning humankind's relationship to God and to one another. Jesus proclaims that the "kingdom has come near" by his incarnation into human history making God's healing power accessible to all people.²⁹ Meier emphasizes that the Christian sources of the generations immediately following Jesus' life and ministry remember him clearly as a healer

²³ Wilkinson, 64-65.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 143. All Greek cited within this text has been transliterated at the request of the publisher.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 142.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ John J. Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 120.

²⁸ Wilkinson, 143. (See John 4:53; 7:31; 9:38; 10:38; 11:15, 45; 12:11; 14:11 and 20:30-31)

²⁹ Kelsey, 42-47; Wilkinson, 65.

of physical ills.³⁰ In addition, Wilkinson notes that the word “health” does not appear in the English version of the Authorized Version (AV), Revised Standard Version (RSV) or the New International Version (NIV) and only once, in Luke 7:10, in the New Revised Standard Version (NSRV), where *hugiainonta* is translated as “good health” instead of “well.” Therefore, the Gospels clearly are concerned with healing, specifically indicated by the frequency of usage of Greek verbs meaning “to heal” and its derivations in the Gospels as indicated in table 2 below.³¹

Table 2. Frequency of Usage of Greek Verbs Meaning “Heal” in the Gospels³²

| Verb | Meaning | Matt | Mark | Luke | John | Total |
|---------------|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| therapeuō | heal, restore, cure | 16 | 6 | 14 | 1 | 37 |
| iaomai | heal, cure | 4 | 1 | 12 | 2 | 19 |
| sōzō, diasōzō | preserve, keep from harm, save from death | 4 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 16 |
| apokathistemi | restore to a former condition of health or soundness | 1 | 2 | 1 | | 4 |
| apoluō | free a person from disease | 0 | 0 | 1 | | 1 |
| katharizō | cleanse used in conjunction with healing leprosy | 1 | 1 | 3 | | 5 |
| Total | | 26 | 16 | 36 | 4 | 82 |

³⁰ Meier, 679.

³¹ Adapted from Wilkinson, 77.

³² The following lists the specific citations corresponding to the Greek verb “heal” used, adapted from Kelsey, 87-88 and Wilkinson, 77-84. The Greek is transliterated at the request of the publisher.

therapeuō: **Matt** 4:23, 24; 8:7, 16, 9:35, 10:1, 8, 12:10, 15, 22, 14:14, 15:30, 17:16, 18, 19:2, 21:14;
Mark 1:34, 3:2, 10, 15, 6:5,13;
Luke 4:23, 40, 5:15, 6:7, 18, 7:21, 8:2, 43, 9:1, 6, 11, 10:9, 13:14, 14:3;
John 5:10.

iaomai: **Matt** 8:8, 13, 15:28;
Mark 5:29;
Luke 5:17, 6:17, 19, 7:7, 8:47, 9:2, 11, 42, 13:32, 14:4, 17:15, 22:51;
John 4:47; 5:13.

sōzō, diasōzō: **Matt** 9:21, 22, 14:36;
Mark 5:23, 28, 34, 6:56, 10:52;
Luke 7:3, 8:36, 48, 50, 17:19, 8:42;
John 11:12.

apokathistemi: **Matt** 12:24;
Mark 3:5, 8:25;
Luke 6:10.

apoluō: **Luke** 13:12.

katharizō: **Matt** 8:3;
Mark 1:40;
Luke 5:12, 13, 14.

Health, Curing and Healing in Cultural Context

Students and readers of the Gospels interpret and understand the sacred texts through the lens of their own cultural milieu and their own place in human history. The cultural aperture of this lens binds many to see only through this context. Several researchers, especially Bruce Malina,³³ John Pilch,³⁴ John Wilkinson,³⁵ E.P. Sanders, Geza Vermes, and John Meier,³⁶ have provided post-modern twentieth and twenty-first century Westerners with an enriched view into the cultural reality of first century Palestine by applying the methodologies from the disciplines of cultural and medical anthropology. Thus, people today can have fuller insight into the meaning of the Gospels by considering the cultural values and social norms of the authors of the Gospel texts and Jesus' historical contemporaries.

In investigating healing in the Gospels and its later liturgical development and pastoral practice in the Church and faith community, the investigator must define the terms and methodology used in the study. Today, many people view healing as cure, especially in the West. The advances in modern medicine create the expectation that those who suffer from illness and disease will be cured. As even modern Western medicine admits, however, cure is a relatively rare occurrence.³⁷ Many people in the West are familiar with the diagnostic techniques physicians and health care professionals apply to determine the physical or psychological causes of diseases. These health care professionals then prescribe appropriate therapies to battle and

³³ Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, (Louisville, KY, Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

³⁴ John J. Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000).

³⁵ *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998).

³⁶ John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. II *Mentor, Message, and Miracles*. (New York: Doubleday, 1994) Chapter 21 "Jesus' Healings" is of particular interest to this research.

³⁷ Pilch, 141.

defeat the diagnosed cause. If the prescription is implemented, the patients, their loved ones and health care professionals expect the patients to recover to full health and to be proclaimed cured of their disease. In Western medicine's approach, ailments and diseases are cured and eradicated from the individual's body. Illness is defined not as a reality but an explanatory cultural construct for human interpretation, perception and experience of certain socially disvalued states including but not limited to disease.³⁸ Today, health can be defined "in terms of normality of anatomical structure, physiological function, and mental attributes."³⁹ In the United States, health is related to function, i.e., the ability to perform those functions for the person to maintain oneself.⁴⁰ However, this Western approach to physical and bodily health fails to include many other factors that those outside of Western culture believe play a significant role in overall health and well-being of individuals.⁴¹ Health is defined in other cultural contexts, including those from both the Old and New Testaments, as "wholeness and soundness, well-being and life, strength and salvation."⁴² According to the classic definition offered by the World Health Organization (WHO), health is "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."⁴³ WHO's definition places emphasis on health in terms of mind, body, and spiritual well-being; in other words, holistically referring to the whole person's status of well-being, and not only to their ailments and diseases. Health as the

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁹ Wilkinson, 20.

⁴⁰ Pilch, 24. Also see, Arthur Kleinman, *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture: An Exploration of the Borderland between Anthropology, Medicine, and Psychiatry*. Comparative Studies of Health Systems and Medical Care 3. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, pp. 72-80, and Hector Alavos, *Health Care and the Rise of Christianity*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999 for similar definitions of illness, disease, and health especially the notion of meaning a particular society places upon disease.

⁴¹ Peter Worsley. "Non-Western Medical Systems," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11(1982), pp.330, 315-48.

⁴² Wilkinson, 21.

⁴³ Daniel Callahan, "The WHO Definition," *The Hastings Center Studies*, vol. 1 (1973), 77-87.

condition of a person's well-being is bound within each culture's perspective in order to derive meaning and understanding.⁴⁴

Applying Pilch's cultural aperture to the first century, the New Testament's idea of health emphasizes:

1. being and/becoming (that is states), not doing (activity)
2. collateral and linear relationships, not individualism
3. present and past time orientation, not the future
4. the uncontrollable factor of nature, not its manipulation or mastery
5. human nature as both good and bad, not neutral or correctable.⁴⁵

While curing is the specific therapy focused on the causes and expected outcomes relative to diseases by taking effective control over the disordered biological/psychological processes, "healing is directed toward illness, that is, the attempt to create meaning for the life problems created by sickness."⁴⁶ While medical anthropology makes a distinction between curing and healing, people of the first century used these terms interchangeably.⁴⁷ Whether in the first century or today, healing always occurs one hundred percent of the time because, regardless of the illness or seriousness of the condition, the afflicted comes to some resolution.⁴⁸ Healing is restoring an individual "to wholeness and soundness, well-being and life, strength and salvation." Kleinman explains that healing is one of the primary forms of symbolic action and elemental to social function and experience, and equally basic to the gift or the exchange relationship.⁴⁹ Therefore, the cultural model emphasizes the mediated meaning an illness has for

⁴⁴ Pilch, 24.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴⁷ Bruce G. Epperly, *God's Touch: Faith, Wholeness and the Healing Miracles of Jesus*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 141.

⁴⁸ Pilch, 141.

⁴⁹ Arthur M. Kleinman, "Medicine's Symbolic Reality: On a Central Problem in the Philosophy of Medicine," *Inquiry*, vol. 16, (1974). 210.

the patient and what restoration to well-being and wholeness in the healing means for the one who has experienced this transformation.⁵⁰ Kleinman expresses the importance of understanding a given cultural setting and its system of medicine. Without this knowledge, it is almost impossible to comprehend the concepts, values and knowledge that undergird a specific cultural understanding of healing.⁵¹ Thus, the use of medical anthropology can provide the biblical student with a more comprehensive insight into the culture of the first-century Eastern Mediterranean world by providing a methodology for cross-cultural comparison of healthcare systems, understanding sickness and interpreting the meaning derived from transformative and symbolic healing within various cultural contexts.⁵² Malina suggests that the cultures Jesus and those of the early Christian Church, including the authors of the New Testament, encountered were bound in the social interplay between the dynamics of honor and shame, the group and the individual, clean and unclean, and the perception of limited goods.⁵³ These dynamics affected the way people created meaning out of the world, including their view of sickness. Illness was often not a biomedical issue but a social one. Restoring a person who had deviated from the cultural norms meant removing their shame, restoring their honor within the social community and creating new meaning to life.⁵⁴

Jesus as Healer

Jesus mediated this meaning with the symbolic action of healing.⁵⁵ Using the scriptural text from Mark 2:17 and Luke 5:31 to support his proposition, Adolf Harnack stated that Jesus

⁵⁰ Pilch, 49.

⁵¹ Arthur M. Kleinman, "Toward a Comparative Study of Medical Systems: An Integrated Approach to the Study of Relationships of Medicine and Culture." *Science, Medicine and Man*, vol. 1 (1973), 57.

⁵² Pilch, 27, 32, 35.

⁵³ Malina.

⁵⁴ Pilch, 120-121.

⁵⁵ Kleinman, "Medicine's Symbolic Reality," 210.

appeared as physician among the people.⁵⁶ According to Harnack, the Synoptic Gospels depict Jesus as the Physician of soul and body.⁵⁷ The early Christian writers, Ignatius of Antioch (AD 35-107), Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215), Origen (AD 185-254), and Eusebius of Caesarea (AD 260-340), describe Jesus as a physician although the New Testament does not directly apply this term [*iatros*] to him.⁵⁸ However, Jesus does the work of a physician by healing men and women of disease as recorded in the Gospel texts.⁵⁹ Jesus healed by word and touch.⁶⁰ “Touching is the way power is transmitted, so that Jesus’ touch is an effective conduit for healing power. Jesus touching is a concrete way of demonstrating that the individual is a full member of the community as Jesus understands it.”⁶¹ Thus, healing touch used in liturgical action can mediate a similar meaning of connectedness to the community of faith and God.

A specific example reported in the Synoptics is the leper Jesus touched and healed/cleansed, (Mark 1:40-45; Matt 8:1-4; Luke 5:18-26). The leper said to Jesus, “if you want, make me clean” [*katharissai*] (Mark 1:40). Moved with compassion, Jesus touched the leper and, taking up the man’s plea, spoke, “I do choose. Be made clean.” [*katharisthēti*] (v. 41). Marcus indicates that the verb changes from active voice (v. 40) to the divine passive (v.41), using a Jewish circumlocution indicating God’s action without mentioning God directly and

⁵⁶ Adolf Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, ed. James Moffatt, vol. 1, (London: Williams and Norgate, 1908), 101.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Ignatius in *Ephesians* 7:2 (LCL vol. 1, p. 191); Clement Alex in *Paedagogus* I: 1:1, 2:6, 6:36, 8:64, and 12:10; Origen in *Contra Celsum* 2:67, end, and *Homily on Leviticus*, 8:1; and Eusebius, in *Ecclesiastical History* 10:4, 11 (LCL, vol. 2, p. 405). Also, see Evelyn Frost, *Christian Healing*, 3rd ed. London: A. R. Mowbray & Co. LTD, 1940/1954, her classic work on the patristic fathers and healing in the early Church.

⁵⁹ Wilkinson, 63.

⁶⁰ Wilkinson, 105; Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian’s Reading of the Gospels*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1981), 24-25.

⁶¹ Pilch, 52.

implying the agent of the cure is God.⁶² The leprosy left the man immediately (v. 42). Within the Jewish cultural and social context, the leper would be unclean, and therefore outside the boundary of the community that demanded ritual purity.⁶³ By touching the leprous individual, Jesus does not contract ritual impurity; but instead, the purity of His holiness passes from Jesus to the man.⁶⁴ Jesus accepts the person and restores him into the community by making him clean. Breaking down the social barrier that previously had existed for this individual, Jesus heals him. Jesus instructs the man to go to the priests to be declared “officially” cured/cleansed and reinstated in the social and religious life of the Jewish community.⁶⁵ If the man follows Jesus instructions, his actions would testify to Jesus’ ability to perform a healing miracle and would testify to Jesus’ obedience to the Mosaic Law and acknowledgement of the priestly establishment.⁶⁶ It is not clear from the text whether the man goes to the priests and makes the appropriate sacrifice. This passage concludes with the healed man disobeying Jesus’ command to be silent and proclaiming Jesus’ miraculous healing power everywhere.⁶⁷

In the example of the man with the withered hand (Mark 3:1-5; Matt 12:10-13; Luke 5:18-26), Jesus heals by speaking, “Stretch out your hand...his hand was restored” [*apekatestathē*] (Mark 3:5). Marcus suggests that the awkwardness of the grammar probably indicates an Aramaic original.⁶⁸ In stretching out his hand, the man is miraculously healed by the eschatological power of God. As in the previous example, Mark uses the divine passive of

⁶² Joel Marcus, *The Gospel According to Mark 1-8, The Anchor Bible*, vol. 27, (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 206.

⁶³ Malina, 161.

⁶⁴ Marcus, 209.

⁶⁵ Meier, 700-701.

⁶⁶ Marcus, 207; 210.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 249.

the verb indicating God's action.⁶⁹ Jesus does not touch the individual thereby avoiding being charged by the Pharisees of performing work on the Sabbath.⁷⁰ Therefore, in this context Jesus heals the man with his word of power only and not with action. In the narrative, the Pharisees witness the healing, which occurs on the Sabbath. This narrative is a good example of combining Jesus' teaching with his healing.⁷¹ This pericope, which is similar to the story of the paralytic in Mark chapter 2 and parallels, combines a healing miracle story with a dispute story. In this case, the dispute centers on whether it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath. In first century Palestine, Galilean peasants typically observed the basic rules of the Jewish Sabbath, which included the belief that it was unlawful for anyone to perform a healing on the Sabbath unless it was a life or death situation.⁷² Even though the man's withered hand is not a life-threatening condition, Marcus explains that for Jesus waiting to heal the man until the Sabbath had passed is tantamount to killing him, while healing him is tantamount to saving his life.⁷³ Implicit in the narrative is the premise that Jesus, the Son of Man, is Lord of the Sabbath.⁷⁴ In the dispute, "The Pharisees cannot either disavow their own principle of saving life on the Sabbath or go along with Jesus' radicalization of it. They are silent..."⁷⁵ As a result of his healing word, the Pharisees in verse 6 seek to figure out a way to destroy Jesus. In addition to the criteria of multiple attestations and coherence with other miracle stories, the dispute narrative of this pericope silences the Pharisees in embarrassment⁷⁶ because they cannot answer Jesus' question and still maintain their perceived authority in the situation. These criteria support the historicity

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Pilch, 71; Wilkinson, 94.

⁷² Meier, 682.

⁷³ Marcus, 252.

⁷⁴ Daniel J. Harrington, "The Gospel According to Mark," Chapter 41 in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy eds., (Englecliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 603.

⁷⁵ Marcus, 253.

⁷⁶ Meier, 625.

of Jesus performing the healing, which persuades this author. However, Meier places this miracle story in the limbo category regarding historicity, but does not deny the probability.⁷⁷

Meier points out that the major types of Jesus' physical healings involved persons who were leprous, paralyzed, deaf/mute, and blind.⁷⁸ Jesus is not concerned about causes,⁷⁹ but with restoring people to wholeness and well-being. The specific details of these ailments and illnesses have been lost.⁸⁰ The Q saying reported in Matt 11:5 and Luke 7:22 illustrates Jesus' healing actions and is reminiscent of the prophet Isaiah's messianic hope in Isaiah 35:5 and 61:1. "Blind people see and the lame people walk; lepers are cleansed and deaf people hear; dead people are raised and poor people have the good news preached to them." With the multiple attestations of sources (Mark, Q, L, and John), forms (miracle stories about Jesus and sayings of Jesus), and coherence in the message of these multiple attestations, the basic claims of historicity appear to lend strong support to the tradition that Jesus performed these healings, especially in the examples of the blind man of Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26) and the blind man Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52; Matt 20:29-34; and Luke 18:35-43).⁸¹ In *A Marginal Jew*, Meier identifies Jesus' prophetic and healing role:

(1) Jesus acted and was thought of as a Jewish prophet during his lifetime; (2) Jesus' prophetic message was strongly eschatological, naturally casting Jesus in a role of "a" or "the" eschatological prophet; (3) Jesus distinguished himself from many other prophetic figures of the period ... by claiming to perform numerous miracles of healing.⁸²

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 683-684.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 726.

⁷⁹ Pilch, 13.

⁸⁰ Meier, 727.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 698.

Jesus' Followers as Healers

*As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'
Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received
without payment, give without payment. - Matt 10:7-8, NRSV*

Jesus commissions the Twelve (Matt 10:5-4; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-5) to carry out his mission for building the kingdom of God. Fitzmyer notes that Luke creates a double-sending out in his Gospel: 1) the commissioning of the Twelve in chapter 9 probably going back to the ministry of Jesus given multiple attestations of sources; and 2) the commissioning of the Seventy (Luke 10:1-10), which reflects the early Church missionary activity and regulations. In his narrative, Luke places the commissioning of the Seventy on the lips of Jesus in the text. Fitzmyer finds little evidence to support the position that Jesus actually commissioned the Seventy.⁸³ In Mark's Gospel, Jesus' commission to the Twelve includes a mandate to anoint the sick (Mark 6:13), which probably reflects the practice of the early Christian community rather than a specific mandate of Jesus.⁸⁴ Anointing with oil for medicinal purposes was widely practiced in antiquity. "This use of oil for healing was combined with the appeal to spiritual forces as we can see in James 5:13-15 and as is hinted at in Mark 6:13."⁸⁵ Jesus is never depicted in the Gospels as anointing anyone with oil for healing purposes; however, the early Church tradition was to anoint.⁸⁶ The Synoptic Gospels attest to the disciples fulfilling their commission, which is further made evident in Luke's Acts of the Apostles that the early Church accepted the commission and fulfilled it. Only four and a half percent of the book of Acts is

⁸² *Ibid.*, 699.

⁸³ Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV, The Anchor Bible*, vol. 28A, (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 842-845.

⁸⁴ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 135.

⁸⁵ James Hardy Popes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James: The International Critical Commentary*, Francis Brown and Alfred Plummer eds. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 305.

⁸⁶ Marcus, 384.

devoted to healing narratives.⁸⁷ In Acts, Luke reports five narratives for physical healing of individuals, four narratives for physical healing of groups, two exorcisms of demon possessions,⁸⁸ two narratives for raising the dead⁸⁹ and four general references to miraculous signs and wonders.⁹⁰ The table below illustrates the physical healing accounts which support the premise that the apostles and the apostolic Church continued to perform healings after the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Healers employed word, prayer, touch and anointing in their healing ministries. The Christian community of the New Testament continued the work of healing as part of its normal mission and regarded healing as a gift of the Spirit as attested to by Paul in his epistles.⁹¹ The disciples of the Christian movement adopted Jesus' commission as their own.

Table 3. Physical Healing Narratives in Acts of the Apostles⁹²

| Physical Healing Accounts in Acts | Healer | Reference |
|--|---------------|------------------|
| 1. Lame man at gate of Temple | Peter | 3:1-10 |
| 2. Paul's recovery of sight | Ananias | 9:17-19 |
| 3. Aeneas healed of paralysis | Peter | 9:32-35 |
| 4. Cripple healed at Lystra | Paul | 14:8-11 |
| 5. Cure of Publius' Father | Paul | 28:8 |
| 6. The Sick in streets of Jerusalem | Peter | 5:15-16 |
| 7. The Sick in Samaria | Phillip | 8:6-7 |
| 8. The Sick at Ephesus | Paul | 19:11-12 |
| 9. The Sick in Malta | Paul | 28:9 |

Conclusion

The Gospel accounts of Jesus' healing actions serve as a witness that Jesus performed these deeds of power. Whether these healings were actually physical cures is open to further

⁸⁷ Wilkinson, 157.

⁸⁸ Acts 16:16-18; 8:7.

⁸⁹ Acts 9:36-41; 20:9-12.

⁹⁰ Acts 2:43; 5:12; 6:8; 14:3.

⁹¹ Wilkinson, 258-260.

debate by scholars. For the followers of Jesus, Jesus provided the suffering of his day restoration to health and wholeness. His followers, using his example, were also able to effect healing for those stricken with illness. The culture of the first-century Judaism supported the interpretation that miracles could and did happen, including restoration of health for individuals who found themselves afflicted. For the Christian community, their theological interpretation of Jesus' healing was tied to the ultimate miracle of Jesus' resurrection. Through the lens of the resurrection, all of creation is restored to wholeness and salvation is available to all. This wholeness and salvation includes healing: mental, physical and spiritual. To insure that the commission of Jesus to his disciples was not lost, the Church created and instituted the office of deacon. The deacon's function was to care for the widow, orphan and infirmed. Paul makes clear in his letters to the various Christian communities he founded that one of the charismatic gifts of the Spirit is the gift to mediate God's healing grace and power to those in need of healing. Throughout the history of the Church, those who have been given the gift/charism of healing have not been required to become part of the professional clergy of the Church in order to practice their ministry. The Christian Church in faithful witness to the healing ministry of Jesus and of the apostolic Church has ritualized this pastoral ministry of healing with prayer, laying on of hands and anointing the sick with blessed oil. The Church's liturgical and sacerdotal healing ministry provides the practical evidence to support the New Testament witness for healing. This ministry mediates meaning of suffering and death as well as health, wholeness and salvation to the whole world.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, NRSV

⁹² Adapted from Wilkinson, 157-158.

