

Healing Ministries
VA Conference, at Weavers Church
Nov. 4, 2016

Introduction

This past Monday I awoke ca. 3:30 a.m. and began singing in my mind and spirit these hymn lyrics.

I'll praise my Maker

I'll praise my Maker with my breath,
 and when my voice is lost in death,
 praise shall employ my nobler pow'rs.
 My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
 while life, and thought, and being last,
 or immortality endures. (*HWB* 166).

With these words I magnify the Lord.

Last Friday, the cardiologist report on my six month check-up was “perfect”—blood draws and all, and so it was the last two times before, when on one occasion my Hindu cardiologist said “Miracle.” When I went through the valley of the shadow of death exactly 17 years ago *this week* in the Morgantown, WV, University Hospital, my theme verse was Psalm 30:12: “so that my soul may praise you, and not be silent. O Lord, my God, I will give thanks to you forever.” So I am glad to speak on this topic, to not be silent about God’s healing power, lavished richly upon us through miracle and medicine together. Let us all be thankful for the health we have. May the infirmities we carry in our bodies draw us closer to God for comfort and hope for healing.

Recall Paul’s statement regarding his “thorn in the flesh.” He said it “was given to me by a messenger of Satan to torment me and to keep me from being too elated. He appealed to the Lord three times to take it away, but the Lord didn’t, but rather assured him, “My grace is

sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” Paul did not allow that “thorn” to slacken his gospel energy. And Paul had more than his share of hardships as the next verses in 2 Corinthians indicate. So whatever health we have, thorned as it may be, let us use it for the glory of God and be thankful.

The title for this presentation is “Healing Ministries.” Wow, that could cover the whole Bible and the sum of all our lives and ministries. Tell me, what is Matthew 5–7 called? We know select verses from those three chapters and some by heart. But tell me now what Matthew 8–9 is about. Responses???

Mark’s Gospel is the one best known for its accent on healing and exorcist ministries. About 1/3 of the Gospel is devoted to such ministry. Luke also, both in his Gospel and Acts, the only NT and first century history of the church, is paced with deliverance healings. Matthew is less known for his healing/exorcist emphases. Rather, for Matthew we think of his five long discourses. But in Chapters 8–9 Matthew joins together ten stories of Jesus’ healing and deliverance, which immediately follow the Sermon on the Mount. Chapters 8–9 narrate what this Sermon on the Mount looks like when lived out through gospel ministry “on the ground.”

Only Matthew groups together in one block so many of Jesus’ miracles and exorcisms. This appears to be a NT antitype to the ten plagues in Exodus. Notably, the fifth, and last are exorcisms, with a summary statement that includes many more: 8:16, after healing Peter’s mother-in-law from a fever, “That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick.” He then presents Jesus as fulfiller of prophet Isaiah’s word, “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases” (8:17/Isa 53:4).

Now, yours truly: I do not believe in a health and wealth gospel, and I also do not believe in a “no healing gospel,” but rather I believe in a healing gospel *with* discipleship. Two times, costly “follow me” stories lace these healing miracles (8:22 and 9:9). This healing discipleship ministry belongs not to Jesus alone, but he shares it with his disciples, named in Matt 10, with the *inclusio* of “giving to them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.” That’s the beginning of the *inclusio* in 10:1; 10:7-8 is the end *inclusio*: “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.” Wow, seems a bit beyond us, but it is a vision and gift for us.

Before I speak about one crucial text in Mark and another in Luke, I move to the OT as pattern and hope for such a messianic mission. And here I must be most selective: first the Psalms since in the Hebrew canon they come closest to the time of the Gospels.

You may know from my book (p. 28) this diagram **[P.P. 1]** of “Healing Psalms” put in parallel with “Deliverance Psalms.” Some overlap. The Psalms were Jesus’ and the apostles’ worship manual. So with all these Psalms it should come as no surprise that the hoped-for Messiah would be a Healer and Exorcist. True, many of these Psalms link cries for healing with deliverance from enemies, either personal or national. That’s interesting! For Jesus’ command to love enemies is the context in Matthew for Jesus’ healing/deliverance ministry. Whatever the specific occasion for a given Psalm and the specific enemy or illness, the Psalms now transcend the specific original historical situation so that the experiences of worshippers hearing these Psalms can fill in the specifics of their situations—whatever the malady or circumstance of life.

