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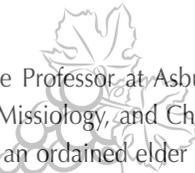
Caring for the Masses: Insights from John Wesley on Spiritual and Physical Healing

Abstract:

John Wesley approached Christian mission through a therapeutic (in the biblical sense) motif. Wesley used physical, spiritual, and social healing to further Christian mission in England, Ireland, and America. The gospel informs, and Christian mission drives, Wesley's comprehension and practice of healing. This study illumines the ways and degrees that Wesley employed physical healing practices that helped him to care for and reach the masses in England with the gospel. Wesley demonstrated that medicine and medical intervention was an important element in the missionary/ministry work. God not only works through direct intervention but through medicine, as well. Wesley used whatever means was biblical, ethical, and theologically expedient for Christian mission. If it was "good," then it was fair game for use in reaching people for Christ and helping to heal their hurts, no matter what caused them.

Keywords: John Wesley, mission, healing, medicine, soteriology, holistic ministry

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Introduction¹

John Wesley approached Christian mission through a therapeutic (in the biblical sense) motif. Wesley used physical, spiritual, and social healing to further Christian mission in England, Ireland, and America. The gospel informs, and Christian mission drives, Wesley's comprehension and practice of healing. This study illumines the ways and degrees that Wesley employed physical healing practices that helped him to care for and reach the masses in England with the gospel.

The 17th century Anglican practice of the "cure of souls" and the rise of regulated medicine in 18th century England influenced John Wesley's emphasis on the therapeutic nature of the gospel of Christ and the character of his ministry.² It also provided a backdrop for Wesley's historical and pioneering work with medicine and the medical use of electricity as one element in treating the spiritual and physical needs of his people.

Wesley's own writings and pertinent secondary sources provided the resources for investigating and understanding his interpretation of God's healing mission to the world. Wesley was a pioneer in certain aspects of medicine. As Randy Maddox (2007:4) notes, "Wesley's interest in health and healing was a central dimension of his ministry and of the mission of early Methodism." This article attempts to show how this feature was integrated into his approach to Christian mission.

John Wesley's Theological Premises Concerning Healing

John Wesley spent a lifetime of loving pastoral care responding to the desperate conditions faced by the poor in whatever country, city, village, or open-air venue he found them.³ He sought to discover methods and means that worked in accord with scripture and apply it to the situation at hand. Wesley's application of healing love integrated the elements of holy attitudes that motivated the words and the tangible works (healing, salvation, food, money, etc.) for the beneficiary. This social action instilled in the Methodist movement sprang from an active faith in Christ, but was also informed by examples from the early Church (Madden 2004: 742, 752).

God's broad love for individuals was also for "the healing of the nations." Wesley's optimistic theology elucidated the bleak human condition without betraying the Christian's hope as he diagnosed the malady and suggested its cure:

It is certain that “God made man upright;” perfectly holy and perfectly happy: But by rebelling against God, he destroyed himself, lost the favour and the image of God, and entailed sin, with its attendant, pain, on himself and all his posterity. Yet his merciful Creator did not leave him in this helpless, hopeless state: He immediately appointed his Son, his well-beloved Son, “who is the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person,” to be the Saviour of men; “the propitiation for the sins of the whole world;” the great Physician who, by his almighty Spirit, should heal the sickness of their souls, and restore them not only to the favour, but to “the image of God wherein they were created.” (WJW Sermon 61, 2:452)^{4 5}

Wesley deliberately exhibited a positive view of life as he preached, “Rest not till you enjoy the privilege of humanity—the knowledge and love of God. Lift up your heads, ye creatures capable of God. Lift up your hearts to the Source of your being! Let your ‘fellowship be with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ’ [1 John 1:3]!” (WJW Sermon 60, “The General Deliverance” 2:450).