IV. HEALING: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANOINTING TRADITION

By the sacred anointing of the sick and the prayer of her priests, the whole Church commends those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, asking that he may lighten their suffering and save them. - Lumen Gentium II

Introduction

In a world plagued by illness, sickness, disease and suffering, many people look for a cure to heal to their suffering and afflictions. The Christian Church, following the example of Jesus of Nazareth, has often provided a pastoral response to those afflicted with illness and sickness. This response was very prominent in the early Church, and gradually became liturgically reserved only for the dying. During the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the proponents of the charismatic renewal within the Christian Churches have stressed the importance of a visible healing ministry within the Church. At the same time, shifts in theological understanding have led to a renewed commitment to the importance of the healing ministry within the Christian community. Healing ministries need to stress wholeness, well-being and salvation for the individual. These healing ministries can and need to be supported by liturgical and sacerdotal actions. Liturgy can be defined as all of the public and prescribed services of the Christian Church as contrasted with private devotion.⁹³ Liturgy makes present in word, symbol and sacrament the paschal mystery of Christ so the people can have a saving encounter with God.⁹⁴ What the faithful do in liturgy is to make *anamnesis*, memorial, of this

⁹³ F.L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 988.

⁹⁴ J. D. Crichton, "A Theology of Worship" in *The Study of Liturgy*, C. Jones, G. Wainwright, E. Yarnold, and P. Bradshaw, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 17. and Anscar J. Chupungco, "A Definition of Liturgy," in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies: Introduction to the Liturgy*, vol. 1, A. Chupungco, ed. (Collegeville, MN: A Pueblo Book The Liturgical Press, 1997), 6; 8.

dynamic saving power of the paschal mystery in their lives, to make it penetrate the depths of one's being for the building up of the Body of Christ.⁹⁵ Through the rites, ceremonies, gestures and forms, liturgy is always celebrated in the power of the Holy Spirit,⁹⁶ which is a Pentecostal *epiclesis*.⁹⁷ "A liturgy is successful not because of its fidelity to some past ideal, but because it builds up the Body of Christ into a spiritual temple and priesthood by forwarding the aim of Christian life: the love and service of God and neighbor; death to self in order to live for others as Christ did."⁹⁸ To this end, David Power maintains that the Church must reclaim the sacrament of anointing the sick as the best response to the needs of the sick person and to their sustenance in faith.⁹⁹ In doing so, the most productive method to accomplish this goal is not to insist on a priest as minister, but allow the community of faith to proclaim God's Word, to bless oils, to anoint the sick, to share the Eucharist and to celebrate God's divine Presence in all of life.¹⁰⁰ "Only in this way will there be a full integration of issues of human sickness and health into a redemptive economy, with due attention to both ecclesial reality and individual need."¹⁰¹

This chapter will explore the historical development of anointing for healing in the Western Church, the modern practice of this rite and the underlying sacramental theology. The major historical developments of anointing the sick with oil in the Roman Church from the New Testament to the present provide a well-documented way to study this liturgical and sacerdotal ministry in the community of the faithful. The key issues of when to anoint, why anoint, whom

⁹⁵ Robert Taft, *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding*, (Rome: Edizioni Orientalia Christiana Pontifical Oriental Institute, 1997), 23-24.

⁹⁶ Crichton, 17.

⁹⁷ Chupungco, 8.

⁹⁸ Taft, 28.

⁹⁹ David Power, "The Sacrament of Anointing: Open Questions" in *The Pastoral Care of the Sick*, (PCS) Mary Collins and David Power eds. *Concilium* no. 2 (London/Philadelphia: SCM/Trinity Press International 1991),106.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

to anoint, and who will anoint are important in understanding the development of the sacramental theology that influences this liturgy. The pastoral caring for the ill and dying in this sacramental way can strengthen the bonds of connectedness between the faith community and the person suffering, and between the self-communicating God and the community and its suffering members. To fulfill its pastoral and sacerdotal ministry to the sick and suffering world mandated in the New Testament, the Church must respond. The Church can respond by applying the early Christian praxis of prayer, laying on of hands, and anointing the sick with blessed oil for healing, whenever it is desired by the ill and their loved ones. Finally, by investigating the issues and pastoral practices of a liturgically visible and compassionate healing ministry within the Christian Church community to the world, the author will illustrate the importance of renewal, growth and expansion of the healing ministry to incarnate the Suffering and Risen Christ to the sick and suffering of the world today.

Anointing the Sick in the New Testament

In the ancient Mediterranean world, the use of olive oil to anoint the body was a well-known therapeutic agent. The Christian Church, expanding on Jewish anointing customs, has anointed her faithful with oil in baptism, confirmation, ordination, coronation and illness. These anointing traditions are all well documented. The liturgical ministry of healing within the Church has included and continues to include prayer, the laying on of hands, and anointing the sick and the dying with blessed olive oil. Sacramental and liturgical anointing provide a visible sign of God's grace and healing presence in the gathered community and especially in the individual who is ill.

The only two scriptural New Testament references which support sacramental anointing and which are cited for the development of a practice of sacramental and ritualized anointing for the purpose of healing the sick are Mark 6:13 and James 5:13-15.¹⁰² I will not provide a detailed exegesis of these passages, but the key points regarding interpretation of these verses are discussed.¹⁰³ The scriptural references make no distinction regarding the severity of the illness in terms of using anointing to invoke God's healing grace. Mark 6:13 states, "they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them"(NRSV). Jeffrey John indicates that the apostles expected a physical healing, which was achieved by their anointing without regard to any additional spiritual effects, remedies or absolution.¹⁰⁴ When commenting on Mark 6:13, Marcus refers to James 5:13-15 emphasizing that it is the power of prayer that accompanies the anointing that makes the oil efficacious and not the oil by itself.¹⁰⁵

The Epistle of James 5:13-15 states:

Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the Church and have them pray over them, and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save [*sozein*] the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. (NRSV)

The use of the verb *sozein* can have both physical and spiritual connotations regarding healing in this context.¹⁰⁶ Brown points out that the prayer of faith that accompanies the anointing can have

¹⁰² Jeffrey, John, "Anointing in the New Testament," in *The Oil of Gladness Anointing in the Christian Tradition*, Martin Dudley and Geoffrey Rowell eds. (London: SPCK, 1993), 46.

¹⁰³ See Martin C. Albl, "'Are Any Among You Sick?' The Health Care System in the Letter of James" *JBL* 121/1 (2002), 123-143; for a further analysis of the James text concerning the anthropological viewpoint I am considering in this study.

¹⁰⁴ Jeffrey, 51.

¹⁰⁵ Marcus, 385.

¹⁰⁶ See John Wilkinson, "Healing in the Epistle of James," *SJT* 24 (1971), 334 for further discussion of the usage of the Greek verb *sōzō* double meaning of to save and to heal as well as his interpretation of the text which supports the themes underlying my theology of sacramental healing.

both physical effects of healing from sickness as well as spiritual effects of forgiveness of sins.¹⁰⁷ However, Paul Palmer suggests that this passage from James is concerned with a physical cure and recovery and not principally with the forgiveness of sin. Nothing in the James text indicates that the anointing is in preparation for death or anticipation of glory.¹⁰⁸ The elders or presbyters in this passage are not necessarily interpreted to be priests as the Roman Church has interpreted this term for centuries, but the leaders of the Church community without regard to their ordained status.¹⁰⁹ These passages provide a witness to the “life-giving-healing-purifying power” given to the blessed oil.¹¹⁰ The anointing is not only for medicinal remedy, but is primarily employed to symbolize the healing presence and power of the Lord.¹¹¹ Brown deduces that, given the echoes of the Jesus tradition in this epistle, this passage could be interpreted to be a continuation of a practice Jesus once commanded.¹¹² If this practice cannot be traced back to a command of the historical Jesus, evidence does exist to support the custom of anointing being adopted by Jesus’ disciples and practiced in the early Christian community.¹¹³ By linking the ritual action of anointing with calling upon the name of the Lord, the Church communicates symbolically their belief that God’s power effects the healing through the ritualized anointing with oil.¹¹⁴ Just as

¹⁰⁷ Raymond E. Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament*, The Anchor Bible Reference Library, (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 738.

¹⁰⁸ Paul F. Palmer, “The Purpose of Anointing the Sick: A Reappraisal,” *Theological Studies* 19, (1958), 313-314.

¹⁰⁹ Kevin Condon, “The Sacrament of Healing,” *Scripture* 9, no. 14 (April, 1959), 36.

¹¹⁰ Dionisio Borobio, “An Enquiry into Healing Anointing in the Early Church,” in *The Pastoral Care of the Sick*, Mary Collins and David Power eds. *Concilium* no. 2 (London/Philadelphia: SCM/Trinity Press International 1991), 39.

¹¹¹ Thomas W. Leahy, “The Epistle of James,” Chapter 58 in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, eds., (Englecliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 915-916.

¹¹² Raymond E. Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament*, The Anchor Bible Reference Library, (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 737.

¹¹³ Kevin McMorrow, “Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick: Historical-Theological Considerations,” *The American Ecclesiastical Review* 169 no. 8 (October, 1975), 508-509.

¹¹⁴ Patrick J. Hartin, *James, Sacra Pagina Series* Vol. 14. Daniel J. Harrington, ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 276.

the community belongs to God, through the anointing the sick person is made part of the fellowship.¹¹⁵

The Early Church

In the early Church clergy and laity alike anointed the sick with the sacred oil blessed by a bishop for the purpose of invoking God's healing presence.¹¹⁶ The ill also ingested the holy oil as a therapeutic remedy. The *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus of Rome (ca. 215) provides one of the earliest remaining documents if not the earliest formulae for blessing the oil for use in anointing the sick. Hippolytus' prayer says, "so it may give strength to all that taste it and health to all that use it."¹¹⁷ More developed than Hippolytus, the prayer of Serapion (ca. 350) states, "pray thee to send healing power of the only-begotten from heaven upon this oil, that it may become to those who are being anointed or partaking of these thy creatures, for a throwing off of every sickness and every infirmity, for a charm against every demon."¹¹⁸ Serapion's reference to the "healing power of the only-begotten" in the prayer implies the incarnation of God in His son Jesus the Christ. Palmer noted the expanded interpretation of the effects of the oil are perfect well-being, remission of sins, grace and goodness, banishment of fever, chill, and weariness, and the warding off of evil.¹¹⁹ In 416 A.D., Pope Innocent I responded to a letter from Decentius, Bishop of Gubbio, in which he interpreted this James text by stating that only the faithful who are sick may be anointed. Innocent continued in his response by stating that the

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship*, (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1993), 66.

¹¹⁷ *Apostolic Tradition* 5.1-2 [Gregory Dix, ed. *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome I* (London:SPCK 1937/1968), 10.

¹¹⁸ John Wordsworth, trans. *Bishop Sarapion's Prayer-Book* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1964), 77.

¹¹⁹ Paul F. Palmer, "The Purpose of Anointing the Sick," 315.

oil must be blessed by a bishop for use by priest and/or laity alike for the needs of the sick.¹²⁰

According to Palmer's interpretation of Innocent's reply, lay people could anoint the sick, because the anointing was not a rite of dying nor was it a rite of penance or reconciliation.¹²¹

Probably, the most significant witness for the effects of Christian anointing practices of the ill in the Western Church was Cesarius of Arles. His *Sermons* (ca. 503-4) provided Christian insight into the healing purposes of anointing which countered pagan practices and beliefs, sorcery, and magic.¹²² In England, Venerable Bede (d. 735) knew of the practice of lay anointing with oil consecrated by the bishop. Often fathers anointed the ill in their families, including the little children and the elderly. Even those suffering from mental illness and disabilities were not excluded as they later came to be.¹²³

Until the Carolingian reform, the Roman Church liturgically had organized only the formula for blessing the oil of the sick. The texts that remained, namely the Hippolytus, Gelasian, and Gregorian sacramentaries, contained the ritual prayers typically used by the bishop in the Chrism Mass on Maundy Thursday to consecrate the oil for use in anointing the sick.¹²⁴ The formula for blessing the oil of the sick consisted of an exorcism, followed by *Dominus Vobiscum* and a prayer. This formulary is still in use today in the Chrism Mass of Maundy Thursday.¹²⁵ However, the absence of written rituals for an anointing order of service prior to

¹²⁰ James L. Empeur, *Prophetic Anointing*, Message of the Sacraments 7, (Wilmington: DE, Michael Glazier, Inc., 1982), 34.

¹²¹ Paul F. Palmer, "Who Can Anoint the Sick?" *Worship* 48, no. 2 (1974), 85-86.

¹²² Borobio, "An Enquiry into Healing Anointing in the Early Church", 41; 45.

¹²³ Palmer, "Who can Anoint the Sick?", 88.

¹²⁴ Charles W. Gusmer, "Rites of the Sick," *Worship* 46 no. 9 (1972), 532.

¹²⁵ Placid Murray, "The Liturgical History of Extreme Unction," *The Furrow* 11, No. 9 (September, 1960), 576.

800 A.D. remains the weakest link in the evidence for knowing exactly how this liturgy of anointing was performed.¹²⁶ According to Antoine Chavasse:

A primordial importance was attached to the epicletic blessing of the oil whereby the oil was imbued with a divine efficacy placing it in the category of a *sacramentum*... The application of the oil was secondary... blessing the oil was strictly reserved to the sacerdotal hierarchy... the application of the oil could be made by presbyters and lay people alike.¹²⁷

In summation of these first 800 years, the Latin Church used oil for anointing the sick and the dying; self, lay, and presbyterial anointing were well established customs; and the purpose of the anointing was restoration of health (mind, body and spirit) and not a death or penance anointing.¹²⁸

The Carolingian Reform

According to Kevin McMorrow, anointing the sick and the Church's understanding of this rite underwent significant changes during the Carolingian Reform. First, in an effort to correct abuses, the priest became the sole minister of the sacrament. Second, anointing of the sick began to be associated with those close to death and with penance, especially deathbed penance. Therefore, the understanding of the effects of the anointing on the recipient shifted from healing and restoration of health to the forgiveness of sins and the preparation for death. Thus, lay anointing was suppressed and became non-existent in the Latin Church.¹²⁹ Third, during this reform period, the rite for anointing the sick was compiled and formalized using

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 581.

¹²⁷ Antoine Chavasse, *Étude sur l'onction des infirmes dans l'église latine du IIIe au XIe siècle*. vol. I.: *au IIIe à la reform carolingienne*, as cited in Charles W. Gusmer "Rites of the Sick" *Worship* 46, no. 9 (1972), 532; [Chavasse's published dissertation vol. 1 is not readily available and vol. 2 is unpublished].

¹²⁸ Kevin McMorrow, "Sacrament of Anointing," 511-512.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 512-513.

Roman, Gallican and Mozarabic elements.¹³⁰ The liturgy consisted of a blessing of holy water and sprinkling, five collects for healing and visitation prayers, the sixth longer prayer (*Domine Deus, qui per apostolum* which petitions for the benefits of unction), penance (added by the end of this period), unction (*In nomine...regnantis*), three antiphons, imposition rubric, Hymn (*Christe, coelestis*), Bidding *Oremus*, prayer (*Salvator noster*), and Blessing (*Propitietur*).¹³¹

Fourth, the administration of the anointing was only effective if a bishop had consecrated the oil.¹³² By the thirteenth century, the scholastic theologians inherited a tradition that was directed to the spiritual effects of the forgiveness of sins.¹³³ “Health of mind and body, the healing dimension of anointing that was so pronounced in the early Church’s blessing of oil and in her liturgical practice, has now receded into the background of Christian consciousness and therefore of theological speculation.”¹³⁴ Gusmer noted that these theologians were commenting on the practice of anointing as it was practiced in their day and the effects of forgiveness of sins.

However, Bonaventure, Scotus and the Franciscan school interpreted the principal effect to be forgiveness of venial sins, while Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas and the Dominican school interpreted the principal effect to be remission of the remnants of sin in preparation for passing to glory.¹³⁵ The rite of anointing was added to the last rites of the Church: penance, anointing, and *Viaticum*. Up until the twelfth century, the sacraments for the dying Christian ended with *Viaticum* or the Eucharistic “food for the journey.”¹³⁶ Because no universal ritual existed for this liturgy at this time, the order of these ritual elements of last rites changed depending upon who

¹³⁰ H.B. Porter, “The Origin of the Medieval Rite for Anointing the Sick or Dying,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 7, (1956), 214-215.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 214-218.

¹³² John Ziegler, *Let Them Anoint the Sick*, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 84.

¹³³ McMorrow, “Sacrament of Anointing,” 513.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Charles W. Gusmer, *And You Visited Me: Sacramental Ministry to the Sick and the Dying* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1984) : 31; and Gusmer, “Rites of the Sick,” 534.

¹³⁶ Palmer, “The Purpose of Anointing the Sick,” 325.

was conducting the liturgy.¹³⁷ Eventually, during this period, anointing or extreme unction became the pinnacle, final element of the sacrament of dying and followed *Viaticum* in the Roman practice of Last Rites.¹³⁸ The ritual itself became almost exclusively associated with death and deathbed penance and the forgiveness of sins.¹³⁹

Protestant Reformers

The Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century in creating their own Churches attempted to undermine the sacramental theology and system in place in the Roman Church, especially as it related to sacramental anointing of the sick and dying. Martin Luther rejected the Roman Church's interpretation of James' Epistle in support of sacramental anointing. The patristic Church had used their divinely given charisms and anointed the sick. However, to reject sacerdotal anointing Melancthon commented that these spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit were meant only for the patristic age that had passed.¹⁴⁰ According to John Calvin's interpretation of James, the text referred to the elder men of the faith community and not priests as in the Roman tradition, or to an anointing for healing and not for the remission of sins.¹⁴¹ Many Protestant groups supplanted anointing with visiting the sick. Some Protestant theologians and groups supported taking Holy Communion to the sick, for example Martin Bucer and the early Methodists.¹⁴² Thomas Cramner's 1549 *Prayer Book* included an unction ritual. However, the Anglican Church eventually followed other Protestant and Puritan influences and removed the unction ritual from subsequent *Books of Common Prayer* and revised the Articles of Religion to

¹³⁷ Ziegler, *Let Them Anoint the Sick*, 82.

¹³⁸ Charles Davis, "The Sacrament of the Sick," *The Clergy Review* 43, no. 11 (November, 1958), 734.

¹³⁹ White, "Brief History to Christian Worship," 95.

¹⁴⁰ Empereur, "Prophetic Anointing", 64.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

reflect Protestant theology. For almost four hundred years, the Church of England did not use oil anointing except in her coronation ritual of the English monarch.¹⁴³ Healing services, especially ones that included anointing, disappeared in Protestantism by 1552 (except for sickroom communions) until the Church of the Brethren resurrected anointing in the 1700s.¹⁴⁴ The Brethren interpreted and lived out the James 5 text in their ministerial practice by anointing and continuing to anoint the sick.¹⁴⁵ Also, the Non-jurors (18th century) and Oxford Movement (19th Century) supported anointing the sick.¹⁴⁶ Finally, their influence impacted revisions in the Anglican Communion's *Prayer Books* in the twentieth century to again include anointing rites.¹⁴⁷

Council of Trent

The Council of Trent did not canonize the practice of extreme unction as a sacrament for the dying only, but left room for the physical effects of the sacrament, i.e. the restoration of health to be realized.¹⁴⁸ The council fathers avoided stipulating that only those in their final struggle could be anointed.¹⁴⁹ The final draft stated, "This anointing is to be used for the sick, but especially for those who are so dangerously ill as to appear at the point of departing this life."¹⁵⁰ Since Trent, the Roman Church has gradually moved to use this sacrament for the seriously ill and not the dying only.¹⁵¹ The Council of Trent taught that through the grace of the

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁴⁴ White, "Brief History of Christian Worship," 130, 164.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Charles W. Gusmer, *The Ministry of Healing in the Church of England an Ecumenical-Liturgical Study*, (Great Wakering, Essex, Great Britain: Mayhew-McCrimmon, LTD, 1974), 86.

¹⁴⁷ Geoffrey Rowell, "The Sacramental Use of Oil in Anglicanism and the Churches of the Reformation" in *The Oil of Gladness*, Martin Dudley and Geoffrey Rowell, eds. (London: SPCK, 1993), 146; 143.

¹⁴⁸ Charles Davis, "The Sacrament of the Sick," 737.

¹⁴⁹ Paul Palmer, "Who Can Anoint the Sick", 90.

¹⁵⁰ See Council of Trent, Session 14, cap. 3 [DS 1698; SCT 2.312].

¹⁵¹ Charles Davis, "The Anointing the Sick," *The Furrow*, 11 no. 2 (February, 1960), 77.

sacrament of extreme unction¹⁵² “the sick person is encouraged and bears more easily the difficulties and trials of his illnesses.”¹⁵³ Thus, Trent supported the liturgical practice at least dogmatically if not in practice that the sacrament for a Christian death was *Viaticum* not anointing.¹⁵⁴ According to David Power, the council fathers upheld the priest as the sole, “proper” minister of this sacrament in order to protect this sacrament from the Reformers. However, their wording and intention left room for future interpretations and revisions in doctrine and practice.¹⁵⁵ In doing so, the Tridentine fathers equated Roman priests with the presbyters mentioned in their exegesis of James’ epistle.¹⁵⁶ The Roman Church’s dogmatic position remained virtually unchanged until the reforms brought about by the Second Vatican Council.

Vatican II and Modern Roman Practice

According to Charles Gusmer and echoing similar thoughts of Charles Davis and others,¹⁵⁷ a theological conflict existed and continues to exist in the Roman Church regarding anointing the sick: on the one side the Church uses this anointing as a sacrament of dying (extreme unction) and on the other side the Church uses anointing as a the sacrament of healing (anointing the sick, a hope for the restoration of physical and mental health).¹⁵⁸ At the Second Vatican Council, the fathers struggled with this conflict. The council fathers attempted to resolve this conflict by promulgating a compromise position in Article 73 of the *Sacred*

¹⁵² Palmer, “The Purpose of Anointing the Sick,” 338.

¹⁵³ See Council of Trent Session 14, *Doctrina de extrema unctione*, cap. 2 [DB 909].

¹⁵⁴ Davis, “The Anointing the Sick,” 77.

¹⁵⁵ David Power, “The Sacrament of Anointing: Open Questions” in *The Pastoral Care of the Sick*, (PCS) Mary Collins and David Power eds. *Concilium* no. 2 (London/Philadelphia: SCM/Trinity Press International 1991), 99.

¹⁵⁶ Paul Palmer, “Who Can Anoint the Sick,” 91.

