



North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW)
PO Box 121; Botsford, CT 06404 *** Phone/Fax (tollfree): 888.426.4712
Email: info@nacsW.org *** Website: <http://www.nacsW.org>

"A Vital Christian Presence in Social Work"

**FROM HEALING TO COMMUNITY ORGANIZING: RECRUITING
EVANGELICAL, HOLINESS AND PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES**

By: Stephen Mott & Walter Tilleman

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The essay below illustrates the content of the workshop that we use in our recruiting work. In our NACSW workshop, we will discuss the strategy of our use of this material in seminars presented by Christians Supporting Community Organizing (CSCO); we are on the Leadership Team of CSCO. We will demonstrate how the seminars are effective in recruiting Pentecostal, Holiness, and Evangelical leaders and congregations for the faith based community organizing movement.

“From Healing to From Healing to Justice and Power, CSCO workshop”

by Stephen Charles Mott and Walter Tilleman

Reign of God and Reign of Satan

The fulfillment of the promises of the prophets was summarized in the biblical concept of the coming Reign of God. In the increasing apocalyptic outlook in the Jewish background and the early church, the Reign of God was countered by the reign of Satan. Satan and other fallen powers or angels were a force of rebellion, perverting their guardian functions in creation, and penetrating people and institutions with their fallen rule. That rule touches every facet of human existence. The Reign of God is the restoration from it. Wherever the reign of Satan is found, there the restoring Reign of God will be found at work.

Christ enters to destroy that rule and to introduce God's final rule.

Disease is one of the binding, destructive reaches of Satan. A crippled woman is described as being bound by Satan (Luke 13:16). One of the terms for sickness is *mastix*, which means scourge, whip. Perhaps it presents disease as a persecution by Satan (Mark 3:10; 5:29, 34; Luke 7:21).¹ Jesus' miracles in the non-human

created world reveal Satan's presence as being much more than the possession of individuals. The stilling of the storm is followed by the exorcism of the Gerasene Demoniac (Mark 4:35-5:20 par.). When Jesus cast the demons from the man into the swine, the rush of the swine into the sea exposed Satan's destructive damage to God's creation (Mark 5:13 par.)

In Matthew 12 (also Luke 11:14-23), the statement about Jesus' healing as fulfillment of the promised time of justice and restoration, is followed by his healing of a person who was both demonically possessed and blind and mute. To the accusation that his undeniable power was from Satan (Beelzebul), Jesus stated that since he had cast out the demons by Spirit of God, the Reign of God had come upon them (v. 28). The Reign of God is concretely present now in the somatic sphere in the restoration of the body, mind, and spirit of this man.

Jesus goes on to identify the significance of the healing over against Satan's rule. Satan's presence is described in political terms. It is a house, a city, a kingdom. Satan's hold is not merely spiritual or individualistic. It is also structural, institutional, and political. Jesus' healing is a pillaging of spoils gathered by the strong man. Healing is recapturing God's creation from destructive hold of Satan. The individual is delivered from a vast socio-cosmic order. To that degree, God's control and purpose in creation is reestablished. The central forgiveness of sins and reconciliation of the individual with God exists within a broader concentric circle that is the greater whole of cosmic redemption and world

James Kallas, [The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles](#) (London, SPCK, Biblical Monographs 2, 1961), 96. Kallas is alert to many possible references to Satan but at times reaches too far in that attempt.

renewal.² Healing contributes to that greater whole and is a part of that work of which the church is the chief instrument of God.

Healing motivated by compassion

Jesus' miracles are often traditionally understood as proofs of his deity. This is not the dominant note in the Synoptic Gospels, however. The frequent command to silence by Jesus in the Markan tradition, called "the Messianic secret," plays down attention being drawn to Jesus' person. In the Synoptic Gospels the miracles are more like samples of the Reign of God, which is breaking in with Jesus' ministry, but which also is to come. They are means, as well as the fruit of the Reign's arrival. What Jesus is bringing about is front and central. The miracles are part of God's intervention for God's human creation,³ of which the church becomes God's agent.