In John Wesley’s view, a key to bringing glory to God was “doing all the good” one could for others. Wesley intended to take care of the people within his charge in all of the ways at his disposal that were appropriate to the gospel.⁶ One of Wesley’s approaches to mission was a visible, tangible avenue to reach many of the lost by offering Christ while helping restore people to health. Wesley’s rationale for his extensive emphasis on physical healing and the use of medicine can be seen in his interpretation of Mark 5:43. In his *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, concerning Jesus’ raising of the girl, Wesley clarifies, “[Jesus] commanded something should be given her to eat—So that when either natural or spiritual life is restored, even by immediate miracle, all proper means are to be used in order to preserve it” (Wesley 1954:157). The emphasis is that life is to be taken as a whole, or holistically. Even in the account of physical wellness being restored to the girl, with no direct mention about her spiritual condition by Jesus, Wesley infers it, because he believed that Jesus works multi-dimensionally.⁷ This lesser known feature of Wesley’s ministry relates the study of medicine to the practice of relief for the poor, both customary among many English clergy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Cule 1990:43-4, Macdonald 1982:106, Maddox 1994:146, Madden 2004:743).

John Wesley's Concept of Salvation as Healing

Medicine did not, and does not, work by itself apart from the grace of God. Charles Wesley provided a poetical insight to this theological position in "A Hymn for One about to Take His Medicine:"

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

(Rattenbury 1929:300)

"Wesley had no great problem demonstrating to his followers the relationship between spiritual care and the need for maintaining both a healthy mind and body" (Rogal 1978:83). One reason Wesley held these together was that he viewed a person as a whole.⁸ Another reason Wesley had no trouble holding these together was a result of his view of humanity created in the image of God. Wesley understood this in a relational sense that takes into account the multidimensional nature of humanity. Wesley eschatologically envisioned, by the grace of God, a restored and healed world. The God who created the world in the first place is at work recreating it in the present. Physical healing is one signal that the Creator is still going about doing good.⁹ Yet, God is not content to work alone. As noted above, this is the work of the church in tandem with the Holy Spirit.

To demonstrate the need for and potential of the spiritual and physical elements offered in the gospel of Christ, Wesley reminded his audiences of the present state of their spiritual and physical needs. To do this, he had to look no farther than London and the surrounding countryside to point to life's many jagged edges. For example, the laws favored the elite and wealthy. The major English political, financial, and social systems labored for their own good, often with little or no regard for those who served them. Many people mistreated one another. When Wesley reasoned and drew conclusions about the brutal behaviors and attitudes conveyed by the system toward individuals, particularly the poor, he turned to the Bible and the Church to see what God had to say about the matter. Reflecting on the generally negative state of affairs that he observed, Wesley declared plainly in his sermon, "The Mystery of Iniquity,"

I would now refer it to every man of reflection, who believes the Scriptures to be of God, whether this general apostasy does not imply the necessity of a general reformation? Without allowing this, how can we possibly justify either the wisdom or goodness of

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God? According to Scripture, the Christian religion was designed for “the healing of the nations;” for the saving from sin by means of the Second Adam, all that were “constituted sinners” by the first . . . The time is coming, when not only “all Israel shall be saved,” but “the fullness of the Gentiles will come in.” The time cometh, when “violence shall no more be heard in the earth, wasting or destruction within our borders;” but every city shall call her “walls Salvation, and her gates Praise;” when the people, saith the Lord, “shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.” (Isaiah lx. 18, 21.) (*WJW* 6:264)

Wesley’s optimistic hopes for the universal redemption of a world marred by sin’s effects remained high. He believed the Methodist revival was both a sign of hope and a pattern of God’s design for “the general spread of the Gospel.” Wesley recorded preaching from Isaiah 11:9 seven times from 1747 to 1755 and wrote this sermon from Dublin in April 1783, as a reminder that God is at work in the world so that “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Is. 11:9). Wesley concluded, “The loving knowledge of God, producing uniform, uninterrupted holiness and happiness, shall cover the earth; shall fill every soul of man” (*WJW* Sermon 63, 2:488). Wesley practiced what he preached - a gospel that encompassed the needs of the people in the fullness of Christian love!

In the truest sense of the experience, all true healing is divine healing. Physical healing through physical means, e.g., medicines, may stand as an operative symbol because God performs an act of grace to the recipient(s) either immediately or mediated through the inherent nature of the created substance (Runyon 1998:132). This is analogous to how Christ is present as the source and goal in Holy Communion. Theodore Runyon provides these lines from a communion hymn of John Wesley that illuminates this emphasis,

His Body doth the Cure dispense,
His Garment is the Ordinance,
In which he deigns t’appear;
The Word, the Prayer, the broken Bread,
Virtue from Him doth here proceed,
And I shall find Him here. (Runyon 1998:131)

Christ is present when healing takes place.