Now a selection from the Prophets in the Hebrew canon: healing is used here metaphorically, to refer to Israel's sickness or health as a nation. Jeremiah 8:22, “Is there no

balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of my poor people not been restored? In this and most other prophetic texts similar to this, the sickness is the nation's idolatry, its going after other gods and reliance on their armies (see Isa. 2:6ff. and 57:14-21). Later Jeremiah voices a more personal outcry for healing, but that outcry is rooted in the sickness of the nation. His cry for healing help is pointed and potent:

"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed;
save me, and I shall be saved;
for thou art my praise" (17:14).

Note: healing, saving, and praising are a three-strand cord. They belong together, whether the context is personal illness or that of our church or nation, which needs now badly our cries for healing, for us and everyone in this nation and others as well, above all Syria and Iraq. Let not these disasters, however, silence our praise of God!!

Selectively, I choose an anchor text from the Torah.

God self-revealed divine Yahweh-power for the covenant community in the name: Yahweh-*rapha* (Exod. 15:26), from which comes the lovely song, "I am the Lord who healeth thee..." This Yahweh self-revelation comes right at the end of the memorable Moses and Miriam song celebrating Israel's release from bondage. In this music festival Israel celebrated God's deliverance of them from the waters of death and slavery. This healing promise, however, is connected to keeping the Lord's commandments, a discipleship theme. "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" (*Yahweh-rapha*). This concurs with what we noticed in Matthew.

Now for an interlude before I return to Mark, Luke, and Acts. From all we've heard so far medicine, doctors and pharmacists, get short-schriфт. And so it came to pass, that Israel in the time between the Testaments began to wed the two sources of healing: divine healing and medical curing:

Sirach 38 [see overhead, p. 18 in book, **P.P.2,3**], people are told to "honor physicians for their services, for the Lord created them; for their gift of healing comes from the Most High." The text then also praises the skill of the physician and of the pharmacist (vv. 7-8). But then it also says "*God's work's will never be finished; and from him health (Greek eirēnē/Shalom as peace) is spread over all the earth.*" (v. 8b, emphasis mine)

Sirach 38:1-15: Honor physicians for their services, for the Lord created them; 2 for their gift of healing comes from the Most High, and they are rewarded by the king. 3 The skill of physicians makes them distinguished, and in the presence of the great they are admired. 4 The Lord created medicines out of the earth, and the sensible will not despise them.... 7 By them the physician heals and takes away pain; 8 the pharmacist makes a mixture from them. *God's works will never be finished; and from him health spreads over all the earth.* (emphasis mine)

9 My child, when you are ill, do not delay, but pray to the Lord, and he will heal you. 10 Give up your faults and direct your hands rightly, and cleanse your heart from all sin. 11 Offer a sweet-smelling sacrifice, and a memorial portion of choice flour, and pour oil on your offering, as much as you can afford. 12 Then give the physician his place, for the Lord created him; do not let him leave you, for you need him. 13 There may come a time when recovery lies in the hands of physicians, 14 for they too pray to the Lord that he grant them success in diagnosis and in healing, for the sake of preserving life. 15 He who sins against his Maker, will be defiant toward the physician.

Part 2

I return to the Gospels now for two more selections, one from Mark and one from Luke. Both are chosen to highlight the relation between mission, Christology, and deliverance healing.

In Mark's lead-story of Jesus' teaching in the synagogue (Mark 1:23-28), his first act of ministry, Jesus' teaching is interrupted by an unclean spirit crying out: **[P.P 4]**

"What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!"

And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching-- with authority!

The English word *rebuke* in v. 25 is too weak. The Greek word is a form of *epitiman*, which usually translates the Hebrew *ga'ar* in the Septuagint. In the Psalms *ga'ar/epitiman* (Hebrew/Greek LXX) "is used with parallels such as 'destroy' or 'vanquish' in appeals to God as Warrior coming in judgment against foreign nations or imperial regimes that conquer and despoil Israel" (Pss 9:5; 18:15c; 76:6; 80:16; 104:7).¹ Already, first off, Jesus' proclamation or teaching about God's kingdom come near (1:15) collides with Satan and his kingdom.² This lead-story shows Jesus' authority as God's Spirit-anointed Son. It is followed by Jesus' healing Peter's mother-in-law from a fever. These are specific stories among others. See 1:34. **P.P. 5**