¹⁵⁷ Charles W. Gusmer, “Liturgical Traditions of Christian Illness: Rites of the Sick,” *Worship* 46, no. 9 (1972), 528; Davis, “The Sacrament of the Sick,” 727; and Power, *The Sacrament of Anointing*, 95.

¹⁵⁸ Gusmer, 528.

Constitution on Liturgy. Therein, the sacrament commonly known as “extreme unction” should better be known as “the sacrament of anointing the sick,” yet the condition of “danger” of death continued to be part of the requirement to validly anoint an ill person.¹⁵⁹

The Sacrament is the grace of the Holy Spirit to those who are sick: by this grace the whole person is helped and saved, sustained by trust in God, and strengthened against the temptations of the Evil One and against anxiety over death. Thus the sick person is able not only to bear their suffering bravely, but also to fight against it. A return to physical health may follow the reception of this sacrament if it will be beneficial to the sick person's salvation. If necessary, the sacrament also provides the sick person with the forgiveness of sins and the completion of Christian penance.¹⁶⁰

As a result of Vatican II the Roman Church has expanded and created new rites and rituals for healing including, “Visitation and Communion of the Sick,” “Rites for Anointing a Sick Person,” “Viaticum,” “Rite of the Sacraments for Those Near Death—Continuous Rite of Penance, Anointing, and Viaticum,” “Confirmation of a Person in Danger of Death,” and “Rite for the Commendation of the Dying.” *The Pastoral Care of the Sick* describes the order of the liturgy for celebrating this sacrament. After the Liturgy of the Word and the homily, prayers of intercession, the imposition of hands, the blessing of the oil or thanksgiving for the oil already blessed, the anointing, and a concluding prayer comprise this liturgy. The Mass continues with the Eucharistic prayer and Holy Communion. If Mass is not to be celebrated, then this rite concludes with the “Our Father,” final prayer, and blessing.¹⁶¹ This sacramental anointing is done as required by the *Apostolic Constitution* of Pope Paul VI by anointing only the forehead and hands with blessed olive oil with these words said only once: “*Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord*

¹⁵⁹ *Constitution on Sacred Liturgy* [Article 73], in *The Liturgy Documents Volume One* (Archdiocese of Chicago: The Liturgy Training Publications, 1991), 23.

¹⁶⁰ The Roman Ritual, *Pastoral Care of the Sick Rites Of Anointing and Viaticum*, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1982), 12.

who frees you from sin save you and raise you up.”¹⁶² This mandate reduced the number of actual points of anointing from the five senses, believed to be avenues for temptation and sin in the previous eras, to only the forehead and hands.¹⁶³ Marc Caron emphasized the pastoral importance of anointing the person at the onset of serious illness instead of at the last moments of life. Also, he supported a communal celebration of this liturgy as promoted in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.¹⁶⁴ This rite is communal and public prayer, which distinguishes this liturgical anointing from charismatic healing and private use of oils.¹⁶⁵ Regardless of how simple or solemn the ritual, the anointing should always be conducted in the context of Word and prayer and “not reduced to a perfunctory dubbing.”¹⁶⁶

David Power has raised four issues on the theology, implications, and characteristics of anointing, especially in the Roman Church in the post-conciliar studies and writings: “the matter and form of the sacrament, its minister, the subjects for whose benefit it is intended, and its effects.”¹⁶⁷ These issues continue to be debated by Catholics and Protestants in Western Christendom despite the movement toward more anointings for healing, which is the desired pastoral result.

Modern Protestant Practice

The renewed interest in spiritual healing ministries among modern Protestants began with the revival of Biblical scholarship and the teachings contained in the New Testament texts,

¹⁶¹ PCS, articles [97-160].

¹⁶² Paul VI, *Apostolic Constitution Sacrament of Anointing the Sick*, in PCS, 8.

¹⁶³ Palmer, “Who can Anoint the Sick?” 92.

¹⁶⁴ Marc Caron, “The Twentieth Century Sources for Communal Celebration of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick,” *Worship* 50 (1976), 404; 420.

¹⁶⁵ Power, “The Sacrament of Anointing,” 99.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

especially the James text discussed previously, and the charismatic gifts of the Spirit presented in the Acts of the Apostles and in Paul's Epistles. In addition, the Protestant Churches' medical missionary movement in Europe and America in the nineteenth century promoted interest in medical healing within a Christian context.¹⁶⁸ This Healing Movement is often closely associated with the Holiness Movement of the nineteenth century and Dr. Charles Cullis, an Episcopal layman and physician.¹⁶⁹ Albert Benjamin Simpson and William Edwin Boardman, both Presbyterian ministers, were instrumental in promoting the Healing Movement within the United States. Simpson's book, *Gospel of Healing* published in 1915, has been so instrumental to the Healing Movement in America that it was republished in 1992 in a single volume along with two other classics on healing, Andrew Murray's *Divine Healing* (1884) and Adoniram Gordon's tract *The Ministry of Healing* (1881).¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, the Pentecostal Movement dramatically highlighted the importance of a visible healing ministry, which received noted attention from the mainline Churches.¹⁷¹ As a result, many of the major Christian denominations have made official studies on the need and effectiveness of religious healing.¹⁷² "The Church today is entitled to believe that it does possess the authority and power to heal in the comprehensive sense," based on the following reasons: "the intention of Jesus, the promise of Jesus, the practice of the Apostles, the scope of the Gospel, the power of prayer, the presences of

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁶⁸ Wilkinson, 276.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 278.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 278-279.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 280.

¹⁷² Church of England, *The Ministry of Healing* (1924), sections on spiritual healing *The Lambeth Conference 1930* and *The Church's Ministry of Healing* (1958); United Presbyterian Church, *The Relation of Christian Faith to Health* (1960); United Lutheran Church in America, *Anointing and Healing: Statement* (1962); American Lutheran Church, *Christian Faith and Ministry of Healing* (1965); Church of Canada, *Handbook on the Healing Ministry of the Church* (n.d.) and *Report of the Bishop of Toronto's Commission on the Church's Ministry of Healing* (1968); United Church of Christ, *Resolution on Healing, a Valid Ministry of the Church* at the Vermont Conference (1978), the Protestant Episcopal Church, *Prayer Book Studies III: The Order for the Ministration to the Sick*; and the Roman Catholic Church, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963), *The Pastoral Care of the Sick* (1982), and the Pastoral Letter of the American Bishops, *Health and Healthcare* (Nov. 19, 1981).

healing gifts, and the vocation of the Christian.”¹⁷³ To highlight the use of oil for baptism, confirmation and unction/healing, the Church of England and the Episcopal Church of the United States (ECUSA) both have the clergy return to the Cathedral on Maundy Thursday for the Chrism Mass to renew their priestly vows before their bishop and to receive a new supply of blessed anointing oils for use in the parish throughout the year. In recovering their healing liturgies, the Protestant Churches have developed written rituals and incorporated them into their pastoral ministries. In the Episcopal Church of the United States (ECUSA), the *Book(s) of Occasional Services 1994 and 2003* provide a liturgy for a public healing service with a collect, suggestions for scripture lessons, a Litany of Healing, blessings and prayers for the laying on of hands including provisions for anointing anyone who is desirous of it.¹⁷⁴ Some excerpts from this service are:

The Collect

Almighty God, giver of life and health: Send your blessing on all who are sick, and upon those who minister to them, that all weakness may be vanquished by the triumph of the risen Christ; who live and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A Blessing for those who come forward

The Almighty Lord, who is a strong tower to all who put their trust in him, to whom all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth bow and obey: Be now and evermore your defense, and make you know and feel that the only Name under heaven given for health and salvation is the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Laying on of Hands [and Anointing]

N., I lay my hand upon you [and anoint you with oil] in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, beseeching our Lord Jesus Christ to sustain you with his presence, to drive away all sickness of body and spirit, and to give

¹⁷³ John Wilkinson *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 286-287.

¹⁷⁴ *Book of Occasional Services 1994/2003*, (New York: Church Publishing Inc., 1994, 2003), 166-173.

you victory of life and peace which will enable you to serve him now and evermore. *Amen.*¹⁷⁵

Episcopalians also may use “The Ministration to the Sick”¹⁷⁶ as a format for their public and “sickroom” healing services, which is divided into three parts: 1) Ministry of the Word; 2) Laying on of hands and Anointing; and 3) Holy Communion. This section of the prayer book offers additional prayers for the sick including prayers said by the sick person, prayers before an operation, for doctors and nurses, and thanksgiving for the beginning of recovery.¹⁷⁷ Another Episcopal healing ritual is provided in *Enriching Our Worship*. This text includes suggestions for readings and Psalms, a Litany for Healing, a Confession of Sin and a Confession of Need, Laying on of Hands and Anointing, along with suggested hymns from *The Hymnal, Wonder Love and Praise*, and *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*.

Other Protestant groups have developed their own modern healing rites that include Word, praise and prayer, and depending upon the tradition of the denomination, prayers for laying on of hands and anointing with oil. The Lutherans have the “Laying on of Hands and Anointing the Sick.” The United Methodists have both a public and private “Service of Healing.” The Presbyterians have developed “A Service for Wholeness for Use with a Congregation” and another “with an individual.” As indicated previously, the Church of the Brethren *Pastor’s Manual* provides for anointing the sick.¹⁷⁸ Apart from these formal rituals, in actual practice small prayer groups from local parishes, some with an ecumenical composition, have formed and meet regularly to pray for the ill, suffering and dying. The participants in these

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ BCP, 1979, 453.

¹⁷⁷ BCP, 458-461.

¹⁷⁸ James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 3rd ed., (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 273, 275

groups, whether lay or ordained, often use laying on of hands and anointing with oil as a symbolic action and a sign of God's grace and presence in the healing process.¹⁷⁹ Many mainline Protestant parishes have established healing ministries as part of their mission and the healing services as part of their worship experience. Therefore, the healing ministry of the Church must be practiced within the ecclesial community and under its leadership. When the congregation is gathered for praise, prayer, and worship, healing may be found. When the members of the body practice healing within their daily life and work, they become witnesses to the secular community at-large.¹⁸⁰

The healing methods employed today by Christians are the same as Jesus and the early Church used namely, prayer, word, touch and means.¹⁸¹ Jesus informs us in Mark 9:29 that prayer is the only method to conquer that particular kind of demon. The faithful today can empower the community by praying in community with others either in a prayer group or participating in a prayer chain or circle. Jesus speaking the word of authority healed the man with the withered hand.¹⁸² Jesus touched Blind Bartimaeus to heal him.¹⁸³ In Mark 6:13 the sick are anointed with olive oil by the disciples. The prayer of faith is the basis for all healing, while speaking the word, touching and anointing have known therapeutic results. Through the liturgical actions of prayer, laying on of hands and anointing with oil, the Church and its members can be a witness to Jesus' healing ministry as presented in the Gospel. Regardless of the nature of the illness or the imminence of death, prayer, laying on of hands and anointing the

¹⁷⁹ Bruce G. Epperly, *Crystal and Cross: Christians and New Age in Creative Dialogue*, (Mystic, CT: Twenty-third Publications, 1996), 111. and Morton Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1995), 175.

¹⁸⁰ Wilkinson, 291.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 293.

¹⁸² Mark 3:1; Matt 12:9; Luke 6:6.

¹⁸³ Mark 10:46; Matt 20:30; Luke 18:35.

sick by a lay or ordained representative of the ecclesial community can be an effective and compassionate pastoral response to illness and suffering today. The mainline Churches need to continue to expand and make visible their liturgical healing ministries with prayer, touch and anointing the sick with oil in faithful witness to the healing ministry of Jesus, to fulfill the commission of Jesus to his disciples, to be obedient to the New Testament mandate for anointing, to revitalize the historical tradition of healing in the Church, and to be the manifestation of His Body, who is God Incarnate.

Conclusion

In the past thirty years, the world has seen the influence of other healing religious traditions from Eastern and native cultures, as well as the rise of the New Age movement with its emphasis on alternative therapies, rituals and spiritual practices for healing outside of the Christian Church.¹⁸⁴ Some of these therapies have proven to be scientifically helpful in the healing process. Many people have tried these alternative therapies to augment traditional Western medicine and in some cases instead of Western medicine. In light of these sociological developments, the Church has had to reawaken her ministry of healing. This ministry of pastorally caring for the sick and suffering through prayer, laying on of hands and sacramental anointing is an important Christian witness in the world. In providing this ministry, the Church fulfills the commission Jesus gave and left to his disciples. This commission now resides in the Body of Christ as the “one holy, catholic and apostolic Church.” Persons of faith today often ask their spiritual leaders and pastors to teach them to pray and meditate, to find God’s peace and healing in this chaotic world, and to deepen their understanding of their faith including

¹⁸⁴ Kelsey, 188.

healing.¹⁸⁵ As a result, the sacramental healing practices demand proper teaching and catechesis in order for the ecclesial community to understand God's grace as manifested through these liturgical actions. "The physical cure spoken of is produced not by magic; but by grace, by the power of the Spirit and the response of faith."¹⁸⁶ "There is no healing that is not an act of God."¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Epperly, *Crystal and Cross*, 112.

¹⁸⁶ Borobio, "An Enquiry into Healing Anointing in the Early Church," 46.

¹⁸⁷ Thomas Talley, "Healing: Sacrament or Charism," *Worship* 46, no. 9 (1972) : 521.

V. HEALING: SIN, REPENTANCE, RECONCILIATION, REDEMPTION, SALVATION

Because thou didst give Jesus Christ, thine only Son, to be born for us; who, by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, was made very Man of the substance of the Virgin Mary his mother; that we might be delivered from the bondage of sin, and receive power to become thy children.

Preface for the Feast of the Incarnation, Book of Common Prayer

Through Jesus Christ our Lord; who for our sins was lifted high upon the cross, that he might draw the whole world to himself; who by his suffering and death became the author of eternal salvation for all who put their trust in him.

Preface for Holy Week, Book of Common Prayer

But chiefly we are bound to praise thee for the glorious resurrection of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; for he is the very Paschal Lamb, who was sacrificed for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world; who by his death hath destroyed death, and by his rising to life again hath won for us everlasting life.

Preface for Easter, Book of Common Prayer

Introduction

The Christian tradition has maintained the principle of *lex orandi; lex credenti*, that the rule of prayer is the rule of belief. The three Prefaces to the Eucharistic Prayer noted above provide us with examples of how our liturgical prayers concentrate on the concept of sin and salvation through the incarnation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. These prefaces emphasize that Jesus Christ, Son of God, became man to deliver us from the bondage of sin, to suffer death as a sacrifice for human sin, and to remove sin and its consequence -- death -- by bringing eternal life. Therefore, Christian understanding has and always must be viewed through the lens of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through prayer and the passion and glorification of Christ, all Christian doctrines come to be and are interpreted. In the preceding chapters, we identified Jesus of Nazareth as a healer. We have noted that his followers healed others in imitation of him and in response to his dictate. We have explored how this healing has been ritualized sacramentally in the Church for the health, well-being and salvation of its members.

This chapter will explore the impact of sin, particularly original sin, and how the Church and its leaders go about reconciling sinners to God in Christ through sacramental healing and reconciliation. In order to fully understand healing within the Church and its sacramental expressions, we need to build upon the passage in James discussed in the previous chapter and analyze how forgiveness and reconciliation effect healing in the individual and the community. In delving into James, we can make valid our assumption that redemption in the salvation economy is an act of healing brought about by the incarnation of God in Christ Jesus and needs to be actualized sacramentally by the faith community.

Sin the Human Condition

The doctrine of original sin has been subject to much debate throughout the Christian era. More emphatically, this doctrine has been used and abused by the Church, both clergy and laity, to influence interpretation of scripture; to understand human nature, sin, salvation, atonement, justification; to impact liturgical practice and sacramental theology; and to influence pastoral practice and counseling, especially healing and the understanding of disease and suffering. This misunderstood doctrine has been defined as “Adam’s eating the apple or fig” as the original sin. But, what was the real sin? Was it sexual intercourse? Was it lustful desire? Was it human pride or was it rebellion against God or was it disobedience? Did all of humanity fall or become tainted with original sin because of Adam’s first sin? Does his sin and its consequence pass to all humanity through procreation?

On the other side of the debate, scholars, theologians and laity alike have provided different interpretations of this doctrine. This debate has gone on since the fourth century of the

Common Era, when St. Augustine of Hippo apparently coined the term *Original Sin (ex originali peccato)*¹⁸⁸ in his writings against the Manichaean and Pelagian controversies and heresies. Even today, many believe the thought of original sin is not compatible with the post-modern worldview. They often note that the followers of Judaism, who also share the Adam story, have never developed a doctrine of original sin based upon Jewish exegesis of this text. Some in this camp, for example Matthew Fox, place a stronger emphasis on original blessing and original righteousness rather than on original sin.¹⁸⁹ For them, the doctrine of original sin is too negative and stifles the concept of blessing and human freedom, righteousness, and goodness in creation. The idea of Adam's sin being conveyed to all humanity through heredity is incompatible with their beliefs about human nature.

In an effort to bridge the differences of opinion between the various ecclesial communities, I will employ an Anglican *via media* (the middle way) approach to study the doctrine of original sin. The middle way combines the use of scripture, tradition and reason to draw a comprehensive interpretation, which offers a more enlightened way to study this doctrine. Specifically, in using this methodology this paper will investigate: 1) scripture – namely Genesis 3 and Romans 5 -- passages often cited in defining the doctrine; 2) tradition – an overview of the doctrinal development in western Christianity as influenced by Augustine of Hippo, the ecumenical councils and the Protestant movement; and 3) reason – modern interpretations based upon developments in science, philosophy, anthropology, psychology, theology and sociology, which have impacted doctrinal interpretations about sin and its origin. First, I will provide the traditional definitions of the doctrine of original sin from which we can employ the *via media*

¹⁸⁸ Augustine on Fallen Human Nature, in *The Christian Theology Reader*, Alister McGrath ed. (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 398.

methodology to analyze the influence of scripture, tradition and reason upon the Church's authoritative doctrine and its influence upon understanding healing within a Christian context.

Definition of Original Sin

The term "original sin" does not appear in the Old or New Testaments or in the Jewish writings and is unsupported by the Jewish scripture. It is only through the revelation of salvation in Jesus Christ can the doctrine of original sin be developed. Jesus triumphs over sin and death [the consequence of sin] through his passion and resurrection. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church the revelation of the doctrine of original sin is closely related to understanding the saving work of Christ for the redemption of humanity. Traditionally, original sin is the human condition of universal sinfulness resulting from the first or "original" sin by the first humans expressed in Genesis 3.¹⁹⁰ Once the first sin was committed, "the world is virtually inundated by sin."¹⁹¹ This sinful condition is transferred or passed on from Adam, the first man, to subsequent generations onto the present and future generations. In Christian theology, it is "the state of sin in which [hu]mankind has been held captive since the Fall."¹⁹² Death entered into the world as punishment for sin. What is sin? As generally defined by the Catechism of the Episcopal Church, sin is the seeking of our own will instead of the will of God, thus distorting our relationship with God, with other people and with all creation. From this perspective Adam's first or original sin so distorted the human condition and humanity's relation with God

¹⁸⁹ Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing*, (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnum, 1983).

¹⁹⁰ Sean Fagan, SM, "Experiences of Sin", in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, ed. Peter E. Fink, SJ, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), p. 1192. Daniel L. Milgore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 2nd, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2004), 155, 419; "Original Sin, an Overview" www.sullivan-county.com/z/original_sin2.htm.

¹⁹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., (Washington, DC: US Catholic Conference, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 98-101.

¹⁹² "Original Sin" in F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, UK: The Oxford University Press, 1997), 1195.

that only the atoning work of Christ could remedy humanity and restore creation into right relationship with God. “Sin is a universal [human] condition.”¹⁹³ Augustine writes of inherited sin in *On Original Sin*, Luther expresses the *Bondage of the Will*, Calvin writes of “vitiating and corrupted will” in *Institutes*, and Edwards speaks of ‘universal evil disposition of humanity’ in *Original Sin*.¹⁹⁴ “The doctrine of original sin is not a theory of the origin of sin but the claim that the whole of humanity finds itself in a condition or state of captivity to sin.”¹⁹⁵

Scripture and Original Sin

“The Bible is far more interested in affirming the reality of sin, the need for repentance, and the divine promise of redemption than in longing for the recovery of a lost paradise.”¹⁹⁶ This is the point as it relates to reconciliation and healing people of mind, body and spirit is not a return to Eden, but a restoration wholeness, righteousness and goodness that God originally intended. Biblically, we can use modern exegetical methods and apply these methods to Genesis 2-3 and Romans 5, which are of specific importance to the development of a Christian doctrine of original sin. The limits of this discussion will not allow a complete exegesis of these texts; however, I will highlight the important concepts which apply to the doctrine of sin which impact Christian understanding of healing.

Genesis 2-3. The classical interpretation of Genesis 2-3 provides the account of the Fall of Man and has often been used in explaining the Christian doctrine under study. God commands Adam not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Following the

¹⁹³ Milgore, 156.

¹⁹⁴ Augustine, *On Original Sin*; Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, Calvin, *Institutes 2.2*; Edwards, *On Original Sin*.

¹⁹⁵ Milgore, 155.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

creation of woman, the text continues with the serpent's temptation of the woman, who in turns tempts Adam with the luscious fruit of the forbidden tree. Utilizing their free will, they give into their prideful desires for knowledge "to be like God or gods [divine beings of the heavenly court]."¹⁹⁷ They eat of the fruit and their eyes are opened to the knowledge of good and evil. Thus, they broke God's command and forever distorted the human relationship with God and with all of creation. Their knowing their nakedness symbolizes their guilt for their actions and the loss of an innocent, trusting relationship with God.¹⁹⁸ The consequences of their action resulted in punishment by God. The punishments according to the text were: enmity was placed between the man and the woman; the woman would have pain in childbirth; the woman became subjected to her husband's rule; the man would toil¹⁹⁹ with sweat to cultivate food; death would come returning them to dust; and they were banished from the God's Garden of Paradise.

We need to remember this text speaks of primordial time, a time before "once upon a time." According to Father Wimmer, the story does not tell about a particular moment in history, but is more parabolic in nature explaining the human condition, which always and everywhere occurs in humanity.²⁰⁰ From this brief summary of the text, we can see how it has been used by the Church and with a Christian lens to provide an Old Testament scriptural support for this doctrine. However, the intention of the writer of the text was not to support the Christian concept of original sin.²⁰¹ The intention may have been to explain universality of human nature, which we inherit from our biological parents. People live with the human condition including

¹⁹⁷ The New Oxford Annotated Bible, 5.

¹⁹⁸ The New Oxford Annotated Bible.