Healing was so important to Jesus' ministry that were it was an ends in itself. They healing miracles did not merely function as symbols, pointing to a deeper meaning, nor only to draw attention to Jesus' verbal message. They themselves were the message. The healings were acts of liberation to benefit the recipient. This the meaning of healing and being healed. The significance is what happens is to the recipient, not merely what it says about the healer.

This conclusion is clear when the motivation of the miracles is examined. For example, before the feeding of the 5,000, Matthew writes that "when Jesus saw the great crowd, he was moved with compassion for them, and he healed their sick" (14:14). In five other healings Jesus heals because of his compassion

² Kallas, Significance of the Miracles, 87.

³ Cf. Raymond E. Brown, "The Gospel Miracles," in Brown, New Testament Essays (New York, Images Books, 1968), 228.

(splagchnizesthai). When blind Bartimaeus told Jesus he wanted him to open his eyes, “because he was moved with compassion,” he touched his eyes and he saw again” (Matt. 20: 34; also Mark 1:41 [the text is questionable, however]; Matt. 15:32/Mark 8:2; Matt. 9:36 (cf. 9:35 and 10:1); Luke 7:13. In Mark 5:19 mercy (eleein) moves Jesus is moved to heal. After healing the Gerasene demoniac, Jesus told him, “Go back to your people and tell what the Lord did to you in having mercy upon you you.” In six other healing miracles, Jesus responds to a *request* for him to have compassion (splagchnizesthai) or to have mercy (eleein). For example, Jesus healed the boy possessed by a spirit when the boy’s father asked, “Help us by having compassion upon us” (Mark. 9:22) and the ten lepers were healed after they called, “Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us (Luke 17:13) (in addition, Matt. 9:27, 15:22; 17:15; Matt. 20:30-31/Mark 10:47-48/Luke 18:38-39).⁴

Similarly, when Luke describes the motivation for Jesus' healing before the feeding of the 5,000, instead of saying that Jesus was moved with compassion, as Matthew does, Luke writes, "He healed those who had need (chreia) of healing" (9:11). Genuine healing is motivated by compassion for the desperate needs of humankind, as exemplified in the One who was most complete in his emotional wholeness. Healing is a loving intervention by God in the desperate condition of humankind. Being clothed with compassion is also characteristic of those in the church of Christ (Col. 3:12), and healing is one of the responses.

⁴ Before raising Jairus' daughter from the dead in Luke 8:52, Jesus tells those around her body, "Stop weeping." That perhaps should be interpreted as words of compassion not rebuke (cf. James MacKinnon, The Historic Jesus [London, Longmans, 1931], 336). When he raised the son of widow of Nain from the dead, Luke connects those same words to his compassion: "The Lord was moved with compassion for her, and he said to her, 'Stop weeping'" (7:13).

The disaster of disease

Why did healing have this powerful role in Jesus' response to the needs around him? Disease was a disaster. This perspective is seen in Jesus' defense of his healing, even on the Sabbath. To heal a man with a withered hand is to "save life." The hearts hardened even while observing that deliverance is what angered Jesus (Mark 3:4-5). Jesus compares the danger of disease to that of a child or ox that has fallen into a pit (Luke 14:5). Healing responds to a basic necessity of life which is on the level of thirst, symbol of basic needs; it is like leading a valued draft animal to water (Luke 13:15). Healing involves the dignity of being a human; the physical being of a person is important because, Jesus says, they are worth so much more than a sheep, whose urgent distress even met sabbatically approved rescue in the standard interpretation of Jesus' day (Matt. 12:11-12).