And he [Jesus] cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. Mark 1:34

Jesus as proclaimer of God's kingdom coming through deliverance from evil and healings of various types, disclose the secret of Jesus' identity. i.e., Christology, which lies at the heart of Mark's Gospel. All this is inextricably intertwined. Hence the sharp conflict in the Beelzebul narrative soon to follow (3:22-27). Jesus' memorable and haunting question to his accusers when they accuse him of doing these works by the power of Beelzebul is: "How can Satan cast out Satan?" Jesus' further explanation of this riddle is important: **P.P. 6**

If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man's house and

¹ Richard A. Horsley, "By the Finger of God': Jesus and Imperial Violence," pp. 51-80 in *Violence in the New Testament*, ed. by Shelly Matthews and E. Leigh Gibson (New York, London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 65-66. Horsley draws on an older article by Howard Kee, "The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories." *NTS* 14 (1968): 232-46. See also Swartley, *Israel's Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels: Story Shaping Story* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 1994), 57-58.

² "Zechariah 3:2 is especially striking with regard to the spiritual-political dualism at Qumran and Jesus' exorcisms: 'Yahweh subject *ga'ar/epitiman* You, O Satan. In the Qumran Scrolls *ga'ar* occurs in the context of the struggle between God and Belial." Horsley, "Finger of God," 65.

plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered. Mark 3:24-27

In healing ministries we sometimes, but not usually, run up against direct collision with Satan, and his evil spirits. Healing ministry is of many kinds with many approaches I later describe.

Jesus' sending out the seventy in Luke 10, again demonstrates these interrelated realities. After the disciples return from their mission of announcing peace (shalom) to every house, healing the sick, and exorcising demons—and they were jubilant at their success, Jesus says, **[P.P. 7 Luke 10:17-18]** “I was seeing [durative imperfect] Satan falling like lightning from heaven.” The healing ministry is what the church and world need to overcome this cycle of violence trying to cast out violence. It never ends, and thousands lay dead and bleeding, with thousands more suffering in refugee camps.

Love of enemy, healing, and deliverance are intertwined as this story demonstrates:

One afternoon I received a call from a co-laborer in deliverance ministry asking me to immediately pray and bind the demon of murder in a given man in the area who had just threatened to come to his church and murder the pastor. Both he and I, and the pastor prayed, binding in the name of Jesus this demonic power that had overtaken this man. While we were praying the man did come into the church parking lot, started toward the church with a gun, then suddenly stopped, got back into his pick-up, tore out of the church lot, went home, and called the pastor on the phone and said, “I need help. I am overcome with this evil compulsion to murder.” The pastor arranged a meeting for the same evening inviting several of us to come and assist him.

During my twelve-mile drive to the church that evening I struggled with how a nonresistant Mennonite will handle the likely violence to be manifested. The word that kept coming to me was, “Jesus said, ‘Love your enemies.’” How does this figure when one is confronted with violence? I couldn't rationally connect that answer, which the Spirit gave three times to my ethical dilemma. Not long into the session, I thought I was a “goner.” The man, much bigger than me, lunged toward me with fist aimed at my head. These words, without my thinking, burst out of my mouth, “Jesus said, Love your enemies.” The man collapsed to the floor, with swinging arm gone limp.

Then we learned from the demon, when under Jesus' authority to speak the truth regarding his legal right to defy the exorcist commands to leave the man, said that someone murdered this man's father when he was twelve years old, and that all these twenty-five plus years he nurtured the desire to find and kill the man who killed his father. When we bound back the spirits afflicting him and talked directly to the man, telling him what we learned, the man broke down and said, "How do you know this? I've told no one. It's true, I am overcome by the spirit of murder." He then wept and wept, confessed his sin, and asked for God's forgiveness. From then on we knew what we were dealing with, and expulsion of that demon from the man came quickly in the next round of command-confrontation. The spirit of murder cannot stand when confronted with Jesus' command to love the enemy.

In Acts, every time the gospel mission enters into a new region some sort of encounter with evil powers occurs. Four key stories are Philip's encounter with Simon Magus in Samaria (Acts 8:8-24), Paul's encounter with Elymas the magician in Salamis, Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12), Paul's exorcism of a spirit of divination from a slave girl in Macedonia (Acts 16:16-18), and the gospel's confrontation of sorcery and magical arts in Ephesus (Acts 19:11-20).