¹⁹⁹ As noted in the annotation of the new Oxford annotated Bible, NRSV, work is not intrinsically evil, however work becomes toil when the relationship between God and humanity is distorted or broken.

²⁰⁰ Joseph Wimmer, OSA, "Original Sin", (*New Theology Review*, Vol. 17 No. 3, August, 2004), 77.

²⁰¹ James L. Connor, S.J. "Original Sin: Contemporary Approaches," *Theological Studies* 29 (1968), 219.

the universal character of sinfulness, especially disorder, disobedience and the pain of human history.²⁰² The sacred author of this text would not have had our modern understanding. For many of us, Adam and Eve only symbolize humanity's beginning parentage and not the actual biological parents of all humanity.²⁰³ The universality of the myth can inform us of what it is to be human, to desire, to exercise free will and the cost of breaking right relationships with one another and the Creator. This text does not answer the questions posed by modernity concerning grace, inherited sin, evolution or natural reason. It is difficult to develop a doctrinal concept of original sin on this text alone, even from a Christian perspective. To gain further scriptural insight into this doctrine, we must look to St. Paul and his letter to the Romans for the best scriptural tradition underpinning original sin.

Romans 5. The key scriptural text for the development of the doctrine of original sin is Romans 5:12-21. In this passage summarized here, Paul states that sin came into the world because of the disobedience of one man, Adam. Now, the free gift of grace comes into the world through the obedience of Christ Jesus. Death was the result of sin, and since all have sinned, all will die. Eternal life is the result of the righteousness of Christ, and since all can have the gift of grace, all will be justified.

This text is cited by the ecumenical councils of the Church to defend the classical position. In this passage St. Paul, writing to the Church in Rome, provides a rhetorical analogy and contrast between Adam and Christ, between disobedience and obedience, between sin/death and grace/life, between condemnation and justification, between the law and righteousness. In

²⁰² Original Sin an Overview, 3.

²⁰³ Connor, 218-219.

using the Adam-Christ parallelism, Paul is able to more effectively “proclaim universal redemption in Christ Jesus.”²⁰⁴ “Adam then becomes a convenient way of talking about this universality, . . . by means of Adam, Paul can show that constitutive sinful desire goes deeper than the law and tends to manipulate the law toward its own death-ridden ends.”²⁰⁵ This text brings to the forefront the concepts of the universality of sin and its consequence, death. The economy of salvation whose components are obedience, grace, righteousness and justification are brought about by the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ as the author of salvation frees all humanity of their trespasses, and the bondage of the sinful human condition and its resultant death. Paul links sin and death both extrinsically, as one results from the other as through the divine punishment (referring back to Genesis), and intrinsically, the two are involved in one another without any recourse to the divine sentence.²⁰⁶ What is conceptually important to Paul’s understanding that all have sinned is taken from the point of view of the universality of redemption, whereas in classical theology the universality of redemption follows the universality of sin.²⁰⁷ Paul’s discussion of Adam and Christ illustrates, “the Bible is eschatologically rather than protologically oriented in its thinking about sin and redemption.”²⁰⁸ Let us now turn to the tradition of the Church and its teaching of original sin.

Tradition and Original Sin

In investigating the teaching tradition of the Western Church on the topic of original sin, we must look at Augustine of Hippo, the conciliar documents, which define the Church’s

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 220.

²⁰⁵ James Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin through Easter Eyes*, (New York: The Crossroads Publishing Co. 1998), 155.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

²⁰⁷ Connor, 222.

²⁰⁸ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 2nd. (Grand Rapid, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 155.

authoritative position. Specific to our study are the Council of Carthage (417), the Second Council of Orange (529), the Council of Trent (1546) and the teachings of the Protestant Movement. The Augustinian perspective had significant influence on the understanding and magisterial teaching of this doctrine.

Augustine. Augustine created his doctrine of original sin in combating two heresies or two anthropologies, the Manichaeans and the Pelagians, which are errant according to Rome.²⁰⁹ Augustine's intention is to defend the Catholic faith over and against the other two. To quickly summarize the differing views,

The Catholics say that man, created good, fell into sin, and thus can be redeemed and is in need of redemption; the Pelagians say that, since man is born healthy, he needs no doctor; the Manichaeans say that, being substantially evil, man cannot be redeemed.²¹⁰

The Doctor of Hippo explains Romans 5:12 (in whom all have sinned) in that Adam committed the *originating* original sin, and therefore, the rest of humanity is under the guilt of that same sin, the *originated* original sin, through procreation.²¹¹ Through original sin, grace is lost, mortality becomes a reality, and people turn their desires away from God, concupiscence. Wimmer indicates that for Augustine sexual desire is part of it, but moves beyond it.²¹² Humanity according to Augustine is damned (*massa damnata*) and deserves hell.²¹³ Human freedom is corrupted.²¹⁴ Only through the grace of Christ is salvation possible in faith and baptism.²¹⁵ Augustine's

²⁰⁹ Alison, 290.

²¹⁰ Alison, 290 cited and translated from A. Villalmonete, "El problema del mal y el pecado original en San Agustín," (*Naturaleza y Gracia*, 1991).

²¹¹ Wimmer, 77; Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 1196.

²¹² Wimmer, 77; Augustine, *City of God*, Book XIII. Chap. 13, trans. Marcus Dods, (New York: Modern Library, 1993), 422.

²¹³ Wimmer, 77; Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 1196.

²¹⁴ Migliore, 154.

²¹⁵ Wimmer, 77; Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 1196.

theological stance on the doctrine of original sin greatly influenced three councils' official promulgation of this doctrine.

Council of Carthage. In developing its doctrinal position, the Council at Carthage denounced Pelagian thinking, which summarized as follows:

- 1) Adam was created mortal and would have died regardless of committing sin;
- 2) children do not need to be baptized because Adam's original sin does not pass on to the rest of humanity;
- 3) children who die without the benefit of baptism go to bliss anyway;
- 4) the grace of Christ avails only remission of sins already committed but does not help new sins of commission;
- 5) the gift of grace has no impact upon our free choice.

Those who believe in above statements are to be anathematized.²¹⁶

Council of Orange. At the Council of Orange, 25 canons were passed employing most of Augustine's teaching and the canons of Carthage with minor modifications.²¹⁷ The council fathers insisted that the whole person -- body and soul -- was corrupted by sin and not the body only as the Pelagians taught. Thus, the whole human race is affected by this originating sin not from the outside as a contagious disease, but forms the person from within.²¹⁸ The affirmations appended to the end of the official documents state that the sin of the first man so warp free choice that humanity could not love, believe and act toward God as a person should.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Council of Carthage, 417. *Canons on Sin and Grace in Documents of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. ed. H. Bettenson and C. Maunder, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 64-65.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.

²¹⁸ Alison, 273.

²¹⁹ Bettenson and Maunder, 67.

The central insistence of the text is entirely compatible with a Christological reinterpretation of Adam's sin. ... owing to Christ's salvation and the coming into being of a state where the whole human can be changed for the better, it becomes possible to see the way in which such humanity as has not been touched by that change for the better is living in a state subject to corruption. Anthropologically, the insistence of the text is on our complete dependence on grace in every aspect of our life for our being brought to human fulfillment.²²⁰

Council of Trent. The Council of Trent was the last ecumenical council to propound definitive canons on the doctrine of original sin. At Trent, in an effort to refute Protestant claims that the Catholic Church had a Pelagian bias, and because the fathers could not agree on the essence of sin, the council fathers reiterated the traditional Augustinian notion of original sin and the anti-Pelagian position of the Council of Orange.²²¹ At Trent, the five canons dealing specifically with original sin reasserted both of the previous two councils' statements on this doctrine while adding to the theological argument shifts in insight that arose during the intervening period. Namely, St. Anselm of Canterbury's notion of the loss of original holiness and justice embedded in original sin had no real impact upon human nature.²²² While Trent upheld that original holiness and justice and the sin's effect upon Adam were two ways of expressing the same thing.²²³ At Trent, the fathers took up original sin in order to undergird their preparations for a decree on intrinsic justification to counter the Lutheran position.²²⁴ Therefore, the fathers refuted Pighius' claim that one sin of Adam is not interior to us but imputed to us.²²⁵ In addition, Trent was not deliberating the "essence of sin" but continuing to maintain the Roman position against the Pelagians and Lutheran anthropology. Therefore, a Catholic reading of Genesis 3 may oblige one to see the original sin as disobedience; however, the council does not

²²⁰ Alison, 273.

²²¹ Connor, 223.

²²² Alison, 275.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 275-276.

²²⁴ Connor, 223; Alison, 282.

attempt to correct St. Thomas Aquinas' position that the originating sin was pride. Thus, the teaching of the council seems to be, "the whole of humanity from Adam onward is in a state, of its own making, ruled by the power of death which is contrary to the state willed by God for humanity."²²⁶ Connor has asked the questions: "Do the canons from Trent require an understanding that Adam was a single, concrete, historical person and physical father of all? Does Trent exclude any notion of polygenism?"²²⁷ To both of these, modern theological understanding, both Catholic and Protestant, would say no.

Protestantism and Original Sin. Luther and Calvin retained the doctrine of original sin in their respective theologies. In the debates between the Roman Church and reformers, the doctrine of original sin was made even more precise. Reformation Christians had varying views on the way to receive Christ's salvation from original sin. Both Luther and Calvin equated concupiscence with original sin and maintained that concupiscence completely destroyed liberty or human freedom and remained following baptism.²²⁸ From the Catholic viewpoint, Luther's doctrine was so dependent upon grace and the pessimistic view of human nature that it made the merits of salvation impossible.²²⁹ In Calvinism, man freely chose his own ruin, thereby losing his close communion with God (which is life). By failing to trust in the faithfulness of God, he exchanged all that belonged to him and his offspring for the lie of an equality with God, which can never be his.²³⁰ The Reformed tradition also believes that those who put their trust in Christ are predestined from the beginning to live in the light of God's love, and those who do not trust

²²⁵ Connor, 223.

²²⁶ Alison, 276.

²²⁷ Connor, 224.

²²⁸ Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 1196.

²²⁹ Alison, 282; 302-303.

²³⁰ Lewis Loflin, Original Sin, an Overview. http://sullivan-county.com/z/original_sin2.htm

Christ will remain in the darkness, guilty of sin.²³¹ At another end of the spectrum, the Universalists believe every person born will ultimately be saved.²³² In between these opposing views are those who emphasize human ability to choose life with God or separation from God, thereby, people remain dependent on God's grace and mercy, while choosing God play a role in their own salvation.²³³

Article Nine of the *Thirty-nine Articles of Religion* of the Church of England provides the official Anglican teaching on original sin and a middle ground approach to the doctrine. This article moves the traditional Catholic position on the doctrine to a more Protestant understanding embedded with Calvinistic theology.

IX. Of Original or Birth Sin.

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly talk;) but it is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in Greek, *φρονημα σαρκος*, (which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire, of the flesh), is not subject to the Law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized; yet the Apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin.

Another approach to the nature of original sin has been offered by William Temple in his *Christianity and Social Order*.

When we open our eyes as babies, we see the world stretching out around us; we are in the middle of it, all proportions and perspectives in what we see are determined by the relation – distance, height and so forth – of the various objects to ourselves. This will remain true of our bodily vision as long as we live. I am the centre of the world I see, where the horizon is, depends on where I stand. Now just the same thing is true at first of

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ *Ibid.*

our mental and spiritual vision. Some things hurt us, we hope they will not happen again; we call them bad. Some things please us, we hope they will happen again; we call them good. Our standard of value is the way things affect ourselves. So each of us takes his place in the centre of his own world. But I am NOT the centre of the world, or the standard reference as between good and bad; I am not, and God is. In other words from the beginning I put myself in God's place. This is my original sin.²³⁴

Temple identifies our original sin as our own devotion to ourselves in self-centeredness. This is to what we truly are devoted. This devotion to self can bring disaster to oneself and those around me, because I have replaced God with my very own self, according to Temple. Although education may win me to a devotion of Truth or Beauty, complete deliverance from this sin of self-centeredness can only be accomplished by "Divine Love disclosed by Christ in His Life and Death."²³⁵ Only through Christ's Passion will I be able to give God my complete devotion of heart and remove myself from the center of my life and live in compassion for others in the love of God's grace.²³⁶

Reason and Original Sin

Having applied scripture and tradition to the study of the doctrine, we will now investigate how reason and modern understanding influence the doctrine presented. The Church supports using human reason to know God because when believers use their intellect to speak about God to other people and in other disciplines, they can express the faith and open up dialogue that may bring others to a knowledge and belief in God. Therefore, it is most appropriate that we add reason as a component of the study of the doctrine of original sin along with scripture and tradition. The use of reason can aid our understanding and interpretation of the doctrine we are investigating and its influence upon healing.

²³⁴ William Temple, *Christianity and Social Order*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 60.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ *Ibid.*,

Through natural reason we cannot prove the existence of original sin. However, the symptoms of original sin abound around us, the need for police, prisons, suicide, suffering and so on.²³⁷ Original sin as a doctrine is one developed through revelation. St. Thomas makes use of a philosophical proof which may be the only means for solving the problem of evil.²³⁸ Our human reason does not seem to have serious objections to the doctrine. However, rationalists usually have difficulty with the idea that transmission of a sin of one man to the whole of the human race or the punishment of one man to the whole of humanity, which are inherent in the doctrine as traditionally defined.²³⁹

Contemporary Approaches. In his article on “Original Sin: Contemporary Approaches,” Connor is primarily concerned with how we can be true to the traditional teaching of the Church concerning original sin in light of modern philosophical, theological, scientific, and biblical scholarship and thinking. He attempts to provide the Church with a modern day interpretation of this doctrine. Philosophically, we must investigate the doctrine from the standpoint of a human being as central to the discussion, whether from the existential and personalistic perspective or not, rather than the scholastic tradition of being out of the perspective of its Aristotelian and cosmological origins.²⁴⁰ Theologically, we must employ the current Christocentric view of reality and revelation.²⁴¹ Scientifically, we need to include a whole worldview that includes evolution whether monogenic, polygenic or polyphyletic. And,

²³⁷ Original Sin, <http://users.binary.net/polycarp/origsin.html>

²³⁸ S. Harent, *Catholic Encyclopedia: Original Sin* p.5, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11312a.htm>

²³⁹ *Catholic Encyclopedia: Original Sin*. 6.

²⁴⁰ Connor, 216.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

how does this understanding of the evolutionary development affect our explanation of the universality of sin and the transmission of original sin?²⁴²

Connor uses a number of modern theologians who present their current thinking and understanding of the doctrine of original sin. In using Alszeghy-Flick, Grelot, Schoonenberg, Hulsbosch, Rondet, Vanneste, Gutwenger, Connor is able to illustrate a progressive shift of focus from the traditional view of original sin that began with Adam who has passed it on to all humanity, to a revised view of sin as “not-yet-in-Christ.”²⁴³ This Christocentric perspective explains original sin as “simply to be outside of Christ prior to the possibility of free personal decision for or against Christ.”²⁴⁴ Through Connor’s article it becomes clear that not one of these theologians’ explanations is comprehensive to understanding the doctrine and its interpretation. Each presents a facet of the mystery. When we combine their reasoning we can have a better, reasoned understanding of the doctrine for our time. This doctrine attempts to explain a mystery. In this mystery, we are all born unredeemed and need Christ’s grace to save us.²⁴⁵ Each individual with free decision must accept this grace, which Christ gives. As post-modern Christians interested in preserving the apostolic teaching, we need to shift our emphasis in discussing the doctrine of original sin. The old understanding of original sin has become too narrow for our worldview and scholastic advances. We must champion the fundamental doctrine that sinfulness is universally a part of the human condition. The world needs salvation to redeem this sinfulness. This salvation is freely given through the incarnation, passion, death and

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 217

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 238-239.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 239.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 240.

resurrection of Christ. In our response to this Grace, we can choose “being-in-Christ” rather than in sin and death of “not-yet-in Christ.”

A New Anthropological Approach. Using René Girard’s anthropology of mimetic desire and sacred victim, James Alison in his work, *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin Through Easter Eyes*, presents a fresh rethinking of the doctrine of original sin. Girard’s theory can be used to interpret the Genesis 2-3 story of the fall into sin as a myth about “forbidden desire is mediated by another.”²⁴⁶ The serpent in the story creates a desire in the woman to eat the forbidden fruit. Once this desire is aroused, Adam also becomes desirous of the eating the fruit mimicking her desire.

The story suggests that, ever since the first man and woman, humankind has chosen to follow the desires of our fellow creatures rather than of the one in whose image we are made, the Creator. God’s loving desire for the whole creation is the only desire that can save us from lives of suffering the consequences of our violence. Choosing our fellow creatures as models for our desiring leads to a perpetual fall from paradise.... God’s salvation [had] the Son to come into human form in order to model for us the Father’s desire, a desire which is *agape* love for the world, and in which the Father went to the lengths of sending His Son to save it. The Holy Spirit is this divine desire communicated to each person of faith who chooses the Son as his or her model of desire.²⁴⁷

The Girardian perspective of the Pauline argument would state that since the First Adam humans are trapped in imitating each other’s desires. We require the Second Adam, Christ, to show us how to live in the love of the Creator. The Second Adam succeeded in being obedient to the loving desire of the Creator.²⁴⁸ Nuechterlein points out that people are blind to our ingrained or

²⁴⁶ Paul J. Nuechterlein, “René Girard: The Anthropology of the Cross as Alternative to Post-Modern Literary Criticism,” October 2002, http://girardianlectionary.net/girard_postmodern_literary_criticism.htm.

²⁴⁷ Nuechterlein, http://girardianlectionary.net/girard_postmodern_literary_criticism.htm.

²⁴⁸ Paul J. Nuechterlein, “René Girard: The Anthropology of the Cross as Alternative to Post-Modern Literary Criticism,” October 2002, http://girardianlectionary.net/girard_postmodern_literary_criticism.htm.

original sin, “the sin that goes back to the origins which have generated the very cultures that form us”²⁴⁹ until we are forgiven for it, which is revealed by the cross of Christ.

For the Son to come into this world and bring God's salvation, his loving obedience to the Father would necessarily entail being handed over to our engines of sacrifice. The Son would also become the Lamb of God, so that in his being raised from the dead to grant unconditional forgiveness, he would also finally open our eyes and ears to the nature of our Sin, the sin which his death on the cross forgives. In John's Gospel, John the Baptist is the first to recognize Jesus and proclaims, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the Sin of the world" (John 1:29).²⁵⁰

Post-modern Theology-The Middle Way. The origin of sin is not found in the natural conditions of human life, for example sexual activity or physical existence, nor in ignorance or the lack of education, nor caused by poor or unequal social conditions.²⁵¹ However, unjust social conditions can be viewed as corporate expression of human sinfulness.²⁵² Traditional theology about sin has always divided sin into two categories: 1) acts we commit against the Creator's will; and 2) original sin or the universal human condition affecting all of humanity.²⁵³ Theology today sees the paradoxes in human sinfulness. Sin is universal to all of humanity. Sin is the condition in which people live. Sin impacts all human actions both individual and corporate. Sin corrupts the individual and the society from the Divine will and we cannot continue to privatize sin to individuals. Communities and social and economic structures need to recognize the inherent sin present in each of them. These social structures are also in need of redeeming and healing just as the individual is in need of redeeming and healing. Post-modern individuals need to be reminded that sin and death, the consequence for sin, are still

²⁴⁹ Nuechterlein, http://girardianlectionary.net/girard_postmodern_literary_criticism.htm

²⁵⁰ Nuechterlein, http://girardianlectionary.net/girard_postmodern_literary_criticism.htm

²⁵¹ Migliore, 154-155.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 155.

connected.²⁵⁴ Reconciliation, redemption and salvation from sin and death can only be gained through the passion and resurrection of Christ.²⁵⁵

Repentance, Reconciliation, Redemption and Salvation

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.... But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 1:8,9 and 2:1,2 NSRV)

One might wonder why a discussion of reconciliation is included within the topic of sacramental healing, given that reconciliation, especially in the Roman tradition, refers to the sacrament of penance, commonly known as confession. Yet, reconciliation is larger than individual penance and absolution of sins. Reconciliation refers to the notion of restoring individual relationships or restoring harmony within a community. Humanity finds itself in the human condition of sinfulness as we have just been discussing with regard to original sin. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”²⁵⁶ In the act of reconciling the world, Jesus brings us into right relationships with one another and with God, ushering in the kingdom of God. Jesus demonstrated this restoration in his healing.

In his commentary on the Epistle of James, Johnson notes sickness is analogous to sin and its social consequences.²⁵⁷ In Palestine during the first century of the Common Era, Jewish culture demanded ritual purity in order to be an accepted member of the community. For Jews of Jesus’ day, diseases and illnesses were directly caused by sin. This understanding of sickness

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 155.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 156-157.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 157-159.

²⁵⁶ 1 Timothy 1:15.

significantly relied upon their interpretation of Deuteronomy 28:58-62, which clearly underscores the causal relationship between sin and disease for them.

If you do not diligently observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, fearing this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God, then the LORD will overwhelm both you and your offspring with severe and lasting afflictions and grievous and lasting maladies. He will bring back upon you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were in dread, and they shall cling to you. Every other malady and affliction, even though not recorded in the book of this law, the LORD will inflict on you until you are destroyed. Although once you were as numerous as the stars in heaven, you shall be left few in number, because you did not obey the LORD your God.²⁵⁸

For them, the ill person was suffering his or her malady as result of sin, especially unrepentant sin. John's Gospel highlights this cultural thinking. When Jesus healed the man born blind, the Pharisees asked him, "who sinned this man or his parents?" Jesus exclaimed that "this man was born blind so that the glory of God may be made manifest [through Him]."²⁵⁹ Jesus is not linking sin and disease in this instance. In interpreting James' epistle, both Johnson and Hartin indicate that James does not link sin and sickness in a casual relationship.²⁶⁰ However, illness is "analogous to sin in its social effects."²⁶¹

Repentance. Sin especially unrepentant sin in our lives can block spiritual and inner healing, wholeness, deeper discipleship and progress in our spiritual journey to put on Christ in our daily living. Repentance is often central to the conversion experience,²⁶² as well as the

²⁵⁷ Timothy Luke Johnson, *The Letter of James: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, Anchor Bible Series, Vol 37A*. New York: Doubleday, 1995, 342.

²⁵⁸ Deuteronomy 28:58-62

²⁵⁹ John 9:2-3, my paraphrase.