The deadly threat of disease was not only its physical nature. It included also its social repercussions. The healings then and now involve more than the physical. Those who were healed were often social victims in other ways.⁵ A study of twenty-seven Synoptic miracles found that the recipient had been excluded from full identity in the community in one degree or another. Some of the healed were pagans. They had an external exclusion. Others were excluded internally through social status boundaries within the society, such as women,

⁵ Healing reports in the New Testament all involve persons limited in their self-expression, self-determination, or who were hemmed in because possessed of demons. Like the leaping, praising former lame man at the gate of the temple (Acts 3:6, 8), through the healing people emerge from the passivity of dependence (Helmut Gollwitzer, "Liberation in History," Interpretation 28 (1974), 413-14).

children, having an impurity (e.g. lepers). Matthew 8:1-17 brings three of these groups together: leper, (Gentile) centurion, woman.⁶

Disease has a culture meaning, which can be as destructive as the physical attack. Lepers were most visibly excluded. Begging by the blind was the result of a social construct relating to the consequence of disease. Common in the Middle East has been the forcing of sick males to leave their hamlet when a family's resources are insufficient to maintain a non-producing adult.⁷

The separation away of the sick, as well as the poor in general, has a social function. Separation socially hides the economic injustices which would lead to questioning the system itself. The separation is justified by labeling the disease as sin or impurity. The poor and sickly themselves feel inferior, perhaps as cursed by God or consigned by fate so they do not question.

Two spheres are involved in disease: 1) the sphere of the social situation and 2) the sphere of the disease.⁸ A person healed by Jesus was fully restored on both of these levels. 1) Jesus in *first* forgiving the sin of the paralytic before healing him put in question the rationalization of the system (Mark 2:9 par.). Jesus liberated him from his negative social situation, reversing the categories which had justified it. 2) In then healing the body of this man, Jesus liberated him from alienation to the created physical world, in terms of the body. The healing had the result of restoration to community, as the condition and the rationalization for oppression were removed.

⁶ Jean-Thierry Maertens, "La structure des recits de miracles dans les synoptiques," Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses 6 (1976/77), 257-58.

⁷ Allan Louis Young, "Medical Beliefs and Practices of Begemder Amhara" (Ann Arbor U., Microfilms, 1970), 231-32. (U. of Pennsylvania dissertation, 1970)

⁸ Maertens, "La structure des recits de miracles," 258.

In this context we can understand the opposition by public authorities to Jesus' exorcism. This is seen in the opposition to Jesus in the Beelzebul accusation (Matt. 12:22-30 par.). In another situation, Jesus' immediate reference to his exorcism when warned about Herod indicates that exorcism was Herod's concern. "Tell that Fox that I continue to cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow . . ." (Luke 13:32). Studies of possession and mental illness in situations of social strain in the developing world show that they provide socially accepted forms of oblique protest and escape from oppression. They contain the aggressiveness, turning it more on the victim than the community. Exorcists are feared not only for their power. They also are feared because they create instability by removing these escapes and inhibitions. Jesus was an exorcist committed to the value of social healing over the dominant value of social stability.⁹ In his time the Jewish people had little control over their destiny. Jesus' miracles provided sense of power for the oppressed masses.

Healing as justice

In one of his fulfillment statements, Matthew quotes Isaiah 42:1-4. Jesus has fulfilled the prophesy that the servant of the Lord will "announce justice to the nations" and will not "break a bent reed or extinguish a smoldering wick until he leads justice to victory" (12:17-21). In the context what has Jesus done that could

⁹ Paul W. Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities: A Socio-Historical Study." Journal of the American Academy of Religion 49 (1981), 567-88. The threat increased when Jesus sent out his disciples doing the same thing (cf. Mark 6:14 [Herod's alarm]) (583). Regarding the Beelzebul accusation, exorcists are held in check by the central ruling group through accusations of witchcraft to discredit them and to diminish their status (577, citing I. M. Lewis, Ecstatic Religion [1977], 122).

be considered justice? After his healing on the Sabbath, the Pharisees conspire to have him killed. Learning of this Jesus departs; he heals all of the many who come after him and instructs them not to make him known (vv. 15-16). Then Matthew's fulfillment statement follows. The voice not being heard refers to the statement not to publicize the healing. The act of justice is the healing—healing those bent reeds and smoldering wicks caught in the disaster of disease.