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John Wesley's Insights on Ministry, Medicine, and His Practice of Healing

Wesley seemed to be embroiled in one controversy after another throughout his ministry. The one that brought him as much notoriety as anything else was his involvement in providing “healthcare tips” to the poor. Eighteenth century England is not known for its great medical wisdom. Lester King, M.D., delineates the plight of the underclass who became ill: “There were simply not enough doctors to go around, and their services were too expensive, giving rise to the gibe that the physician was like Balaam’s ass, because he would not speak until he saw an angel (an archaic coin worth about ten shillings)” (King 1971:12). The poor fared no better in the hands of the apothecaries either. King recites a notorious case in which a patient was charged £132 12s. 8d. for medicines that actually cost less than £7 (King 1971:10). Wesley was not just indignant about such abuses, but resolved to do something personally to change the situation.

By Wesley’s own criteria,¹⁰ he did not qualify as a professionally trained or certified physician (Bardell 1979:113). Although Wesley never attended a medical college, nor obtained a medical license, or degree, nor any recognition from an accrediting medical society, he read and learned as much about the most current ways to cure the simple, common diseases as most of the registered practicing physicians of his day (Donat and Maddox 2018:20). He saw the plight of the poor and wanted to provide a solution. Wesley explained the boundaries of his medical knowledge and skills and presented his compassionate rationale to aid the destitute of his parish:

But I was still in pain for many of the poor that were sick; there was so great expense, and so little profit [benefit]. And first, I resolved to try, whether they might not receive more benefit in the hospitals. Upon the trial, we found there was indeed less expense, but no more good done, than before. I then asked the advice of several Physicians for them; but still it profited not.¹¹ I saw the poor people pining away, and several families ruined, and that without remedy.

At length I thought of a kind of desperate expedient. “I will prepare, and give them physic myself.”¹² For six or seven and twenty years, I had made anatomy and physic the diversion of my leisure hours; though I never properly studied them, unless for a few months when I was going to America, where I imagined I might be of some service to those who had no regular Physician among them. I applied to it again. I took into my assistance an Apothecary, and an experienced Surgeon;

resolving, at the same time, not to go out of my depth, but to leave all difficult and complicated cases to such Physicians as the patients should choose.

I gave notice of this to the society; telling them, that all who were ill of chronical distempers (for I did not care to venture upon acute) might, if they pleased, come to me at such a time, and I would give them the best advice I could, and the best medicines I had. (*W/JW Letters* 8:263-4)

Wesley felt that he had no other recourse. He agonized over, and worked relentlessly to relieve the suffering of the poor. Wesley established three free clinics (London, Bristol, and Newcastle), orphanages, prison ministries, and a new method for visiting the sick (Ott 1980a:194).

Obviously, he could not attend to all of the sick persons in England, but Wesley proposed that a network of stewards and Methodist leaders could reach a large portion of the neglected population. John Wesley, following the admonition of scripture, specifically Matthew 25:36, resolved, “I am setting a regular method of visiting the sick here [London].” This was one of the chief functions of the Methodist Class Leaders.¹³

When Wesley obliged patients “to give them the best advice I could and the best medicines I had,” he grasped that the process of healing came from God at work in the created order. If we fully grasp this truth, then we can employ the means to heal that God puts before us. Wesley drew this point out when explaining the use of electricity (see below) for healing, when he states, “We know that the Creator of the universe, is likewise a Governor of all things therein. But we know likewise, that he governs by second causes; and that accordingly it is his will, we should use all the probable means he has given us to attain every lawful end” (Wesley 1760:27). God employed medicine and other means to remedy the malady. Holistically for Wesley, this included healing anyone who was sick in body, mind, or spirit.¹⁴

Many people sought healing and wholeness through Wesley’s ministry. Fallen and downtrodden people received help to transform their broken and miserable lives. Wesley used discernment and wisdom to direct people toward God to meet their lives’ deepest and most urgent needs. Those who needed a cure for their sin sick souls gained solace from Jesus, whom Wesley preached. Some, who suffered from various chronic physical “distempers,” often found relief and healing through Wesley’s advice and

cures. Restoration and peace, “being in a state of equilibrium” called for a biblical concrete practice of health care (Ott 1995:180-81). Wesley urged them to have both inward and outward health (Ott 1980b:587).