In this last story some Jewish exorcists tried using the name of Jesus to cast out demons from those demonized, but it did not work. They were not themselves believers in Jesus, and thus were doing exorcism as a form of magic. Paul's confrontation with Demetrius, the silversmith, shows the gospel's power overcoming the evil power inherent in idolatry, sorcery, and magic, *and* the economics associated with it. Paul's rebuke of the demon in the slave girl and the consequent story reveals the interconnection between demons and idolatry. The economic toll of that exorcism was a huge loss of money for Demetrius's business: "50,000 silver coins [*drachmas*] worth of magic stuff going up in flames" (Acts 19:19). Richard Beck describes this drastic loss, which he calculates to amount to over seven million dollars in our currency. He follows this up with the gospel's impact on politics in Paul's "turning the world upside down" in Thessalonica. He later writes, "political work often fails to get to the spiritual roots of systemic

injustice and oppression, the sacred and unquestioned values that justify and perpetuate the political and economic systems of the world. Until the gods of the nation are called into question, radical change is not possible.”³

In light of this, we should not be surprised when such encounters happen in the modern mission movement of the last century (story told by Loren Entz) in the 1980s in Burkino Faso (for later, if time).

Part 3

When my pastor, Duane Beck at that time, and I did a seminar at an MCUSA convention on the church’s healing ministry we found ministries at work in local congregations: **[P.P. 8]**

- a Twelve-step healing group in the congregation⁴
- a men's group taking up study and discussion of healing
- a women's retreat on "The Healing Dimensions of Prayer"
- a Sunday morning sermon series on healing
- mediation efforts focused on healing
- Stephen ministries
- Sunday evening anointing service
- anointing the sick upon personal request

These specific healing efforts in the church are to be commended. I believe, however, there are foundational ongoing practices of the church that are healing ministries, even though we don’t always see them as such. I list seven in my book. Here I comment on five: **[P.P. 9]**

- baptism (historically related to exorcism),
- communion/Eucharist, foot-washing,

³ Richard Beck, *Reviving Old Scratch: Demons and the Devil for Doubters and the Disenchanted* (Fortress, 2016), 163-68. While Beck speaks often of the personal face of evil, it contains, however, no account of an exorcism akin to that of Jesus’ ministry in the Gospels or the stories in this paper.

⁴ James Douglas Nelson, *Awakening: Restoring Health through the Spiritual Principles, Shalom, Jesus and the Twelve Step Recovery Program* (Blue Ridge Summit, Pa.: TAB Books, 1989).

- anointing with oil, etc., in home or church
- visiting the sick: presence and Word
- prayers for healing in church services

1. *Baptism: cross and resurrection: sacramental symbols of power for healing.*

Romans 6 [P.P. 10] regards baptism as dying to our old self and receiving new life in Christ.

Colossians 3:1-4 extends the point [P.P. 11]: “So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Romans 6 is a wonderful text for a baptism sermon, or even a Memorial Service sermon, which one of your VA Conf. pastors, Ryan, powerfully delivered at Emma Richards’ funeral some months ago.

Baptism, cross, and resurrection were at the heart of the early church’s catechetism preparing candidates for baptism. The priest/minister engaged the candidate for baptism in extended teaching on new life in Christ together with prayers to expel evil spirits. After a year or more (sometimes three) this disciplined training culminating in baptism, the sign of new life and deliverance from evil powers that previously pattern his or her life. Baptism initiated the catechumens into Christ-directed living. New “masters” now ruled their lives: Jesus Christ, not Satan; the Christian community, not the “emperor.” The early church knew what we have forgotten. Today we must guard against simply viewing baptism as an initiation into the social life of the church, though it is that also.^{5 6 7} (*comment on note 6*)

⁵ In the early centuries people came to the gospel from paganism and were under the spell of the demons of the pagan religions. Since baptism was the climax of expelling the demon powers, candidates entered into a lengthy period of catechism that included exorcist prayers. Baptism was the climax of this decisive break with the powers of darkness. In the early centuries baptismal candidates coming from pagan idolatrous backgrounds underwent a lengthy period of catechism that included exorcist prayers. Baptism itself was the climax of this decisive break with the powers of darkness.