How can healing be an act of justice? Justice¹⁰ is a standard by which actions are evaluated. In the biblical understanding, distributive justice, the standard by which the benefits of living in society are assigned, is first of all a distribution according to needs. It provides the basic needs for life in community. Accordingly, biblical justice is associated particularly with the groups which are most needy, such as widows, orphans, strangers, the poor, and wage earners. In active terms biblical justice means taking upon oneself the cause of the oppressed. Justice measures the responsibility of government (e.g. Prov. 29.14). It is the standard of the throne and is to be carried out in the city gate. It evaluates public choices. It is legal, supported by authority and power. Justice in its concern for distribution is also crucial to economics.

The purpose of community organizing ties right in. Community organizing puts pressure on governmental and economic leaders to do what is right, to do justice. Justice cannot be separated from politics. Community organizing is a form of politics. Community organizing is very personal. Its basic unit is one on one discussions. Yet it relates to something as public as one can get. But how can Jesus' healings be a part of justice?

¹⁰ Cf. Stephen Charles Mott, A Christian Understanding of Political Thought (New York, Oxford U., 1993), ch. 5.

The relationship of healing to justice can be understood when we do not view it by our modern compartmentalizations. We have already seen that disease in the Gospel was closely connected to other social and economic dilemmas and was viewed as a disaster affecting essential requirements of life. In Scripture illness and related bodily impairments are closely associated with basic injustices in life. Looking at these associations in several passages shows how healing would be considered an act of justice.

In Luke 4:18-19 Jesus quoted from Isaiah 61:1-2. We find the following distresses identified as that to which Jesus is sent to relieve: poverty, captivity, blindness, oppression. Blindness, a physical ailment, occurs in the midst of economic and political afflictions. That Jesus did heal the physically blind should be a warning against spiritualizing the list. The description has been strengthened in its sense of injustice by bringing oppression in from another passage, Isaiah, 58:6.

In Luke 7:22 par., regarding the groups which John the Baptist is to be told are being liberated by Jesus, along with the blind, lame, lepers, deaf, and dead, we find the poor. The warning against spiritualizing this list is even stronger. Jesus has just healed many from their diseases, scourges, and evil spirits and has given sight to the blind (v. 21).¹¹

The Hebrew Scriptures frequently associate together the economically weak, the politically oppressed, and the sick and disabled. In Proverbs 31 the king's mother has instructed him to speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute (v. 8), and again to speak out, execute justice and defend the

¹¹ The healing of the blind, deaf, and lame is found in the context of joyous coming way of the Lord in Isa. 35:5-6, the straight paths indicate a deliverance from oppression (Isa. 40:3; cf. Ps. 5:6, 8, 9-11; 27:2b, 11f.; Isa. 59:8).

rights of the poor and afflicted [two terms for the poor] (v. 9). Even if "those who cannot speak" could be taken as a metaphor for those who are silenced socially, the ease of movement from the physical to social probably means that both should be considered.¹² King Lemuel is a non-Israelite king, probably from northern Arabia. These norms apply to government and go beyond the people of God.

In Psalm 107:17 the word sick has been suggested as an emendation of the Hebrew fool. The strophe goes on to describe a situation of affliction, loathing food, drawing near to death. If illness is meant in this section, then in the Psalm we have a series of strophes treating the landless (possibly refugees, v. 4), prisoners (v. 10), the sick (v. 17), shipwrecked (v. 23), hungry and landless (v. 36) (although vv. 33-38 along vv. 39-43 may be a summary and conclusion). The last strophe, vv. 39-43, includes those brought low, those oppressed, and the needy.