²⁶⁰ Johnson, p. 342; Patrick J. Hartin, *James, Sacra Pagina Series* Vol. 14. Daniel J. Harrington, ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 277.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 342.

²⁶² Christopher Bryant, "The Nature of Spiritual Development" and "The Nature of Spiritual Direction: Sacramental Confession," in *The Study of Spirituality*, eds. C. Jones, G. Wainwright, E. Yarnold, SJ. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 566.

healing experience.²⁶³ Christopher Bryant indicates that the three movements of the soul on our journey toward God are repentance, faith and love.²⁶⁴ The effect of repentance influences one's faith and deepens one's love for others.²⁶⁵ But, in order for ongoing spiritual growth and development, we need to continually return to the act of penance. Not with a casual request for God to forgive us, but with sincere and contrite hearts after a hearty search to identify the idolatries in our lives that interfere with our desire to place God at the center of our lives. We need to identify our attachments to goods, things, pleasures, popularity, success and our selfish desires and habits and confess to one another and ask for forgiveness in prayer. In therapy, the 12-step model provides a methodology in steps four and five for making a confession.

- Step 4: "We need make a search and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."
- Step 5: "We need to admit to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

The psychological therapeutic methods put into practice the exhortation James is describing from a secular or at least not necessarily a Christian viewpoint. The Exhortation from the *Book of Common Prayer* tells us to examine our lives and conduct by the rule of God's commandments, to acknowledge our sins, to make restitution for injuries we have caused, to forgive those who have wronged us and to be reconciled to one another. The prayer book continues to suggest that when we confess our sins, we will benefit by the strengthening of our faith. We need to battle our selfish desires and inclinations and create habits that endeavor to build Christ in us.²⁶⁶

Bryant states that the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude can provide the structure for Christian values of faith, hope and charity on which to build a firm foundation. However, we cannot effect this change alone. We each need the renewing power of

²⁶³ James 5:16.

²⁶⁴ Bryant, 566.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

the Holy Spirit to guide us and direct us in areas of ourselves that need to be cleansed, redirected and brought out into the light of Christ and his forgiving power.²⁶⁷

Bryant suggests that confession is a powerful resource to bring the “whole of life into conformity with the will of God and the following of Christ.”²⁶⁸ Why is confession so important? When we sin not only do we reject God, we create disease in ourselves and in our community. James refers to a community confession of sin reminiscent of the Jewish custom of communal confession of sin to God as portrayed on *Yom Kippur*.²⁶⁹ The general confession used in the more liturgical Churches allows for the congregation to acknowledge their sins as a community. For example, “Most merciful God, we confess to you and to one another that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone.”²⁷⁰ By asking for forgiveness of the community through confessing our sins to one who represents the whole, the individual, as well as the all of the faithful, we can be restored through the Spirit’s healing power to wholeness, defeating the brokenness of sin and relationships, and turning away from the evil one.

What does the Church’s teaching say about confession? According to the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church, confession is a sacrament of:

- *Conversion*, because Jesus’ call to conversion is sacramentally present;
- *Penance*, because the Church provides steps for the sinner’s personal conversion, penance and satisfaction;
- *Confession*, because the penitent discloses to the priest his/her sins and by doing so acknowledges God’s authority and praises His divinity;

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 566.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 569.

²⁶⁹ Hartin, p. 274. See Lev 16 for Day of Atonement ritualized communal confession.

²⁷⁰ BCP, 1979.

- *Forgiveness*, because the priest pronounces God’s absolution and peace; and
- *Reconciliation*, because it imparts God’s love and reconciliation to Himself and asks us to be reconciled to one another.²⁷¹

From the Anglican perspective, the Catechism of the *Book of Common Prayer*, penitence is confessing our sins and where possible making restitution with the intention of amending our lives. The sacramental rite allows the penitent to confess their sins to God in the presence of a priest who will pronounce the assurance of pardon and the grace of God’s absolution.²⁷²

Sacramental confessions: “power to heal and liberate springs partly from the fact it links the individual penitents with their fellows in the Church. It is also due in part to the symbolic resonance, which enables it to touch and heal areas of their being not subject to their conscious control. The child within the adult, subject to moods of anxiety, resentment, bitterness, and despair, is impervious to reason but is open to the power of symbols, and rejoices to hear the voice of one who speaks with authority of Christ and brings assurances of forgiveness.”²⁷³

Sacramental confession, in addition to being a venue for listing sins committed and asking for forgiveness, provides a venue for God’s healing, especially deep wounds, obstacles and old blockages that stand in the way of growth in the spiritual disciplines. It is in the forgiveness that one can experience God’s love and acceptance. Through forgiveness our bitterness and resentments are washed away allowing the entry of God’s healing power in our lives. MacNutt points out that it is as if, “God’s saving, healing, forgiving love cannot flow into us unless we are ready to let it flow to others.”²⁷⁴ In his healing ministry MacNutt has noted the intimate connections between the forgiveness of sins and physical and emotional healing.²⁷⁵ He further provides these insights with forgiveness as experienced in his healing work:

- Physical sickness is often a sign that we are not whole at the spiritual level,
- Physical healing often requires forgiveness of sin or an inner healing,

²⁷¹ The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd Ed. (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994, 1997). Specifically paragraphs 1424, 1455-58, 1423, 1395, 1385, 1440, 1446, 1422, and 1496.

²⁷² BCP, 1979, 857 and 861.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 569.

²⁷⁴ Francis MacNutt, *Healing*, (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1974, 1999, 2003), 137.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

- The most important repentance is bitterness and resentment, sins which Christians today do not often recognize as sins.
- Love is the best remedy to break cold bitterness and resentments that block God's healing power to enter our lives.²⁷⁶

How can we grow spiritually if we do not take seriously our need to acknowledge our own sinfulness, confess it to a priest or another believer and obtain the assurance of God's pardon through Jesus Christ our Lord? In Mark, Jesus tells us to pray with faith and we will receive; and, while we pray, we need to forgive others who have wronged us as we pray for our own forgiveness.²⁷⁷ The experience of forgiveness can have therapeutic effects. Prayerful repentance, confession and forgiveness will enable the Spirit's healing presence in our lives to reconcile ourselves to God and the community of all of humanity.

Reconciliation. As we have discussed in the chapter above, the James' text has been used by the Church as a proof-text to support the anointing tradition for healing, especially in the sacrament of Extreme Unction in the Roman Tradition, as well as defining who the ministers (elders) of the anointing, healing, forgiving and praying should be. These liturgical and ministerial aspects were investigated in the preceding chapter. According to Hartin, the specific actions of the elders that James identifies to pray, to anoint and to call upon God's name seems to be indicative of an operative healing ritual in James' community.²⁷⁸ Both Johnson and Hartin provide some enlightening insights on this text, which are noteworthy for our exploration of reconciliation, redemption and salvation as components of healing experienced by individuals as well as the faith community.

²⁷⁶ MacNutt, 140.

²⁷⁷ Mark 11:24-25.

²⁷⁸ Hartin, 275.

The healing process of mind, body and spirit may require reconciliation to the community. Illness and disease often produce alienation from the community for the sick individual and their families. Jesus in his healing ministry broke through the isolation the individual experienced and removed the alienation in order to restore the person to the community. Jesus touched the leprous man and imparts his ritual purity onto him thereby restoring him into the community. Johnson notes in his commentary that “such a physical healing is symbolic of social reconciliation.”²⁷⁹ But Johnson points out that it is more than the experience of the individual, it is the way in which the community responds. Sickness like sin often produces social alienation. The faith community must not be like the world and shun the sick person, but must with loving compassion pray, anoint and call upon Jesus’ name to remedy their suffering. In touching the sick individual in this sacramental way, the community will aid in shouldering the pain and loneliness to reestablish communion.²⁸⁰ For the ecclesial community’s response to Jesus’ mandate to heal, the Church becomes the community for reconciliation in the world. And as a reconciling community, the members must bear each other’s burdens and confess their own short-comings so that forgiveness and love may abound.

Redemption and Salvation. Only through the prayer of faith and the power of the incarnated, risen One can healing be efficacious. Hartin interprets James to link healing in the name of the Lord to the power of Jesus’ resurrection because James uses the Greek verbs *sōzō* [to save] and *egerō* [to raise up].²⁸¹ By using these resurrection verbs, he “underscores healing as an experience of God’s resurrection power, given now to the community in anticipation of the

²⁷⁹ Timothy Luke Johnson, *The Letter of James: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, *Anchor Bible Series, Vol 37A*. (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 335.

²⁸⁰ Johnson, 343.

²⁸¹ Hartin, 76.

restoration of the entire created order at the Lord's *parousia*.²⁸² Jesus, the eschatological prophet, conquers sin and death through his death and rising to life again. The ultimate miracle of Jesus' ministry gives the ultimate power to his disciples through the Holy Spirit. When applied with righteous faith and love, this power can heal, forgive and save. Healing is more than physical cure or forgiveness that cleans the soul. Healing in its fullest definition means wholeness and salvation. The ecclesial community must then be concerned with the "whole" person with regard to health and well-being of mind, body and spirit. More importantly, the Church needs to be concerned with the wellness of the community as the reconciling community in the world. Finally, the faith community is ultimately concerned with salvation, the ultimate reality of faith in Jesus Christ. At the *parousia*, this ultimate reality will be realized because the incarnate, risen Christ destroyed sin, disease and death and makes the new creation available to all who have faith and believe.

I may have sinned gravely. My conscience would be distressed, but it would not be in turmoil, for I would recall the wounds of the Lord: he was wounded for our iniquities. What sin is there so deadly that it cannot be pardoned by the death of Christ? And so if I bear in mind this strong, effective remedy, I can never again be terrified by the malignancy of sin. --*St. Bernard of Clairvaux*

Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored sin and its origins as the human condition in which all humanity struggles. We have investigated the importance of repentance and forgiveness and the importance that reconciliation and acceptance play in healing. Healing is possible through the prayer, faith and the loving compassion of the community as representatives of the Christ in the

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 276.

world. Through the incarnation, passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Church community can have a powerful healing ministry in the world. It is to this ministry and mission that we now turn.

VI. HEALING: MINISTRY, MISSION, AND UNITY

It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe, pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that marvelous communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that He is the principle of the Church's unity. -- Unitatis Redintegratio 2

Introduction

In fulfilling the mandate of Jesus to heal the sick, the Church carries out its healing ministries for the faith community and for the whole world. In this mission to heal, Christians who minister sacramentally to all who suffer employ prayer, scripture and tradition. The minister, whether lay, religious or ordained representative of the community, must mediate love, compassion, reconciliation, redemption and salvation, and meaning, through their healing ritual actions. In order to be effective witnesses of the Gospel message, Christians need to provide the world with a unified healing response that manifests the love of God to the world. Therefore, the healing offered in the name of Jesus Christ must not be divided by denominational interpretations or jurisdictional authority disputes. These divisions are scandalous to the Church's mission of bringing the *kerygema* of healing, salvation and wholeness to all of humanity. Jesus sent his Spirit to empower the Church to heal. As the repository of this healing power, the Church can use its healing ministry as a building block of Christian ecumenism. In this chapter we will explore the ministry rooted in baptism, the minister as healer, the healing mission of the Church, and the powerful witness a unified pastoral response to sickness and disease can have. To be the witnesses of Christ's love for the whole world fosters the unity of the Body of Christ. Baptism unites Christians into the Body of Christ. Our healing ministries can bridge denominationalism and authority disputes to foster Christian unity. In this unity the

Church's message must always strive to embody God's healing and salvation manifested to the whole world through the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

The Ministry of the Baptized

Baptism. Baptism, the sacrament of initiation, is the cornerstone on which all of Christianity builds its ministry, community and unity. Baptism, traditionally in the Trinitarian formula of immersing, pouring or sprinkling water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, binds the whole Church and its individual members into the faith of Christ Jesus. Through baptism each member symbolically is buried and raised to new life in Christ. The waters of baptism rejuvenate the person by washing away the stain of original sin. The grace of new life imparted upon the one baptized accepts and enfolds him or her into the faith community. Following the ritual of baptism, chrismation, and receiving the Light of Christ, the baptismal service in the *Book of Common Prayer* specifically addresses welcoming the new member (infant, child, adolescent, or adult alike) into the fold. "We welcome you into the household of God, profess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim His resurrection and share with us in His eternal priesthood."²⁸³ Christ the eternal high priest²⁸⁴ calls each of us into the ministry of the faith by virtue of our baptism.

Ministry. Our ministries to the faith community and the world are enabled by God's grace through the many vocations, charisms, gifts and talents that have been bestowed upon each of us individually and the whole Church corporately. St. Paul clearly taught in his epistles that there are many ministries and gifts but one Body. According to John Webster, Anglican theology of

²⁸³ BCP, 308.

²⁸⁴ Hebrews 2:17; 3:1-2; 5:5-6.

ministry has come out of the ecumenical discussions and is based in the Christological context of ministry.²⁸⁵ For examples from the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue and Anglican-Reformed dialogue, “The life and self-offering of Christ perfectly express what it is to serve God and man. All Christian ministry ... flows and takes its shape from this source and model”²⁸⁶ [ARCIC]; or “Christ is unique: he is our one High Priest. The priesthood of the Church and the priesthood of its ministry are derived from the priesthood of Christ” [ARIC].²⁸⁷ Ministry includes all the baptized: lay, religious and ordained. We have witnessed the role of ordained minister as healer throughout the history of the Church. Now, the laity has expanded their participation by performing a larger or more active role in the Church’s healing ministries. Given the involvement of lay people in the healing rites and ministries of the Church, I will review the recent thinking about lay ministry. Specifically, we will look at the significant shifts in understanding that have occurred in the Roman Church, which I believe has also had an important influence on Anglicanism and Protestantism, both in terms of actual pastoral practice and in terms of collegial dialogue for Christian unity. The Roman viewpoint can help us to see these changes, because of their distinct divisions between the roles fulfilled by the sacerdotal, hierarchical, ordained ministry and the laity.

The Roman Catholic Church has experienced an explosion in lay ministry since the Second Vatican Council. This explosion of lay ministry and apostolic work²⁸⁸ by the baptized has invigorated the Church as the “People of God” and has brought to life the dogmatic constitution

²⁸⁵ John Webster, “Ministry and Priesthood,” in *The Study of Anglicanism*, Steven Sykes et.al. eds. 329.

²⁸⁶ ARCIC, *Final Report*, (SPCK: London, 1982), 30.

²⁸⁷ Anglican-Reformed International Commission, 1971-1984, *God’s Reign and Our Unity*, (SPCK: London/St. Andrews Press, 1984), 79.

²⁸⁸ Francis Cardinal George, OMI, “Magisterial Teaching” in *Together in God’s Service: Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry*, (Washington, DC: NCCB/USCC, 1998, 2001), 130.

of *Lumen Gentium*. The Church in its ministry and mission in the world no longer rests on the shoulders of the vowed religious and clerics, but on all the baptized who now can participate actively in the Church to bring about the Kingdom of God. The emphasis Vatican II gave to the ministry of all the baptized provided a major shift in Roman Catholic theology and practice. Since the Protestant Reformation, the many Protestant and Anglican Churches embraced Luther's notion of the "universal priesthood of all believers" in their theology and practice, usually allowing for more lay participation. Some four hundred years later, the council fathers expressed that all the faithful had a ministry by virtue of their baptism. This renewed Roman Catholic understanding of the importance of the laity also significantly influenced and reinvigorated lay ministry in the Anglican and Protestant Churches. Thus, ordained and lay ministry in this communion ecclesiology must work together for the building up of God's Kingdom. Thomas O'Meara defines Christian ministry as "the public activity of a baptized follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit's charism and an individual personality on behalf of a Christian community to witness to, serve, and realize the Kingdom of God."²⁸⁹ He notes ministry has six characteristics:

(1) doing something; (2) for the advent of the kingdom; (3) in public; (4) on behalf of a Christian community; (5) which is a gift received in faith, baptism, and ordination; and which is (6) an activity with its own limits and identity within a diversity of ministerial actions.²⁹⁰

Lay or laity refers to those baptized members of the community who are not "institutionally"²⁹¹ ordained or vowed religious.²⁹² As defined by the U.S. Catholic bishops, an

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 136. The author notes that O'Meara moves away from the need of ordination in number 5. The author supports that only faith, baptism/confirmation, and Eucharist are the minimal requirements for one to exercise the gifts of one's ministry within the Church as John Paul II states in *Christifideles Laici* No. 20.

²⁹¹ Vera Dozier.

²⁹² *Lumen Gentium*, 31.

ecclesial minister describes a layperson who has professionally prepared for ministry in the Church.²⁹³ Apostolic work of the laity is its witness to the Gospel and its mission for bringing about the kingdom of God both in the secular world and in the Church.²⁹⁴ The inclusive definitions of ministry since Vatican II do not disregard the past understandings but only emphasize the continual mandate for renewal within the Church, which could result in the restructuring of the Church.²⁹⁵ The U.S. Episcopal Church continues to emphasize the ministry of the baptized. This branch of the Anglican Communion provides an adequate model for Church governance in which the laity has a voice in electing leaders including bishops and primate, calling parish clergy, and -- in cooperation with the house of bishops and clergy -- in administering the temporal and financial affairs and setting policy of the national Church and local parish as well. This model provides a communion collegiality among the bishops with invested lay participation in the formal decision-making structures of the government of the Church through election, annual meetings, vestries, diocesan conventions and general synods.

Three Scholars' Perspectives On The Laity

Zeni Fox.²⁹⁶ Zeni Fox's presented her insights into her sociological research in lay ministry to the colloquium of the Subcommittee on Lay Ministry of the Committee on Laity of NCCB. Her research supports a theology of Church with mutuality in ministry between lay and ordained ministers as the people of God for the building up of the Kingdom of God. Fox provided specific examples and data taken from her survey of ecclesial lay ministers. Her data

²⁹³ NCCB, *Called and Gifted: The American Catholic Laity*, (Washington, DC: USCC, 1980).

²⁹⁴ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 2.

²⁹⁵ Campbell, "Part III: The Struggle to Serve: From the Lay Apostolate to the Ministry Explosion," In *Transforming Parish Ministry*, ed. Jay P. Dolan. New York: Crossroads Publishing, 1989, 203.

²⁹⁶ Zeni Fox, "Ecclesial Lay Ministers: An Overview," in *Together in God's Service: Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry*, (Washington, DC: NCCB/USCC, 1998, 2001).

revealed that the functions and responsibilities of individuals filling ecclesial lay ministries typically include: Ministry Administrators, Liturgists, Musicians, Religious Educators, Helping and Pastoral Service Ministers. Many of these lay ministers have often professionally trained for ministry in the Church and now are employed by the diocese or parish.²⁹⁷ Ecclesial ministers seem to prefer the term “ministry” to other terms to describe the work they do. Some believe the term “ministry” to have New Testament origins.²⁹⁸ Almost three-fourths of the lay ministers affirm they have received charisms, as defined in the survey as “special gifts of grace” for service in the Church. In Fox’s study, many surveyed noted that they enjoyed this ministerial work, felt called by God to perform the work and contributed to the needs of the ecclesial community. Ecclesial lay ministers believe the authority to exercise their ministry and God-given gifts originates in their baptism and God’s call to do this work. This work can be supported by their professional training and competence. In addition, the authority to serve in these roles is often mandated by the parish community and/or ordained leader. Frequently, the community is able recognize the needs and affirm those within the community who either have the charism necessary to fulfill the need and/or have been specifically trained in a specialization which will benefit the entire community.²⁹⁹ As a result, lay ministers seem to want evaluations of their work to come from those they serve instead of from the ordained clergy, who may have supervisory oversight.³⁰⁰ These ecclesial ministers believe in collegiality of working together as lay and ordained ministers with varying gifts and talents for the benefit of the whole community. Some of the ecclesial lay ministers feel that a rite of installation or commissioning would improve their acceptance of their ministerial role within the Church. These ecclesial lay

²⁹⁷ Zeni Fox, “Ecclesial Lay Ministers: An Overview,” 6.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

ministers state that the primary reason they are employed in the Church results from the work of the Holy Spirit in revitalizing lay ministry within the community, and not because of the shortage of priests or women religious.³⁰¹ Fox emphasized that the gifts and charisms in ministry today are reminiscent of those found in New Testament communities.³⁰²

Thomas Franklin O'Meara.³⁰³ O'Meara, one of the leading theologians on ministry, wrote *Theology of Ministry* in 1983 and reissued his work in 1995. His volume on ministry is one of the most significant theological works devoted to communion ecclesiology and the ministry of all the baptized since the Vatican Council II. O'Meara reiterates the sacramental grounding of ministry in the sacrament of baptism rather than in ordination. By doing so, he undercuts the exclusion of women and men who are not ordained from ministry simply on the basis of their status or lack of status within the institutional Church. Ministry cannot be confined to the institutional Church, but should "expand the community" from which it emerges,³⁰⁴ according to O'Meara. It seems unavoidable to conclude that it [the current change] came from a deep encounter between the Spirit of the Risen Jesus and the People of God. Apparently, the Holy Spirit intends to alter, to broaden the way in which the Church's members understand themselves and the Church's mission. Perhaps the Spirit wants to restore the primal Christian reality of wider ministry and to end centuries in which most Christians were viewed as passive or second-class citizens in the Church.³⁰⁵

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² *Ibid.*

³⁰³ Thomas O'Meara, OP, "Ministry in the Catholic Church Today: The Gift of Some Historical Trajectories," in *Together in God's Service: Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry*, (Washington, DC: NCCB/USCC, 1998, 2001).

³⁰⁴ Campbell, "Part III: The Struggle to Serve: From the Lay Apostolate to the Ministry Explosion," In *Transforming Parish Ministry*, ed. Jay P. Dolan. New York: Crossroads Publishing, 1989, 204.

³⁰⁵ Thomas O'Meara, OP, "Ministry in the Catholic Church Today: The Gift of Some Historical Trajectories," 83.

In his work, O'Meara describes five paths of development, which can explain the recent expansion of ministry in the Roman Church. They are (1) the Pauline theology of the Body of Christ; (2) the social distinction between clergy and laity; (3) the ministry of women; (4) passing beyond the recent past; and (5) the reemergence of circles.³⁰⁶ The renewed influence in Pauline theology can explain the diversity of gifts, charisms and ministries of the baptized, which complement one another within the community. These gifts, used together by members of the community under the guidance of the one head of the Church, Jesus Christ, for the purpose of bringing about the kingdom of God, promote unity and service by all the diverse members of the Body of Christ. New Testament scholarship continues to support women in a variety of ministerial roles, which is now beginning to be actualized in the Roman Church.³⁰⁷ Also, New Testament studies have reestablished the importance of a communion ecclesiology compared to the hierarchical ecclesiology. Above all, O'Meara strongly believes the Holy Spirit is at work in renewing the Church's lay ministry.