2. Eucharist/communion/Lord's supper, *and the Love Feast, with Foot Washing*. I see two streams of emphasis in the Lord's Supper that contribute significantly to the healing and health of the congregation. The one is common fellowship. Combining Foot Washing, Love Feast, and Communion, as Church of the Brethren does, draws one into the heart of caring love.

A second dimension of healing is the holiness of the Lord's Supper. One is in the presence of the holy in which the ordinary elements of food, water, cup and bread bond the new community. The Lord's Supper commemorates the death of Jesus, God's resurrection victory, and the future final triumph of God's people. Often at our church we sing during Communion, "I am the Bread of Life...I will raise you up on the last day." What a powerful celebration of faith! God's *presence* is mediated into our human situation, now and into the future, beyond death. That presence is power, a power that can heal the sick, physically, emotionally, spiritually.

On one of my sabbaticals we lived in New Haven, CT. We attended an Episcopal church, where we found healing in the Eucharist with these words as we took the communion emblems:

The broken body and shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ
keep you in body, soul, and spirit until the day of his coming.

Syrian Orthodox baptismal rites retain to this day strong exorcist language, addressed directly against Satan: e.g. "I adjure you by God...Be uprooted and dispersed. Be vanished from God's creation, O you accursed one, unclean spirit, spirit of deception, and fuel for the unquenchable flames. Make haste and do not resist..."

⁶ See Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1999), 17. In his recent book Kreider describes at length the stages of this catechetical process in great detail: Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 107-14; 133-84.

⁷ These are just a few lines (from Part I, preceded by parts A–H) of the "Exorcism" liturgy on pp. 36-38 (quote from p. 38). A "Short Form" reads: "In Your name, O Lord God, I seal and cast out from this Your creation the evil and unclean spirit. Depart + + +, perverter and rebellious one, and let Your servant be purified from deceitful spirits." Fear + + + O unclean spirit, the coming judgment. Do not assail this creature of God because he (she) is not the dwelling place of demons. I adjure you + + + in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to be uprooted and dispersed, O unclean spirit, make haste and do not resist" (40-42). For the full text of the standard (long) "Exorcism" see *The Sacrament of Holy Baptism according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch*. trans. by Deacon Murad Saliba Barsom; edited and published by Metropolitan Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel, Archbishop of The Syrian Orthodox Church in the United States of America and Canada (1974). It may still be that the book can be ordered from the Archbishop at: 49 Kipp Ave, Lodi, NJ 07644. In this book the original Syriac text appears on the right page, and the English translation on the left.

In some Roman Catholic churches the Mass is combined with a healing service. Here are some post-communion prayers:

Lord, through this sacrament may we rejoice in your healing power
and experience your love in mind and body.

Lord, our God, renew us by these mysteries.

May they heal us now and bring us to eternal salvation.⁸

3. The *laying on of hands and anointing with oil* recognizes God's divine power needed for our healing (Jas 5:13-18). Laying on of hands and anointing with oil powerfully testify to the humble dependence of the community upon God. It witnesses to the support of brothers and sisters as they gather around the one to be healed. It vulnerably opens each person to the transcendent presence and power of God. Anointing with oil should not be reserved for only extreme illness or last rites. Anointing with oil with opportunity to confess sins is a sacred act in which we look to God for healing.

Dean Miller of the Church of the Brethren says, "Healing will occur in a congregation where accepting, caring, forgiving, and loving people unite in prayer and demonstrate support to those who come seeking to be anointed."⁹

Must confession of sin be part of a healing ritual? James connects anointing with oil to confession of sins (5:16). Phyllis Carter says it well, from the Church of the Brethren practice: "Is there any sin which you know that would keep this prayer from being effectual?" The gospel relates forgiveness of sin and healing. James 5:16 links confession and healing. I like especially a story Phyllis Carter told of one such healing. She received a call from a member in a Nursing Home who was suffering much pain, and wanted to be anointed. She has no hesitation to do this,

⁸ McManus, *Healing Power*, pp. 78-79.

⁹ Dean M. Miller, "Anointing: An Ancient Rite," *Messenger* (June 1987): 26-27.

but had a problem: her eight year old boy had to go with her, and she lectured him on the way to be quiet and just observe. After she prayed and anointed the man, the man asked the boy to pray. He said, “O Lord, do whatever you can for this old man.” The man’s face brightened and he said, “When the boy prayed, the pain left me!”