In Isaiah 42:7, which comes a few verses later than those quoted in Matthew 12:18-21 (in which justice is ascribed to the Lord's servant), we find the servant's mission to the blind, to prisoners in dungeon, and to those who sit in prison.

In Job 29:14-17, Job states that he has robed himself in justice. He then describes the groups he has defended. He mentions the blind, the lame, the poor, and the stranger. Here the language of justice is specifically present. This is true also of Psalm 146:7-9. After describing God as one who does justice for the oppressed, the following groups are listed: hungry, prisoners, blind, those bowed down, the just, strangers, orphan, and widow.

Similar associations of physical malady with economic or social distress are found in other passages. In Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10, her barren womb (v. 5) is described with the justice language of raising the poor and lifting the

¹² This would be true also if "opening the eyes of the blind" (e.g. cf. Isa. 42:7 below) is a metaphor for release from prison.

needy (v. 10). In Isaiah 33:23-24 in describing God's future just Reign, the promise is made that economic spoil will be in abundance. The lame and sick are then specifically mentioned as beneficiaries. Their hope is economic, reflecting the economic catastrophe of their physical affliction. The healing metaphor for God's coming justice in Malachi 4:2 is not surprising. "The sun of justice will rise with healing in its wings."

From looking at what these groups have in common in their distress, several conclusions can be made. 1) The body is a person's link with the outside world, the physical and social environment. How one relates to the body determines the way one relates to the world. As Augustine said, the body is not an ornament; it is part of our nature¹³. In that, the body is our basic contact with society; it is the basic unit of society. The physical healer is connected to a wider spectrum. 2) Disease is one of the sources by which the body is attacked,¹⁴ but it is linked with other sources, such as economic oppression and negative social status. 3) Sickness is part of the spectrum of economic and political oppression.¹⁵ Healing is part of a continuum which ranges from restoration of physical health to the overthrowing of

¹³ Augustine, City of God, trans. M. Dods (New York, Modern Library, 1950), 1.13, p. 18.

¹⁴ Disease is approached most frequently in the Old Testament as trauma--a blow inflicted from the outside; it is an intruder (K. van der Toorn, Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia: A Comparative Study (Van Gorcum, Studia Semitica Neerlandica 22, 1985), 68-69.

¹⁵ This spectrum was recognized elsewhere in the Mediterranean world. Plato stated that a sin like greed is called a disease (nose\ma) in physical bodies; in the case of the state and polities, the same sin is called injustice (adikia, Leges 906c). Criminal justice which cures diseases of the soul by curing people from gaining by acting unjustly is called "the cure of justice" (he\ iasis adikias, Leges 862c).

fallen institutions. 4) Justice includes healing of the sick. In contributing to healing we are linked to broader actions of justice.

A vivid example of this interconnection of physical disease and injustice occurred in the Irish potato famine in the middle of the nineteenth century

Throughout the country one could see “famished and ghastly skeletons,” “cowering wretches almost naked in the savage weather,” children with “their faces bloated yet wrinkled and of a pale greenish hue,” and families eating seaweed and suffering from fevers and dysentery. According to an English visitor, the streets of one town were “crowded with gaunt wanderers, sauntering to and fro with hopeless air and hunger-struck look,” while the poor-house was surrounded by “a mob of starved, almost naked, women,” “clamoring for soup tickets.” So many people died that corpses were placed in reusable “trap-coffins” with hinged bottoms. For the living, the choice became clear: emigrate or suffer destitution and death.¹⁶

Previously the potato landlords had converted lands from crops to cattle grazing for exports. The result was great poverty. The rural poor had been living largely on potatoes. Then the potato blight came destroying half the crop. In a decade a million people died.

Healing is a part of justice, which controls the distribution of power and empowers those who are weak in the necessities of life. In contributing to healing we are a part of the social mission of release, deliberation, and liberation from forces all of which afflict our somatic-social existence. Healing is part of justice. As such, it empowers. It relates to the distribution and effective use of power. This is the concern of community organizing.