Bruce Kaye.³⁰⁸ Bruce Kaye states that it is clear from scripture and tradition that God initiates the call to each individual in creation. God's call transcends ordinary professional, social and religious life.³⁰⁹ Kaye expresses St. Paul's notion that there is a double sense of calling to accept God in faith and to serve within the context of one's current circumstances.³¹⁰ Christians are called "in society, for society. They are called out, away from the evil, towards freedom in Christ-like behavior in society."³¹¹ God calls lay people to engagement in the

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

³⁰⁸ Bruce, Kaye, "The Forgotten Calling? Theology and the Vocation of the Laity." *St. Mark's Review*, No. 167, Spring, 1996. Bruce Kaye is the General Secretary of the General Synod of the Anglican Church in Australia.

³⁰⁹ Bruce, Kaye, "The Forgotten Calling? Theology and the Vocation of the Laity," 4.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

realities of social life.³¹² Kaye suggests that lay vocation in the secular world is more important than lay ministry in the Church.³¹³ Many theologians including the Vatican II documents support his position, because the main mission of the laity is to be witnesses of Christ in the secular world. The ecumenical movement has advanced the revitalization and expansion of lay participation throughout the whole Church of Christ.³¹⁴ He encourages the Church to improve lay theological training by making it more accessible, relevant to actual life realities, and removing outdated clericalism. Thus, the curricula for lay theological study must be invested in the social and institutional realities of the world in which lay people live. By improving lay training, the laity will be better ministers of the Gospel and witnesses in the world to provide Christian insights, morals and faith in the midst of modern realities of life within secular institutions, pluralistic society and social life.³¹⁵ His concern is that the Church has focused too much on lay ecclesial ministry to the detriment of lay vocation in society.³¹⁶

Ministry of Healing

Further, Thomas O'Meara suggested this expansion of ministry has not been the work of bishops or theologians but has happened.³¹⁷ The Holy Spirit continues to gift the Church, its mission, and the ministries of its members. The active lay participation in ministry continues to increase throughout the whole Church of Christ. Understanding and theorizing about ministry is done in historical context and reflects each generation's interpretation of what it means to be the Church, a minister of the Gospel and a member of the ecclesial body. Christian ministry is

³¹² *Ibid.*, 5.

³¹³ *Ibid.* 3.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

³¹⁷ Thomas Franklin O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 24.

rooted in baptism. The ministry and charism under discussion is healing. In chapter two, I discussed modern Catholic and Protestant healing practices in the West, which have re-emerged out of the anointing tradition, the medical missionary movement and the charismatic renewal. I also made a case for lay, religious and ordained ministers of healing as consistent with the early Church tradition and in fulfillment of Jesus dictate to heal and anoint the sick.

An example of one charism identified by St. Paul and the Church is the ministry of healing in which the Spirit gifts the individual to be the minister and conduit for God's grace in the healing process. The tradition of the Church has never required those who possess this charism to be ordained in order to practice it; obviously some are. Therefore, lay people can participate in the Church's healing ministry as Christian witnesses in the world. This sacramental healing ministry includes prayer, laying on of hands and anointing with oil as the best Christian response to illness and suffering within the Christian community and in the world. Within a variety of contexts, the Christian community and its members can carry out their healing mission in institutional settings of nursing homes, hospitals, hospices and their pastoral care departments. Christians can fulfill their vocational healing ministry by participating in pastoral visitation programs of their local congregations, caring for the chronically ill, supporting persons with living with HIV/AIDS, cancer, Alzheimer's, and mental illnesses and disabilities and physical challenges, or other debilitating diseases. Lay people can also serve as Eucharistic ministers within the community going out to serve communion to those unable to attend the Eucharistic celebrations of the ecclesial community due to infirmity. For those lay Christians whose secular vocations are as health care professionals, they must practice their science and art of medicine by caring for the patient from a Christian perspective and as a witness and minister

of the Gospel. Canon Vincent Strudwick relayed his thinking to me regarding the Church as either “gathered” and “dispersed.” “The clergy spend most of their time with the “gathered” Church while the laity spends their time “dispersed” – which is where their ministry is and should be.”³¹⁸ However, we must ensure that when the Church is “gathered” we are serving the needs of the sick and dying in sacramental and pastoral ways, as well as training those who will provide their ministries to the “dispersed” in the world, especially with regard to Christian healing and wholeness. Through caring for the sick and suffering in this pastoral and sacerdotal way, the sick individual and all the faithful can have a deeper understanding of human illness, suffering and death in the Christian context and in light of the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ³¹⁹ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Healer and the Healing Mission

The Healer. By virtue of baptism all members of the Body of Christ are ministers and witnesses to the paschal mystery. Those who carry out healing ministries on behalf of the ecclesial community are oftentimes referred to as healers. “The basic idea upon which the Christian healing ministry is founded is that the healer is the instrument and carrier of the healing love of God transmitted through the Holy Spirit.... The healing power that operated through Jesus and raised Jesus from the dead is now operating in and through the Church.”³²⁰ The healer can be empowered directly by the Holy Spirit with the gift of Healing and heals in the name of Jesus. These two methods aid in legitimizing their healing ministry. First, the charismatic healer (lay, religious or ordained) is empowered by the grace of God to manifest the Spirit’s healing

³¹⁸ Canon Vincent Strudwick, email to the author Oct. 14, 2007.

³¹⁹ Peter Fink, ed., *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 1188.

³²⁰ Kelsey, 299.

power. They become conduits for God's grace and love. They can mediate wholeness and salvation for the sick person, which can have both spiritual and physical therapeutic effects. This type of healer ministers to the world because of the gift of healing given by the Holy Spirit as St. Paul teaches.³²¹ They perform their gift of healing in homes, hospitals, nursing homes or public healing services for all who need God's healing presence. The second type of healing minister is the person who officially represents the faith community. This healing minister functions as did the elders mentioned in James. They visit the sick in their homes, hospitals, nursing homes or perform public healing services in the Church for all who need God's healing presence. These are the official ministers of healing. They may be priests or pastors, deacons, vowed religious, or officially commissioned and sanctioned lay people who serve as chaplains, pastoral visitors, parish nurses or administrators of the liturgical healing rituals, including anointing. I would maintain that the most effective healers and healing instruments of God are those who, as Kelsey has pointed out, have a deep "loving concern for all people."³²² "There is a consistent emphasis within Anglicanism upon the laity's responsibility for bearing the Church's mission."³²³

Healing Mission. In the life and activity of the mission community, the fullness of Jesus' good news about God's love for the world leading to the healing of creation, the establishment of justice, and the overcoming of all systems of oppression that contradict God's rule is to be proclaimed.³²⁴ The Gospels portray Jesus as having the power of God to heal every aspect of human brokenness.³²⁵

³²¹ 1Cor. 12:28.

³²² Kelsey, 309.

³²³ Fredrica Harris Thompsett, "The Laity," In Stephen Sykes, *et. al.* Eds. Revised Edition, *The Study of Anglicanism*, (London: SPCK/Fortress Press, 1998), 288.

³²⁴ Guder, 17.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

When the gospel is defined in terms of reconciliation, it refers to the way that God through Christ restores divided and broken relationships: the relationship of creature to Creator, to other creatures, to oneself and to the world of created nature. When the gospel is defined in terms of redemption, it refers to the way that God through Christ's death releases sinners from the bondage of sin and sets them into the wholeness of freedom and hope. When the gospel is defined in terms of forgiveness, it refers to God's removal of our guilt of our rebellion through Christ's atoning self-sacrifice on the cross. Instead of separation from God, we discover that God has drawn us into a new relationship to himself as his children and thus to his whole creation."³²⁶

God's saving action for all creation through the "Christ Event" makes us witnesses to the Incarnation.³²⁷ As incarnational witnesses, we carry out the mission of the Church including healing. Christian healers serve as witnesses to Jesus Christ and embody his mandate to heal. Christian healers incarnate God's grace to those who suffer. Christian healers rely on the prayer of faith and the loving compassion of God to heal. They incarnate the healing presence of God for the ill. They provide the connectedness to the Christian community. They provide the love and caring necessary for the person to bear their suffering and come to acknowledge God's grace, love and power. In caring for all regardless of religious affiliation, baptism or disease, they imitate Jesus of Nazareth's healing ministry. Again, "the root meaning of salvation is healing, which has to do with making that which is broken whole again."³²⁸ They bridge the brokenness and isolation that often accompanies illness and disease to impart the love of God and the connectedness to the faith community. They carry out the healing mission of the Church to the world. In this ministry, the healers can demonstrate, through their compassionate response to all who suffer, the unity of the Body of Christ.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

Unity

Through the technological advances in the twentieth century the world witnessed, “this fragile earth, our island home”³²⁹ becoming a global community. The modern and post-modern world continued to progress, secularization and pluralism in society became the norm. In the mission fields, the Church also became keenly aware of the differences in cultural and religious perspectives within various societies. Even the diversities and divisions which separated the various denominations from one another created a stumbling block to the missions’ success. Over the course of the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, the Protestant, Anglican and Eastern Churches began to see the importance of Christian unity. These Churches³³⁰ began to seek unity in spite of their differences. The Roman Catholic Church has always wanted Christian unity, but on its terms. Denominational members created a movement within the Church attempting to move the Christian Church forward toward unity, through dialogue and practice. Thus, the ecumenical movement began. By the mid-twentieth century, the Roman Catholic Church also began to call for Church unity. The Second Ecumenical Vatican Council shifted Catholic thinking toward an open dialogue with the separated brethren, and embracing unity from a position of collegiality rather than supremacy. Both Protestant and Catholic ecclesiology of the twentieth century began to express the Church in terms of a mystery or in terms of a pilgrim Church. Christians regardless of denominational ties became more aware of the need for unity rather than division. As defined in the *Decree on Ecumenism*, the “ecumenical

³²⁹ *The Book of Common Prayer*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 370.

³³⁰ It is the author’s position that there is only **one** Church of Christ despite its divisions and factions, however for expediency in understanding within this chapter, the plural Churches will be used to refer to the collective denominations and confessional ecclesial bodies.

movement” refers to “initiatives and activities encouraged and organized, according to the various needs of the Church and as opportunities offer, to promote Christian unity.”³³¹

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the ecumenical movement’s goal for unity can best be achieved by resolving conflicts regarding authority, doctrine, practice and particularism through embracing diversity, compassionate dialogue and collegiality; building upon existing cohesion in belief and practice; and remolding symbols of Christian unity, by embracing the creedal statement: “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.” The post-modern Church will need to adapt a “Spirit Guided” Approach toward Christian unity that allows inclusion of differing opinions, interpretations, understandings and perspectives. Acceptance of this diversity can be based upon the different perspectives given in the canonical scripture by John the Evangelist, the writers of the Synoptic Gospels, and Paul, and by the early Church fathers varying views and interpretations of meaning. Specifically to this endeavor, the variety of healing ministries within and throughout the Church today incarnate our common goal of bringing healing, salvation and wholeness to a broken world and a foundation on which to base Christian unity in practice. “If Christ’s calling defines the Church’s purpose, and if the called community is to incarnate the good news, then, to put it bluntly, neither the institution’s existence nor its maintenance is to be its priority. The Church is not the ultimate and intended outcome of God’s grace. Christ did not die only to save Christians, nor to form a Church of saved, but to bring God’s healing love to the world.”³³²

³³¹ *Unitatis Redintegratio, (Decree on Ecumenism) 4, The Basic Sixteen Documents Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations.* Austin Flannery, OP, ed. (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Co. 1996), 504.

³³² Guder, 24.

Ecumenism and Pan-Protestantism. With historical roots dating back to the Reformation and in evangelical Protestantism, the ecumenical movement became a dominant feature of twentieth century Christianity. All true believers, who have had a conversion of heart, comprised the true Church. This view of the Church, as defined by Protestantism, provided the grounding necessary to promote unity across denominational lines, including the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

The Church's renewal seemed then to many Christians to depend on the restoration of its unity, though by unity its advocates meant less absorption into a single Church than the creation of an organic union which allowed for legitimate differences while providing an abiding solidarity. This view was unacceptable to Roman and Eastern Churches.³³³

Walker points out in his text that six specific movements (see table below) in areas of Protestant life and thought were launched, which resulted into world interdenominational agencies and brought about organic Church unions in the 1900s. These representative organizations within the ecumenical movement began to routinize the charisma of unity by creating the institutional structures that were the forerunners of today's organizations or continue to operate to promote Christian unity. At the Faith and Order Conference in Lausanne (1927) it was stated that, "In this world of strife and conflict, unity is so rare and so uncommon that when it is seen in the Church the world will recognize it as supernatural and coming from God Himself."³³⁴

³³³ Vivian Green, *A New History of Christianity*, (New York: Continuum, 2000), 322.

³³⁴ "We Must Have One Church!", Excerpts from Lausanne 1927, Faith and Order: Proceedings of the World Conference . . . ed. H. N. Bate, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1928) 492-295. cited in Norman E. Thomas ed. *Classic Texts in Mission and World Christianity*, 226.

Table 4. Protestant Ecumenical Movements, Their Organizations and Significance³³⁵

| Movement | Example Organizations (founding date) | Significance |
|---|---|--|
| 1) Mission fields probably the most important part of the movement. | World Missionary Conference (1910); International Missionary Council (1921) | Need for missionary cooperation; Many who participated at Edinburgh 1910 were to play prominent roles in the movement |
| 2) Youth work & Christian education | YMCA (1855); YWCA (1894) World Council on Christian Education and Sunday School Association (1947, 1950) | Training of lay people who helped to pioneer the movement |
| 3) Christian service and common ethical action | “Life and Work” Federal Council of Churches in America (1908); National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (1950) | Promote moral, social, spiritual, activities of the Church and supported fellowship and catholic unity of Christian Churches |
| 4) Doctrinal differences | “Faith and Order” World Conference on Faith and Order (1927) | Over 400 met in Lausanne, finding areas of agreement and friendship on major doctrinal differences |
| 5) Organic Church unions | Lutherans, Methodists and Presbyterians united many of their divisions (during 1900s) United Church of Christ (1957) brought together Reformed and Evangelical | Intraconfessional & within denominational family unions or reunions |
| 6) World denominational associations or fellowships | Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops (1867) World Methodist Council (1881) Baptist World Alliance (1905) Lutheran World Federation (1923) | Most of these bodies are consultants to the World Council of Churches |

Christian unity was deemed necessary because two-thirds of the world’s population remained outside the Church. Divisions confused the enquirer, wasted missions’ resources and diminished missions’ effectiveness. These divisions were seen as a source of weakness in Christian lands, and as a sin and scandal in non-Christian lands.³³⁶ The organizations from these movements, especially the International Missionary Council, Faith and Order, and Life and Work, began to join together at two conferences in 1937, and later in 1938 at Utrecht, when the basic faith statement was adopted, agreeing on the Lordship of Jesus Christ as Saviour. This “basis” is echoed by C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*, stating the Church’s purpose and mission is to bring people to Christ. William Temple (1881-1944), Archbishop of York and then Canterbury, was

³³⁵ Williston Walker and Richard Norris, David W. Lotz, Robert T. Handy, *The History of the Christian Church* 4th ed. (New York: Scribner, 1985), 696-690.

³³⁶ Faith and Order, 226-228.

one of the great pioneer leaders of the ecumenical movement. Temple emphasized that the Church was to promote Christian principles and to expose where the current social order was in conflict with them. He believed that Christians' task was to reshape the social order to conform to Christian principles.³³⁷ Also, he promoted understanding for those whose opinion differs from our own, rather than force our traditions upon them.³³⁸ He took the leadership as chairman of the provisional committee of this new organization through the difficult period of the Second World War.³³⁹ Eventually in 1948, the same year as the United Nations was chartered, the World Council of Churches was born and established its headquarters in Geneva with a permanent secretariat under its first secretary, Willem A. Visser 't Hooft. Although its decisions are not binding on the 320 member Churches, the World Council of Churches' main mission is carried out under four program units focusing on 1) unity and renewal; 2) health, witness and education; 3) justice, peace and creation; and 4) sharing and service. In renewing and revitalizing our healing ministries, the Church can provide a unified witness to the Lordship of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in the love of God the Father. In covenanting together our mission of healing, the Christian communities can create a compassionate, unified response to the world to:

³³⁷ William Temple, Excerpts from *Christianity and Social Order*, in Richard J. Foster and Bryan Smith, eds. *Devotional Classics* (San Francisco, 1993), 251.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

³³⁹ Walker, 690

- promote health and well-being;
- provide medical training and health education;
- fight the injustices of inadequate health care systems;
- foster our commitment to ecological health of the earth;
- serve and care for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs all of humanity;
- teach the gospel message and actualize the Kingdom of God in the world; and
- perform the healing sacraments, rites and liturgies of the Church.

Ecumenism and Roman Catholic Vatican Council II (1962-1965). The watershed event for the Church in the twentieth century was the calling of an ecumenical council by Pope John XXIII. Despite being the largest denomination in the world in terms of those who identified themselves as Roman Catholic, the Roman Church was being left behind as the modern world continued to progress. The Roman Church had lived with the outcomes of Vatican I for almost a century. This Vatican II was drastically different from the previous council held in 1870. The Church fathers of Vatican I, including Pope Pius IX and the popes that followed him and the Roman *Curia*, sought to build a wall around the Church to protect Her from the changes and advances of secularization and modernization. This reactionary position of isolation was epitomized by the declaration of papal infallibility; the teaching *magisterium's* failure to include advances in scholarship, e.g., new insights in historical and biblical criticism; and the condemnation of errors of all others professing and practicing Christianity not in concert with the Bishop of Rome. “The Church would remain in its fortress, proclaiming its truths to a world in turmoil, seeking to avoid fragmentation in the face of hostile forces.”³⁴⁰ Although during the pontificate of Leo XIII there was some loosening of this position, the Roman Church remained

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 695.

generally opposed to the ecumenical movement until Pope John XXIII.³⁴¹ In 1960, Pope John XXIII created the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, an example of his openness to the ecumenical movement. This department became the most radical of the *Curia*.³⁴²

Pope John XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council on October 11, 1962. His opening address illustrated the new breath of life that came into the Roman Church and that modernity had to be embraced.

The Christian, Catholic, Apostolic spirit of the whole world expects a step forward towards a deeper penetration and a developing realization of the faith in perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine which should be studied and expounded through modern research and modern scholarly discipline.³⁴³

The 3,281 prelates of the Church from all over the world, men of all races and cultures, were a refreshing sight to behold around the modern world via television coverage, and by the official, invited observers from other denominations. This scene seemed to end what had been the old stuffiness of western European, especially Italian, influences at work in the Church, and many of the preparatory documents were discounted for new documents which supported the renewal and the accompanying revised theological viewpoints. During the four sessions, the council fathers presented their positions with a new comprehension of the Church. The Church was to be updated (*aggiornamento*), renewed. Although Pope John was unable to see it to conclusion due to his death in 1963, Pope Paul VI (1963-1978) took up the mantle and provided the leadership needed to see the council to its conclusion in 1965 and the implementation that followed.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 686.

³⁴² Green, 334.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 328.

The council's first completed work focused on the liturgy. Building on the work of the liturgical movement, they revised the Mass, requiring that the Canon of the Mass be said in the people's vernaculars, and provided for revision of the sacrament of extreme unction to now be the rite of anointing the sick.³⁴⁴ Vatican II produced the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation taking modern methods of Biblical scholarship seriously and even allowing the use of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, which had been developed for Protestant scholarship.³⁴⁵ The council also issued a Declaration on Religious Freedom and a Decree on Ecumenism. "The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns our Lord founded one Church and one Church only."³⁴⁶ The decree stated:

The Church, then, is God's only flock; it is like a standard high lifted for the nations to see it for it serves mankind through the Gospel of peace as it makes its pilgrim way in hope toward the fatherland above. This is the sacred mystery of unity...in Christ and through Christ, the Holy Spirit energizing its various functions.³⁴⁷

The masterpiece of Vatican II was the completion of the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church. This document moved "the Church away from hierarchical and juridical emphases to a more Biblical, historical, and dynamic position."³⁴⁸ The text stresses the collegiality, priestly role of bishops, who with pope form a college to guide the Church.³⁴⁹ Collegial infallibility was declared to co-exist with papal infallibility. *Lumen Gentium* provided a separate chapter on the mystery of the Church and on the pilgrim Church. Pope Paul VI affirmed that the Church is a mystery because God is really present, even if "hidden" or veiled. And, the mystery is expressed in the people of God through *koinonia* or community as a "people on the way." or "pilgrim

³⁴⁴ Walker, 698; Green, 336.

³⁴⁵ *Dei Verbum (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation)* 25, *The Basic Sixteen Documents Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*. Austin Flannery, OP, ed. (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Co. 1996), 114; Walker, 699

³⁴⁶ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, (Decree on Ecumenism) 1, p. 499.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2, p. 502.

³⁴⁸ Walker, 699

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

society.”³⁵⁰ In *Lumen Gentium*, the Church was defined as God’s people, of all baptized Christians regardless of denomination.³⁵¹

At Vatican II a number of Catholic theologians took part as official theological advisors to the council fathers including Karl Rahner, de Lubac, Yves Congar, Daniélou, and Hans Küng. Jesuit Karl Rahner’s (1904-1984) theology supported the notion of mystery both individually and corporately as the source and ground of our being. This mystery is the God himself.³⁵² However, the French Dominican Yves Congar is given precedence as the theologian responsible for the “shift in sensibility” that refreshed the Roman Church.³⁵³ Congar wanted to reform the Church structures and give greater participation to the laity. His theology can be described as the “humanization of God” in the Church.³⁵⁴ Congar pointed out that the Church must interact with the world of history and not with some abstract understanding of the world.³⁵⁵ Congar also pointed out that the language of the council was not the rhetoric of monarchical power but language of mission and service.³⁵⁶ More radical in his theological approach than Congar was Hans Küng. Küng’s theology was strongly scriptural and Christological interested “in the Jesus who meets us today, within the horizons of the world, humankind and God, as the challenge to the faith he personally embodies.”³⁵⁷ Küng’s beliefs made him critical of the Church’s existing

³⁵⁰ Yves Congar, OP, “Moving Towards a Pilgrim Church,” Alloeric Stacpoole, ed., *Vatican II: By those Who Were There*, (London: G. Chapman, 1986), 129

³⁵¹ *Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church)*, 15. *The Basic Sixteen Documents Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*. Ed. Austin Flannery, OP, (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Co. 1996) p. 21.