- 4. Visiting the sick: presence and Word.** These points are really two. In our culture we often fail to visit the sick. Obed Dashan who had just come to the AMBS from Nigeria, asked me at our first meeting in 1990 in the AMBS hall how I am and how is your wife and family. Mary was home quite sick, recovering from a severe pancreatitis. Obed immediately asked if he could come and pray for her, saying, “in our culture if the sick are not visited they won’t get well!” Reading, or better, *reciting* familiar Scriptures with the sick is helpful, at least in most cases.¹⁰

The second part of this is meditation on Scripture for one’s own healing and health. Here I tell what happened to me as God’s great surprise on June 26, 2012.

Healing Story, June 26, 2012

On this day I was scheduled to go to the hospital for an A-Fib conversion, an external electric shock to my heart-beat into rhythm. On that morning I woke up early, ca. 5:00. Since I was supposed to fast before the medical procedure, I could spend more time with my daily Bible reading. At the time I following the three readings per day designated in the Book of Common Prayer: a Psalm, another OT text, and a NT text. It happened that the NT text for the day was Luke 7:1-10. I was better acquainted with the Matthew parallel, which lacks many of the arresting details in the Luke version. It’s the story of Jesus healing the Centurion’s Servant.

The players in the story arrested my attention. The *Roman* centurion sends out messengers to find *Jewish* elders to tell them to find *Jesus* and bring him to this Roman army captain’s house to heal his sick servant/son (v. 7d, *pais*, which can mean both; in vv. 2, 3, and 10, *doulos* [servant/slave] is used). As a NT scholar I knew the enmity between Romans and Jews, and the centurion was in a ruling position. I also knew the enmity dynamic between the Jews and Jesus. But here is something really special. The enmity is put aside for the sake of healing. Roman centurion, Jews, and Jesus are together in one mission!! The action is reconciliation!

¹⁰ In 2013 when I was in hospital I experienced the lifting of my spirits by some visitors. The chaplain, one of my former students, was most helpful, giving me the opportunity to share the emotional load of my illness, a fractured rib from a fall and then having developed pneumonia.

By then the story had fastened itself on me, but then comes another part: what happened as Jesus was on the way. The centurion sends out other servants who say he said, “A am a man under authority and my soldiers do what I say..., “I am not worthy for you to come under my roof, only speak the word and my son/servant will be healed.” Wow, that really gripped my spirit, and I began to hear from John Michael Talbot’s cantata, *Light Eternal*, the words, (tenor) “only speak the words,” (alto) “and I will be healed.” By now I was in the grip of the Word, hooked in spirit, and then came a warming wave over me, from head to feet, and I knew I was healed. My pulse was strong and steady.

What now do I do? Do I go the hospital or cancel the appointment? I recall they said that first they do an EKG and if all is normal, they don’t do a cardio-conversion shock. So Mary and I decided to go. When the intake nurse (a man) was going over my meds, he asked me what I am now doing. I told him and also told him what happened to me that morning. He then said “I know you are a Bible professor; I was your student at EMU in 1973, _____ Beechy from Illinois. And I believe in miracles too.” We both smiled. Then he or another nurse did the EKG and it was perfectly normal. So the female nurse who was to get me ready, with I-V and such, said we can’t do anything in light of the EKG until the cardiologist comes. So then we had a wait, Mary, our pastor, Larry, and I for at least a half-hour.

The cardiologist, a Hindu, comes and sees the strange situation. To shorten the story, he says, “well, we’ll take a vote.” First, *Willard*: I say “I’m feeling really fine and don’t think I need it now, but in light of the last three months or in the future I might need it.” Next, *Mary*, your vote: she says, “I hardly know what to say, he feels fine now, but the last three months have been really difficult for him. Since all this has been arranged, maybe it’s okay to go ahead.” The cardiologist stops the vote (the pastor is off the hook) and he says, “Willard, you married a very wise woman. It’s all ready, and we will go ahead.”

So, the I-V goes in. I go to sleep, and later, my former student reports to Mary, “the cardiologist gave a very light shock.”

For me, I was ready to go home. I had had a nice nap. A doctor friend, Glen Miller, said, that should not have been done. It’s dangerous to shock when it’s normal!