¹⁶ Ronald Takaki, A Different Mirror. A History of Multicultural America (Boston, Little, Brown, 1991), 144.

Healing and empowerment

In Ezekiel 34 there is powerful prophesy against the shepherds. As elsewhere in Ancient Near East, the shepherd is a symbol of the ruler. Here is a critique of the political and religious leaders of the nation who as shepherds have oppressed their sheep. They have been using the sheep to feed and clothe themselves instead of feeding the sheep (vv. 2-3).

You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them. (v. 4, NRSV)

The sheep have been scattered with no one to seek them (vv. 5-6).

This passage had a pervasive presence in Jesus' definition of his mission and his related critique of the leaders of the people. It influenced his parables and references to the shepherds and sheep. Its influence is seen in the fact that in Luke 19:11, when Jesus states that he has come "to seek and save the lost," lost is in the neuter gender); yet he is talking about people (which in Greek would require a masculine or a feminine). The reason for the neuter is that, even though sheep are not mentioned, what is in mind are the "lost *sheep*" (sheep, to pro\baton, is neuter), showing the influence of Ezekiel 34 (cf. v. 16).¹⁷

In Ezekiel 34:4 God accuses the leaders that they "have not strengthened the weak nor healed the sick." In this verse weak and sick both have the same root, h>lh. h>lh is the most important and frequent root used to designate sicknesses in the Hebrew Bible. It refers to a state of weakness. There is slackness and

¹⁷ The references to "the lost" in Ezekiel 34:4, 16 in the Septuagint are in the neuter. The people are symbolized as sheep to go along with the image of the rulers as shepherds "who have not sought the lost."

exhaustion because the vital power somehow has been snipped.¹⁸ The weakness is not only physical but also derives from social aversion and isolation and economic exploitation. In the well known passage, Isaiah 53:3, the one who is acquainted with infirmity [h≥lh, also v. 4a] is despised, rejected, has faces hid from him, is held to be of no account. The negative social context is an element of the weakness of sickness. Sickness and weakness in its very language is connected with poverty.

The biblical terms for poverty often basically mean “lacking in power.” In Leviticus 14:21 the identification of the poor is literally that their "hand does not reach." Hand used metaphorically usually means power. The poor are those whose economic power is insufficient to provide them with the essentials of life; their power does not reach. Leviticus 25:35 is a key passage on power. The situation of poverty is one of weakness when a member of the community "becomes low [mu[k] and his or her power wavers¹⁹ in relation to you." They are lacking in power to maintain themselves in the community ("in relation to you"). The obligation is then stated. In the Hebrew it literally is "you shall make him strong" [ha\zaq in the Hiph‘il (causative) conjugation].

In Ezekiel 34:4 this empowering imperative is the obligation placed on the rulers. This is the responsibility of the political institutions, the leading public institutions. "You have not strengthened the weak [h≥lh, which we have seen to be the key term for the sick]"; the verb is the same as that in Leviticus 25:35. In Isaiah 3:7 a person who refuses to be a ruler in a situation of oppression (vv. 5, 13-

¹⁸ Hans Walter Wolff, Anthropology of the Old Testament (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1974), 143.

One may compare a New Testament term for illness, arro\stos, which literally means

"powerless" (BDAG² 109) (Matt. 14:14; Mark 6:5, 13; 1 Cor. 11:30).

¹⁹ Literally, "his hand trembles."

15) states, "I am not one who binds up [ha\bas=²⁰] a wound. In my house there is no bread and no garment." The idea of the ruler as a restoring healer of social needs was more broadly shared in the Mediterranean world. Plato wrote that the lawmaker must do what is possible to undo harm [blabe\] by "delivering what is lost (apolomenon), restoring what is fallen, and making healthy [hygies] what is dead or wounded" (Leges 862b).