³⁵² William C. Placher, *Readings in the History of Christian Theology*, vol. 2, (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1988), 179.

³⁵³ Green, 394

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 394

³⁵⁵ Congar, 143.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 137.

³⁵⁷ Green, p. 395.

structures, hostile to papal authoritarianism and interested in the ecumenical movement.³⁵⁸

These Catholic theologians provided the Roman Church with the scholastic and theological basis to understand and live in the new vision of the Church, despite conservative voices who still opposed the outcomes of the Council.

Sociological Constructs of Christian Unity. “From the very beginning the Christian Church has been characterized by unity and diversity and even by division.”³⁵⁹ Yet Macquarrie has pointed out in religion “diversity is simply difference.”³⁶⁰ He defines these differences in terms of belief, understanding, practice, spirituality, vocation, organizational and bureaucratic structures, polity, and application of moral norms and values.³⁶¹ Therefore, as the ecumenical movement grows into the future, the call for unity can alleviate some of the conflicts which arise between various denominational groups, especially conflicts over issues of authority, boundaries and particularism.³⁶² The organizational transformations, which allow the ecumenical movement to reach the goal of Christian unity, require the Church leaders and organizations to effectively respond with tolerance in and among the ecclesial bodies and within a pluralistic social environment in which these Churches operate.³⁶³ Conflicts over issues of authority and legitimate leadership may be reduced and accepted in a new perspective of collegiality, if Christian unity were to become a more present reality.³⁶⁴ Collegiality would allow for broader interpretations of scripture and tradition and liturgical practice reducing claims of inerrancy and

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 395.

³⁵⁹ John Macquarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity*, (Bungay, Suffolk, UK: Richard Clay Ltd.. For The Graduate Theological Foundation, 1996), 3.

³⁶⁰ Macquarrie, 2.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁶² Meredith McGuire, *Religion The Social Context*, 5th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth-Thomson Learning, 2002), 214-215.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 176.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 218.

even heresy between various ecclesial bodies. Through the influence of the ecumenical movement, much of the religious particularism, in which confessional Church members have self-righteously proclaimed that their interpretations and cultic practices are the only legitimate way to God or salvation, can be molded into acceptable diversity of belief and practice.³⁶⁵ Thus, distinct and separate denominations will become less important and congregations will borrow more ideas for teaching, preaching, administering and worshipping.³⁶⁶ The tension between unity and diversity is necessary to produce results.³⁶⁷ According to Carroll, most of the mainline Churches balance the continuum between hard-line resistance and extreme accommodation.³⁶⁸ However, in light of Western, post-modern society's permissive outlook, the effort for Christian unity and to advance ecumenism, Macquarrie warns that the Church must be careful not to so dilute the message of Christianity that it loses its potency.³⁶⁹ The Church will need to come to terms with this permissiveness in the near future as the conservative opinions, especially as those coming from the Southern hemisphere, gain strength and influence within the denominations.

Christian unity is to be the Church's witness in the world. Although unity has not been perfected, the Churches continue to dialogue with one another in order to find and share common ground. For example, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, baptism as initiation into the community of faith, and healing rites of prayer, laying on of hands and anointing, are areas of belief and practice where Christians can agree and cohesion can exist. These cohesive agreements point to the Christian unity that can be observed and built upon. Christians, who see themselves in the

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 222.

³⁶⁶ Jackson W. Carroll, *Mainline to the Future: Congregations for the 21st Century*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 5.

³⁶⁷ Macquarrie, 7.

³⁶⁸ Carroll, 37.

³⁶⁹ Macquarrie, 7

Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed as members of the one Holy, catholic and apostolic Church, believe unity of the Church is already present through the Spirit's work. And, this unity can be practiced in the healing missions and ministries. Christians have come to understand that Church unity will probably not be fully realized until the eschatological event because cultural experiences and differences create a variety of human understandings.³⁷⁰ Such recognition can be witnessed in the Concordat signed between the Episcopalians and Lutherans, who now can "officially" share communion and clergy. In 1999, *The Gift of Authority* was published, which outlines some of the common understandings regarding authority within Church structures between Catholics and Anglicans and their efforts to reunite. These dialogues continue between the Anglican Communion and the Holy See, as well as between and among other ecclesial groups.

On the issues of papal primacy and the exercise of the Petrine ministry, a stumbling block for both sides, the discussion has taken the direction of investigating the possibility of the Bishop of Rome as symbol of Christian unity rather than as the monarchical, infallible head of the Church. In his encyclical letter *Et Unum Sint* Pope John Paul II encouraged cordial dialogues regarding the exercise of this Petrine ministry. This position leans toward a collegiality of bishops with primacy of honor going to the See at Rome. In structuring the Churches, Beozzo and Ruggieri suggest a "sorority of Churches who live out their own diversity in a reconciled way."³⁷¹ This collegiality also can be witnessed at the congregational level in the common reality shared by the faithful, who often are more interested in sharing their Christian experience rather than the denominational particularities that divide them. This cohesion of unity is present

³⁷⁰ Jose Oscar Beozzo and Guiseppa Ruggieri, "Introduction: Towards an Ecumenical Structuring of the Churches: An Invitation to Recognize the Unity in Process." *Concilium* 2001/3. www.concilium.org/english/intro013.htm.

in small groups of believers. In these faith sharing groups, members often cross denominational lines to participate in prayer, Bible study, healing, pastoral care, outreach and service and point to the lived experience of unity within the Body of Christ. These faithful are often more interested in living out their faith in their communities as witnesses to the life and ministry of Jesus and the Gospel, than focusing on the doctrinal and juridical divisions of the larger denominational organizations.

Ecumenical Dialogue in the Post-modern Church. I have been reviewing the historical developments of ecumenism from both the Protestant and Catholic perspectives and investigated an overview of the sociological constructs of Christian unity. To further the case for Christian unity as witness in today's world, we need to realize the impact post-modernism is having upon ecumenical dialogues. In the post-modern or twenty-first century world, traditional approaches to ecumenical discussion may not be as effective as in the past. According to Robert Jenson in *Unbaptized God: The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology*, denominational leaders and ecumenists, who participate in these discussions, attempt to bring about a singular doctrinal stance on which all can agree or believe. These traditional methods are embedded in the old believing paradigm of the Enlightenment and modernism³⁷² which are fundamentally defective and more divisive than unifying.³⁷³ Ecumenists need to adopt a revised approach to advancing unity.

³⁷¹ Beozzo and Ruggieri, 5.

³⁷² Marcus Borg, *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 2004) 7-12.

³⁷³ Robert Greer, *Mapping Postmodernism: A Survey of Christian Options*, (Dowers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 197.

“Spirit Guided” Approach toward Christian Unity. Based upon my research of several independent scholars of the post-modern period, I see a new understanding emerging regarding how to best promote Christian unity throughout the post-modern Church. This emerging trend is dynamic and fluid in that it is based upon the Spirit’s guidance. This new approach for unity actualizes the creedal statement, *“one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.”* I have termed this post-modern revision the “Spirit-Guided” Approach of Christian Unity. This approach incorporates the meaning of the Church as the People of God, as a Pilgrim People, and as the Body of Christ, that is holy, catholic and apostolic and invigorates faith, hope and charity of agape love in diversity. “Agape love encompasses any and every action that makes concrete God’s good and healing purposes for the individual and all of creation. This love transforms grace into reality and translates pure doctrine into practice.”³⁷⁴ How this unity creates meaning for the Church, Christians, and the world is important to the Church’s message and mission in the world. Our sacramental healing liturgies can be the symbol of this Christian unity in pastoral practice.

Holy. This new approach of unity is based in the Holy. Unity comes from the Holy Spirit as it has since the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the Gospels, Jesus proclaims that he would send His Spirit upon the Church and this is testified to in Luke’s Acts of the Apostles at Pentecost. Though some will discount the involvement of the Spirit because of the “supernatural” interpretation, the Spirit is the source of cohesion between differing, diverse opinions from among opposing factions within the Church and the source of strength against all opposing forces to a Christianity united in love and justice. The Spirit makes the Church indefectible. “The Incarnational witness of the community is not sinless, but rather embodies the

³⁷⁴ Guder, 40.

reality of grace, in its contrition, repentance, and forgiveness.”³⁷⁵ The Spirit inculcates holiness onto the People of God and the institution of the Church despite its brokenness and divisions. The Church as the Body of Christ is animated by the Holy Spirit in order to enflesh Jesus Christ in the world today. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”³⁷⁶ The Spirit will lead the Church into all Truth despite the frailty of human understandings and differing human perspectives. Healing is Holy because all healing comes from God. The Church in its healing ministry can impart God’s grace and healing power. The Holy power can be manifested through the minister as healer and received by the one who in faith desires the healing. Through our sacramental healing traditions, the Church and its members symbolically mediate meaning for the one suffering. The one who is healed will experience God’s holiness and merciful grace.

Catholic. “Catholic” is “universal” and should not to be interpreted only as the denomination of the Roman Catholic Church, but as the Body of Christ, universal, for all people and for all time. We proclaim a catholic, universal message that is based upon scripture and tradition of God’s incarnational, revelation in Jesus Christ and our relationship to God through Him. The Church as catholic must be centered in Jesus’ message for the whole world. The message is inclusive. We proclaim our relationship to God and to one another in Jesus Christ who is the fullest revelation of God in man. Our understanding of Christian unity must incorporate the broadest sense of universality, catholicity, so that the Church’s mission is universal. The most expedient way to witness to the universality of Christ’s message is to promote healing liturgies and sacramental healing practices that can be performed by any

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁷⁶ 1 Cor 12:13.

baptized Christian, on behalf of the Church, i.e. the faith community, for anyone who desires the grace offered through these healing prayers, healing touch and healing oil. Another way to manifest unity is for the Eucharist, the sacrament of unity, to be open for all of God's children to be nourished at God's table. Jesus came to break down the barriers of hypocrisy. Let us open up our communion tables and altar rails and break down the walls that divide us from worshipping together and sharing bread and wine together at the Lord's Table. If our message is universal, then the Church's Eucharistic banquet must be open universally to all as are the healing rites and rituals. Jesus did not ask those he healed to identify their membership in a group, family or sect. He asked them to believe in the power of God. When we offer the healing power of God in this sacramental way, we offer a universal witness to the whole world.

Apostolic. "Apostolic" does not refer to literal apostolic succession of the Church hierarchy tracing its lineage back to the Twelve and thus Jesus himself, though some have adhered to and continue to hold this interpretation. "Apostolic" refers to our relationship with God, to one another and to the world based upon the faith in Jesus Christ. We must be careful not to identify faith and belief with a set of doctrinal statements that must be believed in a certain way. This type of belief leads to triumphalism -- that my way is the only right way to believe and practice the faith -- and thus harbors disunity. The unity of Christianity proclaims the message of Jesus, which He summed up in love of God and love of neighbor as self. This is the radical message of Jesus to which the apostles bear witness and for which they were willing to die.

The centrality of the community to the gospel means that the message is never disembodied. The word must always become flesh, embodied in the life of the called community.... The gospel dwells in and shapes the people who are called to be its witness. The message is inextricably linked with its messengers. If there is good news

for the world, then it is demonstrably good in the way it is lived out by the community called into service.³⁷⁷

This apostolic witness continues in the Church today despite differences and diversity because the Church bears witness to this message of radical love and justice, which has been handed down from generation to generation within the Christian community. The Church today can continue to embody the healing power of Christ by continuing to expand the sacramental healing practices that have re-emerged in the Church and allow all to partake of their benefits.

Conclusion

God calls each of us to himself and to be members of the community of the body of Christ as the People of God. Through baptism, the individual becomes a member of the ecclesial body. Each individual's charism and vocation is rooted in the sacrament of initiation into the Christian community and enriched by full, active participation in the sacred liturgy, especially the Eucharist. The Church needs to continue to promote the ministries of the baptized, recognizing the diversity of Spirit-given gifts and charisms, which work together for the unity of the community and for the building of the kingdom of God. The Church needs to be aware that oftentimes the ministries performed by laypersons become clericalized. As a result, the laity's main mission of being witnesses in the world is often forgotten, overlooked or undervalued. The institutional Church needs to improve lay formation and training that is relevant for ministry in a post-modern, pluralistic society in order for the laity's apostolic work to be effective. This training is especially needed for those who minister pastorally and perform sacramental healing rites for the sick and suffering. Vatican II, as evidenced in the magisterial teaching, provided a major shift in Roman Catholic ecclesiology and created opportunities for the laity to actively

³⁷⁷ Guder, 22.

participate in the mission of the Church. The shift has had a significant impact on the whole Body of Christ.

The explosion of lay ministry throughout the whole of Church of Christ, points to the Holy Spirit's activity and presence in the world and Church today. The future of lay ministry will continue to increase not only because the Spirit is nudging, but for practical reasons as well. Lay people can now attend seminaries and professional schools to enrich their professionalism and competency in ministry. Lay people who work in secular institutions need to be the presence of Christ in the midst of the mundane and turmoil of the everyday work world. The shortage of clergy and vowed religious will provide more opportunities for lay leaders to lead and serve. More parishes and dioceses have funds available to employ lay ecclesial ministers in a number of capacities. Communion ecclesiology of the dynamic, Spirit-filled People of God needs to be actualized throughout the one Church of Christ in all of its diverse ministries in witness throughout the world to bring about unity under the Lordship of Jesus Christ for the reign of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus prayed for those who followed after his disciples, "that they all may be one" (John 17:21). The ecumenical movement strives for Christian unity. By embracing diversity, Christians from all faith communities can participate in the oneness of being Christian, and the oneness with God as creatures in the universe of creation. In striving for realistic progress toward organic unions or at least collegiality and acceptance, the dialogues need to continue and to include discussions of collegial authority structures and ways for reshaping the symbols that promote unity. By reformulating the Petrine ministry into a primacy of honor, the Bishop of

Rome could again become the symbol of unity for all Christians throughout Christendom, as well as the world, and not just for the Roman Catholics. If ecclesial authorities would allow for a variety of ministers of healing, a diversity of healing practices and interpretations, and not deny anyone the comfort of God's healing presence in our sacramental healing actions, our healing ministries could witness to our unity in pastoral practice. Further, if Church authorities would allow for diversity of interpretation concerning the Eucharistic meal and not deny anyone from the Lord's Table, then Holy Communion could again be a reinvigorated symbol of the unity in Christ. "[These] symbols can represent unity of the social group, and religious rituals can enact that unity, allowing the individual to participate symbolically in the larger unity they represent."³⁷⁸ By actualizing these symbols within the Christian community, the post-modern Church can better claim its holiness, catholicity and apostolicity. This unity is the oneness of God the Father in Christ through the Holy Spirit and the oneness of humanity in relation to God.

God's salvation in Christ heals human divisions between [Churches], races, nations, genders, and social classes....[the] Incarnational witness is fundamentally open to the continuing discovery of surprising ways in which God heals what we have long since come to regard as incurably broken.³⁷⁹

Only time and the will of the Spirit will heal all that divides Christians and their Churches. But, Christians are becoming more aware of their common ground in the Lordship of Jesus Christ and seek to unify themselves under His cross and see reconciling their divisions as a necessary witness in the post-modern world of the 21st century.

Jesus Christ will be revealed to a lost world as the Church functions on a suprarational level where, in spite of its vast diversity of doctrine, liturgy and devotion, it can appreciate and celebrate its oneness. This combination of a oneness *and* diversity that defies rational analysis is what will catch the world's eye and cause many of them to stop, think and wonder. "See how they love and are committed to one another," they will say to themselves. And as they are

³⁷⁸ McGuire, 196.

³⁷⁹ Guder, 33

watching and thinking, in the quietness of their hearts some of them will hear the Holy Spirit speak, whispering within them a single word: *Yes*.³⁸⁰

³⁸⁰ Greer, 210.

VII. HEALING: MANIFESTATION OF THE DIVINE HEALER INCARNATE

Always and in all his Word God wills to effect the mystery of his embodiment. Maximus the Confessor

Introduction

Jesus Christ sent the Spirit to empower the Church and its mission. One of the components of this mission is healing, which we have been exploring. Healing in the Christian context brings reconciliation to those who suffer and to the whole world. In this reconciliation, salvation and wholeness can be found. The faith community can manifest this healing power through its healing liturgies, sacraments and ministries. As members of the Body of Christ, we can embody Christ through the Spirit and make present His power and grace. This chapter will further build upon our interpretation of scripture, our liturgical prayers, our tradition of forgiveness, reconciliation, and redemption, and our understanding of what it means to be Church in healing mission to the world. This chapter will discuss the Old Testament theme of God Himself as the Divine Healer, the tradition of the Incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth, and how this traditional doctrine provides a foundation for a theology of healing. In order to be ecumenically viable, I will use the doctrine as traditionally defined by the Chalcedonian Council of 451 CE. The Christology that arises from the traditional definition of incarnation can provide a cornerstone for a theology of healing, and support the Church's sacramental healing actions in ministry and liturgy. God's healing power can be made present and manifest in the world today through these healing actions because Jesus is God Incarnate. God is involved in the human experience through the paschal mystery of the God-man, Jesus, who brings healing and salvation to all of creation. Jesus is the manifestation in the flesh of God Himself in the second person of the Trinity, who is the Incarnated Divine Healer. As the Divine Healer, Jesus Christ, the eternal *Logos* of God lifts up our sins, diseases, sufferings and alienation into the Divine economy.

Old Testament Promise of the Divine Healer

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as the only Son from the Father. John 1:14 NRSV

Relating the incarnation to healing necessitates an investigation of the Old Testament scripture for clues regarding God as the Divine Healer. The Old Testament scriptures do indicate that God Himself would be the healer. But from a Christian context do these verses prophetically reveal God Incarnate in Jesus Christ who is the Divine Healer in the flesh? I would maintain they do.

Traditionally, the Jewish thinking concerning healing presented in the Hebrew Scriptures has been interpreted throughout the centuries to link sin to its consequence disease and death. Diseases and illnesses were seen as punishment from God for sin and unrighteous living. “He said, ‘If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you.’”³⁸¹ Just as God brought disease and pestilence, in this worldview God also brought healing and health. This healing and restoration to health happened when those who suffered were reconciled to God. In returning to right relationship with the Almighty and turning away from sin, the individual was healed. This worldview was not uncommon in the ancient world, even Hellenistic and pagan cultures linked sickness to being out of favor with the gods. Within this cultural context, Jesus of Nazareth lived and ministered healing to the people. This relationship of sin and disease can readily be seen in the Gospel, when the Pharisees ask Jesus about the man born blind. “Who

³⁸¹ Exodus 15:26.

sinned, this man or his parents?”³⁸² Even Jesus tells some who are healed that their sins are forgiven or to go and sin no more. Further, the Christian Church has held this belief that illness is punishment for sin. Therefore, the healing rite has always provided an opportunity for confession and reconciliation for the one suffering in mind, body or spirit, and in the Roman tradition was administered only by an ordained priest. I have already taken up the topic of sin and its consequences in an earlier chapter and need not examine it further here.

Instead of looking at the Old Testament text from this Deuteronomic theory of illness, I want to suggest along with Morton Kelsey³⁸³ that there is a theme within the text that favors a loving and compassionate God who heals. The following Old Testament examples illustrate God’s compassion. In restoring women to fertility, God gives children to women who had been barren, for example Sarah in Genesis 18:10,14, Samson’s mother in Judges 13:5, 24, Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:19-20, and the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4:16-17. The prophets Elijah and Elisha are both reported to have revived a dead child to life by becoming channels for the power of God (1 Kings 17:17-24 and 2 Kings 4 15-25). Also, Elisha acting as a conduit for the power of God cleanses Namaan’s leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-14). In each of these examples, sin is not the imputed cause of the barrenness or disease, or even untimely deaths of the boys, but rather the text reveals God’s love and compassion in the healing and the restoration to health and wholeness. God’s movement to heal is centered in His loving compassion. God himself is the Divine Healer of ailments and illnesses. Although the linking of sin and disease is the main undercurrent of traditional Jewish thinking and the cultural context in which Jesus lived, Kelsey

³⁸² John 9:2.

³⁸³ Morton Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 1995), 32—36 section entitled “Another Strand” significantly impacted my thinking regarding the Old Testament on this point. I have expanded

points out that Jesus in his teaching and ministry takes on the “prophetic and shamanistic” mantle of the Old Testament.³⁸⁴ From this loving and compassionate perspective, Jesus acted and healed many people. And from this perspective, this loving God is manifested through the compassionate healing acts of Jesus of Nazareth. In this way, Jesus mediates an intimate relationship with a loving, compassionate God and Father.³⁸⁵ First the followers of Jesus and now the ecclesial community continue to mediate this intimate relationship with a compassionate God who heals on behalf of the world. The believers, who in faith through the power of the Holy Spirit do this work, “become healing channels of God’s love, as Jesus had been.”³⁸⁶

Since our premise is that all healing comes from God and was believed to be so in Israel, the following verses express this belief that God Himself is the Divine Healer:

- who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, (Psalms 103:3)
- Peace, peace, to the far and the near, says the LORD; and I will heal them. (Isaiah 57:19)
- Lord, by these things people live, and in all these is the life of my spirit. O restore me to health and make me live! (Isaiah 38:16)
- For I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal, says the LORD, (Jeremiah 30:17)
- I am going to bring it recovery and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security. (Jeremiah 33:6)
- The LORD sustains them on their sickbed; in their illness you heal all their infirmities. (Psalms 41:3)

On investigating the Old Testament further, I have noted several verses where the text indicates God will heal those who call upon His name:

- LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. (Psalms 30:2)
- The LORD will strike Egypt, striking and healing; they will return to the LORD, and he will listen to their supplications and heal them. (Isaiah 19:22)

on Kelsey’s work by bridging these Hebrew texts to the Incarnated Christ and through the power of the Spirit to the faith community.

³⁸⁴Kelsey, 40.

³⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 40.

³⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 40.

- Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved; for you are my praise. (Jeremiah 17:14)
- My child, when you are ill, do not delay, but pray to the Lord, and he will heal you. (Ecclesiasticus 38:9)

Since these verses establish God as the compassionate Divine Healer, the following Old Testament verses express God providing Himself as a physician and healer among the people and can prophetically point to the Incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth:

- Then your **light** shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rearguard. (Isaiah 58:8)
- For neither herb nor poultice cured them, but it was your **word**, O Lord, that heals all people. (Wisdom of Solomon 16:12)
- he sent out his **word** and healed them, and delivered them from destruction. (Psalm 107:20)
- But for you who revere my name the **sun of righteousness** shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. (Malachi 4:2)
- But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

These verses speak of God's "word," "light," "righteousness" and "saving power" to heal, which I have emphasized in bold type, and fit the prophetic vision of Jesus, who is referred to as "word," "light," "sun of righteousness," and "savior" by the first disciples and in scripture and throughout the tradition. These verses, in using a Christian interpretation, can prophetically reveal the Divine Healer, in Jesus of Nazareth, who is God and man, the Christ, the eternal *Logos*, and the second person of the Blessed Trinity. These texts prophetically point us to the Divine Healer manifested in Jesus of Nazareth, the Incarnated One, given his healing ministry and teaching. The most notable verse in the Gospels to support my reasoning that Jesus fulfills this prophetic and shamanistic role of God is from Luke quoting Isaiah. "Jesus had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were

blind.... ‘Go and tell ...what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them.’”³⁸⁷ Thus, Jesus fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy about himself as the Incarnated One of God.³⁸⁸

Chalcedonian Definition of the Incarnation

In him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things.
Colossians 1:19-20 NRSV

The doctrine of the Incarnation as traditionally defined is the cornerstone on which we can build a theology of healing that can be ecumenically received, liturgically expressed, pastorally administered and personally experienced. The Christological debates of the early centuries of Christianity required the Church leaders to “officially” interpret who Jesus of Nazareth was in light of his resurrection. Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the resurrection experience of the first disciples, we would be speaking of just another godly man who was believed to heal. But, given the orthodox Christian tradition whether practiced in Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Anglicanism or Protestantism, all have agreed that Jesus of Nazareth was God Incarnate in answer to Jesus’ question, “Who do you say that *‘I AM’*?”³⁸⁹ I have found this question to be profound, leading us directly to the doctrine of the Incarnation. In Exodus 3, Moses asked God, “who should I say has sent me to the Hebrew people in Egyptian slavery?” God responds, tell them “I AM” has sent you.³⁹⁰ Now, in the Gospel, Mark has Jesus ask who he is by using this name of God. The “I AM” who sent Moses and is now the “I AM”

³⁸⁷ Luke 7:21-22.

³⁸⁸ Isaiah 35:5; 61:1.

³⁸⁹ Mark 8:29.

incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. Peter's response, that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of the living God, does not necessarily imply divinity in Jesus according to many academics. Several scholars have discussed this notion of the titles given Jesus in the New Testament and whether these titles infer that Jesus was both God and man.³⁹¹ However, these titles, plus the use of "Lord" from the Jewish context of the period to refer to Jesus, do seem to infer Jesus' divinity especially in light of the resurrection.³⁹² The most notable example of titles pointing to the Incarnation is Thomas's exclamation, "my Lord and my God,"³⁹³ when he touches the wounds of the risen Christ. It is important to note that Jesus' wounds and piercing remain intact and visible on his resurrected, "divinized" body, thereby raising and divinizing the human suffering of God into the divine eternal reality. Thus, God came down from heaven to take on the human nature of his creation and through the paschal mystery raises our humanity into the divine economy by the Son, who is the second person of the Trinity.

The scripture, the traditional creeds, especially the Apostles' and Nicene creeds, and the doctrinal outcomes of the ecumenical councils have been incorporated into the theological tradition of orthodox Christian thinking and exposition that Jesus of Nazareth is both God and man. The Chalcedonian definition states:

Following the holy Fathers, we teach with one voice that the Son [of God], and our Lord Jesus Christ, is to be confessed as one and the same [Person], that he is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood; very God and very man, of a reasonable soul and [human]body consisting, consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead, and consubstantial with us as touching his manhood; made

³⁹⁰ Exodus 3:14.

³⁹¹ For example, Brian Hebblethwaite, *The Incarnation*; James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 22; Macquarrie, *Jesus in Modern Thought*, 42-43; Marcus Borg and NT Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus, Two Visions*; and Charlene Burns, *Divine Becoming*, 33-37.

³⁹² James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 36-37.

³⁹³ John 20:28.

in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; begotten of his Father before the worlds according to his Godhead, but in these last days, for us men and for our salvation born [into the world] of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to his manhood. This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son [of God], must be confessed in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, inseparably [united], and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and subsistence, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only-begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ; as the Prophets of old time have spoken concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ has taught us, and the Creed of the Fathers hath delivered to us.³⁹⁴

Since Christians agree that Jesus of Nazareth is both God and man, he is God the Son, the second person of the Blessed Trinity, in human form without losing his divinity. Then it follows that we can use the traditional definition that Jesus Christ as the Risen Lord is the incarnation of the Divine Healer. The Divine Healer is the one who empowers our healing liturgies, sacraments and ministries. The Divine Healer is the one to whom we address our prayers of faith and hope of healing and wholeness in these healing rites. The expectation of those suffering is that through these liturgical and sacramental actions God will be present to heal through the Spirit and that their hope in God in Christ can be realized.

Throughout the Christian era, theologians, scholars and preachers have debated and interpreted the classical definition of the Incarnation in Jesus as promulgated by the Chalcedonian Council in 451 CE. For those who want to study the theology, metaphysics and philosophy behind the definition of incarnation, I would suggest Daniel Migliore's excellent introduction on the topic in chapter 8 "The Person and Work of Jesus Christ" in his *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, or Timothy Luke Johnson's *The*

³⁹⁴ Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 14 2nd Series. (Peabody: MA Hendrickson Publishing, Inc., 2004), 264-265.

Creed, What Christians Believe and Why It Matters. For a more detailed, academic treatment, I would offer for further study the portions of the works of Jaroslav Pelikan, especially volumes 1 and 2 of his classic study, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* or his 2004 re-published work entitled *Credo*; or James D.G. Dunn's *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*.

In 1977 with the publishing of the *Myth of God Incarnate*, the debate regarding the classical understanding of the doctrine of the Incarnation re-emerged as a “hot” topic in theological circles. Since then, many scholars have met to discuss and have written numerous volumes from many perspectives of the debate over who Jesus is, and is he God Incarnate, and how have we come to understand and experience him, especially in the modern and post-modern world. During the last thirty years, the attention placed upon the Incarnation has created my appeal that if God is a Healer as believed and written about in the Hebrew scriptures and if Jesus is God Himself in the flesh, then the incarnation has an important role to play in understanding healing from a Christian theological perspective and for providing meaning for the Church's sacramental healing ministries. A theology of healing is surely lacking within the Christian tradition. My focus is not to attempt to enter this debate nor to present a thorough rendering of the doctrine of the Incarnation. I will leave this for others. However, I will use the views of those who side with the orthodox definition and interpretation to assist in fulfilling my objective. My objective is to use the doctrine of the Incarnation as classically defined and interpreted to ground a theology of healing that is ecumenically acceptable to orthodox Christians despite their diversities and particularities, and to create a theology which supports the full expression of God

Incarnate in our healing liturgies, sacraments and ministries that is meaningful to those who seek God's healing grace.

In my article and the chapter above on "Healing: the Gospel Witness, Jesus and His Followers,"³⁹⁵ I presented the view that Jesus of Nazareth was a healer among the people, and was believed by others to have healed. If Jesus was a healer, and if Jesus is God Incarnate, then Jesus is the Divine Healer promised in the Old Testament, experienced by his disciples, and believed in by the community of faith. More specifically, the Christian tradition has defined Jesus of Nazareth as truly God and truly human, then Jesus Christ is God in man who heals all of creation. God in Christ experienced all of our pain, suffering and alienation. God in Christ restores us to wholeness, health and brings us salvation. The God-man, Jesus Christ, brings Divine Healing, which is healing for the body, healing for the soul and healing of the spirit. Because Jesus Christ bore our sin and disease on the cross he resurrects our mortal natures into a new creation through his rising from the grave and ascending into heaven. In doing so, Jesus the Lord and God-man brings into the divine reality our human nature that is complete with our sinful natures, sufferings, alienation, illnesses and diseases. Through the blood of his sacrifice on the cross, Jesus Christ redeems and heals humanity because he is God in man without sin. By his paschal sacrifice, God's own self makes humankind a new creation in God. "The moral and religious significance of Christ's life and death depends upon his being God in person."³⁹⁶ "Our recognizing in the man Jesus God himself come among us to make himself known in personal

³⁹⁵ Charles J. Helman, "Healing: the Gospel Witness, Jesus and His Followers," in *Foundation Theology 2005*, Hugh Page, ed. (Graduate Theological Foundation, IN: Cloverdale Books, 2005), 53-74.

³⁹⁶ Brian Hebblethwaite, *The Incarnation: Collected Essays in Christology*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 6.

encounter,”³⁹⁷ is crucial to our understanding God as Divine Healer. Jesus Incarnate of God, who is the Divine Healer, restores humanity to wholeness, heals our brokenness and diseases, and brings us the hope of salvation.

An Incarnational Theology of the Divine Healer

The Father and I are One. John 10:30 NRSV

A functional theology of healing is a theology that is grounded in the Incarnation of God in Christ Jesus. In our healing sacramental expressions, we manifest the love and healing power of God in Christ. The key component of healing is the prayer of faith. In prayerful gathering, Jesus told his disciples that where two or three are gathered in his name, He would be among them.³⁹⁸ Thus, when we gather to pray, to touch, and to anoint for healing, God Jesus Christ is present because of the Incarnation. Those who minister to the suffering incarnate Christ’s presence through the power of the Spirit embodying his love and compassion. Our prayer to the Father is Christ’s prayer to the Father. Our words for healing and salvation become Christ’s words. Our healing hands become Christ’s healing touch. Our anointing becomes Christ’s healing oil of gladness. For in the healing actions, we find the grace of salvation and wholeness that is available to all because the *Logos* of God came and dwelt as one of us. Our understanding of healing must be based upon our understanding of God in Christ. “Incarnational belief speaks to the deepest needs and spiritual hunger of human beings. It is through his [Jesus] being truly and fully human that he could heal us and make possible a new relationship with God and with one another.”³⁹⁹ God in the person of Jesus experienced suffering and pain. Jesus, the Son of

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁹⁸ Matt 18:20, my paraphrase.

³⁹⁹ Gerald O’Collins, “The Incarnation: The Critical Issues.” in Stephen Davies, et.al. eds, *The Incarnation*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 2004), 25-26.

God, second Divine Person of the Blessed Trinity, as the God-man, offers our humanness, our suffering, our pain and our afflictions to the Godhead. Through the paschal mystery, the human creature's flesh is bound up into the Creator, God's own self. It is to this reality that our healing liturgies must point. And through the Church's sacramental healing rites, the baptized must insure their sacramental actions mediate meaning for those who suffer. The rituals, words and oil are not magic, but symbolic language whose purpose is to symbolize a Presence that creates a religious universe.⁴⁰⁰ Langer notes, that no other medium can adequately address the symbolic transformation of experiences the way rituals, the language of religion, can. The ritual of healing is a concrete example of how these symbolic transformations of experiences are expressed.⁴⁰¹ These sacramental actions convey the grace of God and manifest God's compassion, sympathy and empathy⁴⁰² through the Body of Christ.

The capacity to participate compassionately in the lives of others is ours by grace. Through it we are facilitated in the healing of our infected natures. Salvation comes through the healing that results from breaking out of self-centeredness and grasping, not through mere performance of compassionate acts. We carry out deeds of compassion and the infection of self-centered existence begins to heal. The healing that comes to us in participatory being, incarnating the divine, is the gift of grace and the mode of salvation.⁴⁰³

According to Rahner, the true symbol is a movement from God toward creation, an expression of God's self giving love.⁴⁰⁴ Jesus, the Incarnated One, is the perfect love of God brought to the world in human form. Basing a Christian theology of healing upon the doctrine of the incarnation creates a meaningful context from which to relate the love of God knowing that

⁴⁰⁰ Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art*, 3rd.ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 49.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰² Charlene P.E. Burns, *Divine Becoming: Rethinking Jesus and Incarnation*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002). She provides an extended discussion of empathy in relation to God's loving capacity and relates it to the Incarnation in her work.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 158.

God himself has felt pain and suffered in the humanness of His Incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth. The Body of Christ through its healing symbolic actions mediate God's compassionate love and grace to the suffering individual and to the whole world. God embodied in the man Jesus was moved by his compassion and he healed many who suffered diseases, sickness, and alienation.

“Jesus the human being is “the medium of God’s actual self-grace. In transcending himself vertically through full participation in the life of God, and horizontally through full participation in the life of humanity, Jesus came to be the means through which gift and giver are made present for the Christian believer.”⁴⁰⁵

Conclusion

*He left His Father's home above,
So free, so infinite His grace,
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And Bled for Adam's helpless race.*
-Charles Wesley

“In Jesus Christ the Saviour, God has made the promised healing of creation a reality.”⁴⁰⁶

God's compassion for his creation is fully revealed in the wounds of Jesus Incarnate. Jesus' healing ministry manifests the God of all compassion. In imitation of Jesus and following his dictate to his followers to heal and anoint the sick, the ecclesial community by God's grace and compassion heals those suffering in mind, body and spirit, who call upon his name in the prayer of faith by laying on of hands and anointing with blessed oil. Through these means and symbolic actions, Jesus' presence is manifested and God's healing grace is mediated to the people through power of the Spirit. This grace can be experienced because God lived as one of His creatures in the man Jesus. Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to empower the Church. These ritual actions empowered by God's Spirit can enliven the hope of the individual who suffers and the whole

⁴⁰⁴ Karl Rahner, “The Theology of Symbol,” *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, trans. Kevin Smyth, (Baltimore, Helicon, 1966), 244.

⁴⁰⁵ Burns, 139.

⁴⁰⁶ Darrell L. Guder, *The Incarnation and the Church's Witness*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 1.

world, when meaningfully expressed and received. This hope may not always result in physical cure, but it will always result in healing and wholeness, which is salvation to those who believe. The believers then through the Spirit are a conduit of God's grace and manifest the compassion and love of God to heal. Therefore, through healing the Incarnation fully reveals God in Jesus Christ. Incarnational healing provides the faith community with a glimpse of the mystery of the Trinity. This mystery of God, which is the love and compassion expressed within and between the persons of the Godhead, is manifested in His creation through the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. This love and healing power now reside with the baptized in the faith community as the Body of Christ through the power of Holy Spirit.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. 1 Peter 2.24 NRSV

VIII. HEALING: A THEOLOGY

*For You, our God, are the fountain of healing; and to You we give
Glory, together with Your only-begotten Son, and Your
consubstantial Spirit, now and ever and forever.*

A Prayer from the Sacrament of Holy Anointing on
Great and Holy Wednesday, Byzantine Rite

Introduction

Many who are suffering, sick and dying seek the support and sacramental healing that can be provided by the Church. As a result, a revival of sacramental healing practices within the Church has emerged. These healing ministries and their liturgical expressions require a theology to support them. In these healing sacramental actions, the ecclesial community speaks about God's love and compassion revealed in Jesus Christ, the Divine Healer. When we talk about God, who He is, how He incarnated Himself into His creation, and how we have come to understand Him, we are doing theology. Throughout this work, I have been doing theology in the context of healing and in light of the doctrine of the Incarnation. God himself has taken on the flesh of His creation. Through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth, God has reconciled and healed all creation. Our liturgical healing ministries need to express this profound reality. We as believers and members of the Body of Christ by virtue of our baptism have an obligation to proclaim reconciliation, redemption and salvation to the whole world that is available through Jesus Christ. The Church's mission to the world is to be the reconciler and healer. This mission is often mediated by the sacerdotal healing actions of the Church's members. The ill, suffering and dying can find solace and meaning within these healing rituals when lovingly offered by Jesus' disciples today.

At the outset of this investigation, I outlined a framework for an incarnational theology of healing that could be receivable and used by the various ecclesial communities to move the Church forward toward developing a theology of healing that is certainly lacking in the Christian tradition. With a viable theology, the Body of Christ can have a basis for their pastoral and liturgical responses to the ill and dying. The components of this framework are:

- rooted in the prayer of faith;
- profess the incarnation and paschal mystery of Christ;
- founded upon the Scriptural witness;
- bounded by the healing tradition of the faith community;
- proclaim reconciliation, redemption, salvation and wholeness;
- mediate meaning and hope to the world;
- promote the unity of the Church;
- be loving and compassionate; and
- reveal God's love and grace.

In the preceding chapters, I addressed each of these components in detail and how they are related in the whole expression of God's healing work in the world to support an incarnational theology of healing. Specifically, I investigated Jesus and his disciples in the scriptural witness of the Gospels and Acts. I turned to the tradition of the Church in the development of the sacrament of anointing for healing. Following this, I explored sin, repentance, reconciliation, redemption and salvation as important influences on healing. Then, I discussed the ministry and mission of the Church and how important Christian unity is to those who need the Church's consolation. Finally, I incorporated the doctrine of the Incarnation into the discussion of

sacramental healing and how the Old Testament can be interpreted to point to the Incarnation and Jesus, the God-man, as the Divine Healer.

Incarnational Theology of Healing - *Via Media*

Via media or middle way is the approach I have used in investigating this framework for an Incarnational theology of healing. This middle approach allows the resultant theology, which will arise from this framework, to be acceptable and receivable by the whole Church whether one's theological leanings are catholic, evangelical, reformed, charismatic or fundamental. The middle way uses the Anglican notion of scripture, tradition and reason as a method to analyze a point of theology, a doctrine, a dogma or a liturgy. Given that the topic under discussion here is healing, I have added experience to this perspective because the experience of the one seeking healing and those who sacramentally heal can have a decisive impact on how one interprets and reasons with the scripture and tradition and the healing experience. To this *via media* approach, I have rooted it in the age old doctrine of *lex orandi, lex credenti*.

All dogma, doctrine and theology are rooted in the prayer of the faith. The prayers of the faithful both individual and corporate allow God to communicate His divine will. Therefore, the rule of prayer becomes the rule of belief for the Christian Church. In prayer for healing, whether private devotion or corporate worship, we ask God to bring salvation and wholeness to His creation and to those for whom we pray. Physical cure cannot be ruled out, but the root meaning of healing is salvation and wholeness and it is to this salvific reality that we address our healing prayers to God through our sacerdotal means. These prayers become the basis for our understanding of God's healing work in the world through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and by

the power of His Holy Spirit. Within the context of prayer, God's love and grace can be revealed meaningfully to those who are sick and suffering in mind, body and spirit.

Canonical scripture is the agreed upon story about God and a testament to His revelation of Himself in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the second person of Most Blessed Trinity. In Jesus of Nazareth the fullness of God is manifested in Jesus' compassionate healing actions. Through their healing ministries Jesus' first followers exemplify how the Christian community today needs to respond to those who are sick and suffering in the world. Now, we as the Body of Christ must take the healing ministry and mission to the world so that God may be glorified and the Kingdom of God can be actualized in the world.

The tradition of the Church has been to use prayer, Word, laying on of hands and anointing with blessed oil to sacramentally offer healing in God's name. Through these ritual actions, the sick and suffering and their loved ones can find God's grace and compassion. The ecclesial community then mediates God's reconciliation and redemption, where healing and wholeness can be found. In providing a unified and loving response to those who seek God's healing power, the Church can bear witness to the Incarnation in Jesus Christ. Despite the diversity of opinions, interpretations and liturgical expressions that surround our parochial views of sacramental healing, Christians everywhere must be ready to pray, speak the Word of God, lay on hands and anoint with oil the sick and suffering for healing in imitation of Christ Jesus and as witness to God's love. Our unity as Christians is first and foremost rooted in baptism. As baptized members of the Body of Christ our ministries and missions individually and corporately are to bring healing, reconciliation, redemption, salvation and wholeness in the name of Jesus

Christ who is God Incarnate. In doing so, we can mediate meaning for those who suffer, if our words, actions and sacramental expressions convey God's healing and loving compassion to all.

This sacramental work of healing must point us to the Divine. The Divine Healer is revealed in Jesus Christ the God-man who lived among us by taking on our flesh. He healed many because God Himself is involved in healing His creation through the Incarnated One. Through the paschal mystery, we can come to an appreciation of God's love, grace and healing power.

Limitations and Further Research

My main goal was to establish a theological framework from which an Incarnational theology could emerge to support the revival of sacramental healing practice within the Church today. I have accomplished this goal in establishing the framework. A theology has begun to emerge where one did not exist. But such a theology needs to be digested and reviewed by the various ecclesial communities for its reception. Other theologians and scholars will need to investigate this framework and apply it to other dogmas or doctrines, which impact a healing theology within the Christian tradition, to determine if I have overlooked a component. I have pointed out that the doctrine of the Trinity is one doctrine that has a significant influence on the theology of healing that must be studied within the context of this framework using a *via media* approach. For example, how does the Divine economy work in healing? This study of the Trinity in healing was beyond the scope of this work, even though the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation are inextricably linked. This framework could also be applied to study the various emerging public liturgies and services for healing, as well as hymns and sacramental

music used in Christian healing. By doing so, one could determine if the liturgy or service is true to the spirit of Christ's healing ministry and if it conveys the Incarnational meaning necessary for those who seek the healing power of God. Further research could expand upon the scientific studies on how healing prayer works, or how Christian healing traditions compare to other healing traditions, or how energy healing and vibrational medicine impact the Christian tradition of laying on of hands.

Conclusion

Jesus was a healer among the people. In response to the dictate of Jesus, his early followers healed many who suffered disease. The early Church continued this healing ministry and ritualized it with sacramental anointing for healing. Today, the Church, in response to many who seek healing, has revived its liturgical and sacramental healing ministry. This ministry continues to grow and expand without regard to traditional denominational cultic customs. Christianity needs a theology to undergrid these ministries and to explain the manifestation of the Divine reality in the lives of those who are ill and suffering, those who minister, and those who are witnesses. Therefore, I have written in an effort to provide this framework from which a theology of healing can manifest and incorporate the revelation of God in Christ. The result of which is that in prayer the faithful can make their pleas to God who in his compassion will heal them and bring them forgiveness, salvation and wholeness through Jesus Christ. The Christian community in unified faithful witness and ministry to the world can bring about God's Kingdom now by giving the suffering, ill and dying the loving compassion of the Christ in prayer, Word, touch and anointing. Through these sacramental actions of compassionate response to sin,

disease and suffering God will heal and redeem all. In our prayers for healing, God will be glorified.

*Lord, we are not worthy to receive you, but only say the
Word and we shall be healed.*

-Canon of the Mass taken from Matthew and Luke

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