Providing another nuance to holistic healing, what develops into health psychology and behavioral medicine, Newton Malony relates the insights of Wesley’s integrative ministry in “John Wesley’s Primitive Physic: An 18th-century Health Psychology,” a paper presented before the American Psychological Association in 1992 (1996:147). Malony suggests using Matarazzo’s standard definition of health psychology:

Health psychology is the aggregate of the specific educational, scientific, and professional contributions of the discipline of psychology to [1] the promotion and maintenance of health, [2] the prevention and treatment of illness, [3] the identification of etiologic and diagnostic correlates of health, illness, and related dysfunction, and [4] the analysis and improvement of the health care system and health policy formation. (Malony 1996:148, his numbers)

Malony contends that John Wesley made significant contributions according to these criteria. Four notable examples posited were 1) Wesley promoted George Cheyne’s health habits widely, 2) Wesley’s *Primitive Physic* dealt with treatment of diseases, 3) Wesley understood the interrelation of environment and psychosomatics on health, and 4) Wesley developed a method for visiting the sick and established the earliest free clinics in Bristol and London (1996:151, 154, 156). Malony observes that Wesley took his cue for these good works from a biblical understanding that “the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:9) and “earned an honored place in the history of all health professions and behavioral medicine, as well” (1996:158).

A current contributor to the body of literature analyzing the connection of physical and spiritual health influence of Wesley is Marie Griffith in *Born Again Bodies*. While delineating the historical roots of those ideas from Luigi Cornaro (fl. 1558), Griffith suggests connections between Wesley and the Oxford Methodists’ dietary regimens and spiritual health interrelatedness due to the influences of George Cheyne, M.D. (1671-1743), Jeremy Taylor, William Law, Thomas á Kempis, Jacob Boehm, and Jeanne Guyon—“all of whom wrote of suppressing the appetite so that the spirit could rise” (2004:29-30).¹⁵

Philip Ott affirms the attention of the regimen Wesley offers for good health of body and spirit in his articles “John Wesley on Health: A Word for Sensible Regimen” and “John Wesley and Non-naturals” (1980a, 1980b). Ott’s writings on “John Wesley on Health as Wholeness” and “Medicine as Metaphor: John Wesley on therapy of the Soul” deal more with the salvation theme imbedded in Wesley’s abundant references to therapeutic terminology to describe the holistic work of God among the people (1991, 1995).

Manfred Marquardt’s standard work on Wesley, *John Wesley’s Social Ethics: praxis and principles* notes, “Wesley’s basic thesis, that the sick will must first be healed, “confirmed in innumerable cases demonstrates that Wesley’s healing emphasis on restoring the individual carried the implications of social renewal as well (1992:120). “The ethical power thus awakened and preserved, and firmly founded in connection with Christ, ... enabled many to bring about social change in their vicinity” (Marquardt 1992:120).¹⁶

In this model, Wesley implores us to offer healing through the means available to us to all those to whom we minister. The marginalized of society have few options. The church needs to continue to provide them with competent therapeutic treatment to bring health into their lives.

Wesley promoted his method for visiting the sick, and the dispensary opened at the Foundery in 1746, by highlighting the amount of people who no longer suffered from their chronic illnesses because of his advice, medicines, and God’s blessings (Turrell 1921:362).¹⁷ Even his opponents admitted that he had no aspirations to be a professional physician, but only that he earnestly labored for “the healing of disease” (Thomas 1906:987). Wesley challenged the physician detractors, who still derided him, to see who had cured more patients! They did not take him up on the offer.