Ezekiel states that when human institutions fail, God takes over the responsibility. "I will seek the lost I will bind up [ha\bas=] the injured, and I will strengthen the weak I will feed them with justice" (v. 16). The promise is that God will do that with God's shepherd, David, God's servant, the Messiah, who is coming. "He will feed them, and he will be their shepherd" (v. 23). The Reign of God is this complete restoration.²¹

Jesus' rule is not fully here yet. It is the standard, however, by which we challenge every institution and every practice.

Community organizing is an instrument of this mission. It is not the Reign, but can be used for it. Community organizing uses power, power for healing, to force institutions towards what God wants them to be. As in Ezekiel 34:1-4, institutions are failing to do what God desires. They have ways in which they are *not* empowering the weak.

Community organizing exists to empower a people. It is organizing for power. The weak, lacking economic wealth, political connections, and political experience, need to be strengthened. Those who question what they can do as one

²⁰ The term for "bind up" is same term used in critique of the rulers in Ezek. 34:4 ["you have not bound up the injured"] and of the ruler's responsibility that God takes back in Ezek. 34:

16, cf. below.

²¹²¹ In Isa. 35:5f. the restoration is described as healing.

person, one congregation, are shown that they have power already. They have the power of numbers and the power of assent and dissent. Community organizing helps them development political power, the ability to organize the power they already have.

What community organizing produces is *mutuality* in power. It does not create new victims. It is not dominating. Rather it is participating with others in community to achieve consensus and then to implement it. This is “participating power,” “power with.” God intends this for all people as seen in providing land for every family unit, land which is productive power in an agrarian economy. Community organizing is a powerful strategy of healing the weak by developing their power. It empowers them in community; thus community organizing is a tool of justice.

Healing continued by Jesus' followers

Jesus' ministry of justice in healing is continued by his followers. In John 9 after the dilemma of a blind man is presented, Jesus speaks of "*our* doing the works of the one who sent me is necessary as long as there is day" (v. 4). He goes on to say, "When I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (v. 5). "After he said that," he proceeds to heal the blind man (v. 6).

Similarly in the Synoptic Gospels, the disciples are sent to do that for which Jesus was sent, even using the same language. In Luke 9:11, Jesus is described as speaking to the crowd "about the Reign of God and healing those who had need." In Luke 9:2 the twelve are sent to "proclaim the Reign of God and to heal" and in verse 6 they carry that out. Similarly, Matthew 9:35 (cf. 4:23) provides this summary of Jesus' work: "proclaiming the good news of the Reign and healing." Matthew 10:7-8, which follows, is Matthew's parallel to Luke 9:2 with this dual mission for which the twelve are sent. They are sent to do what Jesus did.

The sending of the *seventy* symbolizes that the mission of the *twelve* in proclaiming and healing is the mission of the whole church (Luke 10:1, 9). (The sending of the twelve itself is a paradigm of the mission of the church as the restored Israel, represented by the “twelve” of the twelve tribes.) The seventy report back to Jesus that even the demons submit to them (v. 17). Jesus' response is his vision of Satan falling from heaven. The followers' activity against the demons is significant for God's conquest of Satan. Jesus goes on to speak of their power over snakes and scorpions. These represent the hostility of nature against humans in a world of sin and Satan. Believers in Jesus in their mission make a contribution to God's Reign even in its more apocalyptic elements in the conflict of God and Satan. The mission of proclamation and healing is a world and cosmos penetrating activity. Those who resist it face the final judgment of God (vv. 11-12).

Responsibility to the whole spectrum

The mission to heal given to the disciples was closely related to the Reign of God. It accompanied the proclamation of the Reign breaking into history with Jesus. In this mission the disciples are agents of that Reign. This mission is continued in the church, whom the disciples represent. The command to heal must be understood in terms of the whole spectrum of actions of justice of which healing is a part. It must be interpreted in light of the physical, economic, political, social, and spiritual promises of God's Reign to which healing was intricately connected.