My thinking about it all.... The miracle surprise (I had not asked to be healed) was medically confirmed by the EKG. Thanks be to God.

On my next visit to the cardiologist, I repeated the episode and he said, “it could have happened through Yoga also!” But in the more recent visits, since 2014,¹¹ when all is fine and I gave credit to both my medical care (to him) and to the Lord, he said, “yes, it is right for you to credit the Lord.”

¹¹ It is also important to note the miracle didn’t happen when in August 2014, after a fall and broken rib and pneumonia, and in critical care in the hospital, I went into A-Fib again. I read the same story from Luke again and prayed for healing but the miracle did not reoccur, and my cardiologist did shock me into rhythm. Perhaps for this reason, his recent statements in 2015, 2016 “you are a miracle” and doing “exceedingly well” is credit to both medicine and miracle—to the Lord!

- 5. Healing prayers in church.** For three decades now my congregation ca. every six weeks has time for people to come forward for healing prayers, with the option of anointing with oil. Sometimes there are few responses; other times many come. The Service runs overtime. This is an important ministry in the congregation.

Part 4

Healing/Health Care through Community organizations

I shift now to Community organizations for healing and health that differ from the prevailing health care modes. The epigraph by Peter Boelin that heads Chapter 12 in my book is:

What we need is medical care with a community orientation and a spiritual dynamic...

we need a method to appraise community needs through soliciting
the concerns, opinions and observation of community members....

To minister to the total person's need within the context of a community requires
a multifaceted approach and multidisciplinary team.

A physician, no matter how talented and energetic, cannot do it all.

Nor can we expect to meet all needs by adding professionals; the cost would be prohibitive.

We must incorporate a broad spectrum of personnel
and involve the people of the community themselves.

Then we have a much greater chance for success in improving health.¹²

I know of no health care center that fulfills Peter Boelen's vision better than that of the innovative Elkhart County model, Maple City Health Center, founded and headed Dr. James Gingerich. In my book I include Dr. Gingerich's description of how this Center functions, as he presented it to AMBS. It is truly a community-oriented health care center.¹³ Here I mention the key points of his thirty-year old Center.

¹² Peter A. Boelens, "Primary health care in an industrialized country," in *Transforming Health: Christian Approaches to Healing and Wholeness*, edited by Eric Ram (Monrovia, Ca.: MARC Publications, 1995), pp. 178-79.

¹³ You can read his story, pp. 213-223 in my book, *Health, Healing, and the Church's Ministry* (IVP, 2012). Dr. James Gingerich has been blessed with an amazing gift of energy, capable not only in running a unique health care

1. It has a clear mission: to serve a particular community, economically deprived, and consisting of both Anglo and Hispanic people. At one point when some patients wanted to bring people from another needy area of town, the Board said, “No, this is not our vision, and it will complicate who we are.”
2. At the heart of the medical care is relationship. Numerous programs of the Center have building of relationships between staff and patients as the primary goal, e.g. an educational component for both expectant mothers and mothers with babies meeting together as part of Center’s work.
3. Payment for services is on a sliding scale, depending upon the patient’s income and ability to pay. Several years ago, they came up with an alternative to dollars. If no money, do several days of community service.
4. The Board that administers the Center went through several major changes. From the beginning the vision was to incorporate selected patients as board members. But the Board was run on the standard Anglo model, with an agenda prepared beforehand. The patients on the Board soon lost interest and stopped coming. About seven years ago when they applied for a special grant, one question pertained to their Board composition. The Center was faced with a new challenge: what is our Board for, and how do we do our work, including Hispanics we serve. As a result, major changes occurred. Both Anglos and Hispanics composed a newly formed Board and all speech is interpreted, both English and Hispanic. The effect: better listening and improved results.
5. Quite recently, the Goshen Hospital recognized the outstanding health performance outcomes of the Maple City Health center and formed relationship with them, to learn from them and also give some fiscal support to the Center.
6. Most recently the Elkhart Community Foundation, which received a huge donation from a person who died, funded Maple City Health Center with thousands of dollars, enabling them to buy an historic house in Goshen, refurbish it to fit their needs. They now can provide an additional service: mental health professionals.

Part 5 [P.P. 11]

History of health care essential to the early church and its growth.

The history of health care throughout the centuries.