In a letter to Vicar Perronet dated 1748, Wesley recounts that within 5 months over 500 people passed through the clinic, and 71 “were entirely cured of distempers long thought to be incurable” (*WJW Letters* 8:265). To say God granted success to his healing endeavors is an understatement. The point is not to defend Wesley’s use of medicine for its own sake; however, a gospel that provides for the spiritual well-being and relieves the suffering of the people without placing an economic burden on them is eye-catching! The gospel presents God as the Source who provides,

motivates, and sustains this work of love, beckoning them to come to Him for wholeness.

Wesley did not take this role of curing of souls and bodies lightly, nor did he just treat illnesses as some of his critics suppose, but *he treated whole persons*. In his journal entry for 21 June 1767, Wesley relates the recovery of Ellen Stanyers of Macclesfield, in Cheshire, from mental, physical and spiritual distress through the care of the Methodists discipling her, as follows:

While she was meditating on what she had heard, those words were brought to her mind, 'Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no Physician there?' With the words the Lord spoke peace to her soul; and in one and the same moment all pain and sorrow fled away, and she was entirely healed, both body and mind. Early in the morning she came to the house of one of our friends, and, clapping her hands together, cried out in an ecstasy of joy 'O my Jesus, my Jesus, my Jesus! What is it that he has done for me? I feel he has forgiven all my sins.' Taking up an hymnbook, she opened it on those words: —'I the chief of sinners am, But Jesus died for me!' She was quite transported, being overwhelmed with peace and joy unspeakable. At the same time she was restored to the full use of her reason, and in a little while was strong and healthy as ever. (*W/W Journals* 3:285)

Excurses on Healing with Electrostatic Shock Therapy

John Wesley, "the brand plucked from the burning," was drawn to the new discoveries about electricity in the middle of the eighteenth century. "Brand from the Burning" is even more interesting because of the imagery associated with the description. It not only recalls Wesley's rescue as a six-year old from the burning Epworth rectory in 1709 or the later spiritual revival fire kindled through his ministry, but connects with "God's brand," "which is another ancient locution for 'lightning'" (Schiller 1981:162).

One of Wesley's pioneering endeavors was to apply mild, static electric shock to help cure patients physically and mentally. Whenever Wesley ran upon a new aid to humanity, he was quick to research it and employ its best gift for those associated with his ministry. Electricity as a new discovery fascinated John Wesley. He read and heard about an "electrical machine" as early as 1745, and later used it in treating the illnesses of the poor. Wesley mentioned electricity in his journal entry

for Friday, 16 October 1747, when he went with some friends to see “The Electrical Experiments.” “It is all a mystery,” Wesley quipped. He was content to leave its theoretical explanation there, but certainly not its practical use. Wesley envisioned a therapeutic labor for this late discovery:

Jan. 20, 1753. I advised one who had been troubled many years with a stubborn paralytic disorder to try a new remedy. Accordingly, she was electrified¹⁸ and found immediate help. By the same means I have known two persons cured of an inveterate pain in the stomach, and another of a pain in his side which he had ever since he was a child. (*W/W “Journal & Diaries III”* 20:444, 1-20-1753)¹⁹

In November 1756, Wesley procured the use of an “electrical apparatus” which he had evidently designed (Madden 2007:247). He set up a schedule where people could receive daily applications of electricity. For several years, he says that hundreds, if not thousands, of persons had been “electrified” (a mild electrostatic shock). Wesley had directed several persons “to be electrified.” They had suffered from various disorders and some found a cure from the treatments (*W/W “Journal & Diaries IV”* 21:81). Wesley only allowed mild electrical shocks to be administered at such a low level that did not “frighten the patient.” He also believed that violent shocks were dangerous to the patient and forbade their use.

Turrell, in “Three Electrotherapists of the Eighteenth Century: John Wesley, Jean Paul Marat and James Graham,” places Wesley as one of the first practitioners of electrotherapy in London (1921:361). Although he does not deride Wesley’s work, he characterizes Wesley’s confidence in electricity as a panacea as gullibly optimistic (Turrell 1921:363). The importance of his paper read before the Royal Society of Medicine Section of the History of Medicine, January 19, 1921, establishes Wesley as one whose work “did a great deal for the early development of a science” and indirectly highlights Wesley’s integrated approach to bringing healing to the whole person (Turrell 1921:364).