Healing is part of a continuum of actions of deliverance from forces which deny people's basic needs for life in community. Individuals and groups of Christians differ in their gifts and opportunities for carrying this out. What is in common, and what is the principle at stake, is using our skills, gifts, and power to meet basic needs according to opportunities which God opens up in history. Some

have natural and spiritual gifts of healing. Others have gifts which can contribute effectively at points on the spectrum of justice other than that of physical healing. Some may have opportunity to go further in terms of political or economic occasions for change, openings which were lacking in first century Palestine. In a democracy the opportunities are much broader. As Proverbs 3:27 commands, "Do not keep back good from those whose right it is [literally, "from its owner"] when you have the power to do it." We have an obligation to see that the basic rights of our fellow humans are met. Where we come in on the healing-justice spectrum will depend on our abilities, training, and opportunities. We are a part of a spectrum, however, and we need to work together.

Our interpretation that biblical healing has a variety of physical social, economic, and political applications is confirmed in the tradition of the church. Augustine in writing about love of the neighbor states that there is no surer step toward loving God than the love of one person to another. One form of sinning against a neighbor is not helping him or her when it is in one's power to do so. This requires more than good will. Love involves doing good partly to a person's soul and partly to a person's body.

Augustine then applies the healing metaphor:

What benefits the body is called medicine Medicine here includes everything that either preserves or restores bodily health. It includes, therefore, not only what belongs to the art of medical men, properly so called, but also food and drink, clothing and shelter, and every means of covering and protection to guard our bodies against injuries and mishaps from without as from within.

He explains that this is because "hunger and thirst, and cold and heat, and all violence" are forces from without that produce the loss of health. Warding off these distresses happens when the compassionate and wise person "assists the

needy, when he clothes the naked, when he takes the stranger into his house, when he sets free the oppressed"22 Healing includes all that prevents and relieves human suffering and preserves life.

John Wesley similarly saw the wider spectrum of which physical healing is a part when he stated that by *sick* he meant "not only sick in the strictest sense but such as are in a state of affliction, whether of mind or body."<23

William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, noted another important dimension in the range of healing. Disease and thus healing apply not only to individuals, but also to the social and institutional context in which they find themselves. Booth wrote of the situation in which a person's "*circumstances* are sick, out of order, in danger of carrying him to utter destitution."<24

The response for the individual and the church in every situation is to examine their abilities and opportunities to heal. All need to look to the heart of healing which is to empower. People are empowered when they can fully participate in the community—certainly physically, and also socially, politically, economically, and religiously. People are to participate with others in community so as to control that which diminishes both individuals and their circumstances. Empowerment involves not only individuals but a mutuality in community that enhances the growth and self-reliance of every individual and family.

22

Augustine, Of the Morals of the Catholic Church, chs. 26-27, in Christian Social Teachings, ed. G. Forell (New York, Anchor Books, 1966), 77-79.

23 John Wesley, Sermon 98, "On Visiting the Sick" 1.1, in The Works of John Wesley, Vol. 3, Sermons 3 (Bicentennial Ed.) (Nashville, Abingdon, 1986), 387.

24 William Booth, In Darkest England and the Way Out (London, International Headquarters of the Salvation Army, n.d.), 221.

A healing relation is not one in which an altruistic person with power takes full responsibility for an innocent, helpless, disabled, wounded person without power. Healing occurs in a relationship in which a person who had, for any reason, been excluded from mutual participation becomes able to participate, in whatever way he or she can, in the community.²⁵

"He sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal."

Christians Supporting Community Organizing, P.O. Box 60123, Dayton, OH 45406; email: cscobco@charter.net phone: 937-276-4077; www.cscoweb.org

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²⁵ Roy Herndon SteinhoffSmith, "The Boundary War Mystery," Religious Studies Review 24 (1998), 139.