Medical missions in the modern times.

center, but talented in many other areas, even putting a new hard cover on my well-worn Bible, baking bread for a food center in Chicago, and on it goes.

Part 6

Current approaches and methods of healing ministry (P.P. 13-14 for this)

I identify eight differing but interrelated approaches or methods/programs:

1. Deliverance ministry: Discernment—Confession of known sins (incl. generational) – Confrontation (speak to demons, not person). Demand names of such & grounds for entering (who is head), Cast them out one by one or all at once in the name of Jesus.
2. “*Two Hours to Freedom*”: Dr. Charles Kraft: Healing of memories first, then command any demons attached to these hurtful memories to show (they usually speak weakly at this point)—then Commands in the name of Jesus Christ to demons to leave. (3/4 time Healing Memories; ¼ time commanding weakened demons to leave)
3. Early church catechism, with long period of instruction in the Christian faith that includes exorcist prayer with culmination in baptism-as-exorcism. I see this also as a healing experience: perhaps physically, but more emotionally and spiritually.
4. Exorcist Liturgies written and used especially for this purpose (in Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican communions). I’ve drawn on these for my own approach.
5. Tilda Norberg’s healing contributions. Gestalty therapy, later (Roy Hange). Also, similar to #4 her book, “*Gathered Together: Creating Personal Liturgies for Healing and Transformation* (Upper Room, 2007).
6. *Healing of Memories*. David Seamands; Leanne Payne, *The Broken Image: Restoring Personal Wholeness through Healing Prayer*. Focus on healing illness rooted in same-sex.
7. Emmanuel Prayer Ministries. Uncovers the hurts and restores to shalom living. Karl Lehman at Reba Place Fellowship, a medical doctor specialty in brain science
8. Theophostic Healing: similar to # 7 (John Lehman is Karl’s father). Here the focus is on bringing “truth” to heal hurtful experiences.¹⁴

¹⁴ Description: Seminars led by John Lehman and assistants (Bev Wiebe). Part of the January Interterm course on Pastoral Care for PM students at Hesston. Palmer’s own critique: while overall positive, yet critical: too closely linked to one person, Ed Smith. Other students, “it may claim too much; does not displace counseling in broader sense.” A massive text for this is: Ed M. Smith, *Beyond Tolerable Recovery: Moving beyond tolerable existence into Biblical maintenance free victory*. 4th ed., 2000. Could also order tapes from John Lehman

Own assessment (wms). Mostly positive. Very closely linked to 'Healing of Memories' Perhaps the key difference is the emphasis on 'inviting Jesus into trauma to speak the truth.' Much emphasis on 'truth.' At times this triggers the resistance of demons, for they love lies. Chapter 19 (about 30 pages) is devoted to dealing with the demonic. Key emphasis is to get the garbage out, focus on truth, confess sin, and then demons

Story, if time, later

Loren Entz, Mennonite missionary in Burkina Faso, tells the story of how Abou, a Muslim leader who became a Christian, claimed Christ's power in victory against the sorcery power of the village's elders:

One night elders who were fetishers invited Abou in order to test him. Was the power of his Jesus greater than their fetish occult power? First they tried to poison him with food, but Abou found victory over that as he offered a prayer of thanks before he partook of the food. God showed himself to be Abou's right hand and he suffered no ill effects.

Then the elders took him to their sacred grounds late that night. Abou was placed beside a huge gaping hole. The six elders sat on the other side of the hole. Fire escaped from the hole. A special whistling brought poisonous bees from the pit to do their evil work against Abou, but again with no success. Abou could not be stopped.

They had one test left, a test which no one else had ever escaped. The old men whistled a second time and a huge snake about 18 inches in diameter emerged. It came toward Abou. It tried to push him into the pit as countless others before him had been pushed in and disappeared. But the snake could only brush his leg. The snake itself fell into the pit. There was no doubt whose power was greater, God's power working through Abou or that of the fetishes through the village elders. The rest of the night Abou preached of Jesus to them, until daybreak, when he returned to Orodara.¹⁵

leave relatively easily. The obverse of focusing on truth is exposing the lies that people accept about situations and themselves, and this causes the problems and is itself the activity of the evil one, the 'opening' for the demonic.

Information on Website:

www.theophostic.com

¹⁵ Loren Entz, "Challenges to Abou's Jesus," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (Jan. 1986): 48–50.