Electricity for Wesley was just one more arrow in his quiver to reverse the onslaught of the ills employed by the enemy. With the efficacy of electricity in treating myriad illnesses, Wesley could make headway in alleviating the suffering of the disadvantaged of society in accessing and affording healthcare. In his later editions of *Primitive Physic* (1760 on), Wesley asserted the efficacy of electricity in curing about twenty different

ailments (Rousseau 1968:247; see *PMT* website, for a list of the increased available treatments through electrotherapy).

Primitive Physic for the Masses

John Wesley perceived that his writings could circulate in places where he could not go. Therefore, he published literature on curing simple diseases. Starting in 1747, he collected the most useful medicines and their recipes that could be prepared simply by an average adult in his or her own home, and published them in the little book *Primitive Physic Or An Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases*.²⁰

Wesley understood the predicament that he combated. He commented in the preface of *Primitive Physic*, “[S]ince man rebelled against the Sovereign of heaven and earth...[t]he seeds of weakness and pain, of sickness and death, are now lodged in our inmost substance; whence a thousand disorders continually spring” (*WJW* Letters 14:308).

William Riddell, F.B.S., Edin., analyzes Wesley’s *Primitive Physic* in “Wesley’s System of Medicine” in the *New York Medical Journal*, recounting many of Wesley’s suggestions as “at least as reconcilable with common sense as that of the contemporary regular practitioner, much more so in most cases” (Riddell 1914:68). Burton G. Thomas viewpoint in *The British Medical Journal (BMJ)* of 1906 is not as flattering. After citing examples of Wesley’s advice found in *Primitive Physic*, he demeans Wesley and his work: “There is nothing in the book of any value whatsoever, and curiously enough, nothing that might not have been written by a person with the slightest education and the meanest intellect” (Thomas 1906:988). This essay, however, confirms Wesley’s wide impact on persons seeking cures for ill health through the sale of hundreds of copies of *Primitive Physic*, albeit from a negative perspective. Ironically, the essay misses that most of Wesley’s sources for suggested cures were gleaned from the contemporary elite of the European medical profession.

A complimentary assessment interpreting Wesley’s work on healing diseases appeared four years earlier in the *BMJ* as “A Medical Tract by John Wesley.” Wesley dealt with most of the known diseases treated by the medical establishment of the eighteenth century. He drew on the learned medical practitioners, common sense, and “the clinical observations of divers wise women of the shires” (*BMJ* 1902:799). The analyses on Wesley and his healing work suggested that Wesley applied the method of experiment on treating diseases, leaning on common sense, and offering

easy and natural cures to the suffers. “The same cannot unfortunately be said of the remedies of the faculty of the period”—a surprising closing quip on the general state of the medical profession of Wesley’s contemporaries (*BMJ* 1902:800).

Another physician amenable to Wesley’s contribution to blending an emphasis on public health and individual and social virtues, Robert Morison, in *The Hastings Center Report* concludes: “Wesley awakened an interest in sanitation (long absent from the Christian world) with the revival of an ancient Hebrew dictum that “cleanliness is next to godliness.” More important, perhaps, were the weekly class meetings for increasing individual social virtues” (Morison 1974:3).

In an address before the Osler Club of Winnipeg, Oct. 13, 1926, Medical Superintendent of Brandon Hospital for Mental Diseases, C. A. Baragar, M.D extols Wesley’s contribution to the care for the ill of the eighteenth century, especially complimenting Wesley’s *Primitive Physic*. Baragar remarks that Wesley’s “treatise on Medicine, a booklet couched in such simple language as to be easily understood by the unlettered poor and yet in the treatment prescribed in accord with that of the foremost physicians²¹ of his day and in some of its definitions delightfully succinct and clear” (Baragar 1928:59).

After describing many of Wesley’s examples related to gleanings from the medical literature and supported from his theology, Baragar concludes, “[Wesley] did much to direct the attention of the public to the importance of health, and he pointed to the [S]ource from which help must come” (1928:65). Baragar lauds Wesley’s professional theological stance and medical efforts as lay skills worthy of “an honored place in the history of medicine” (1928:65).

David Stewart, M.D., believes that Wesley’s *Primitive Physic* is one of the “all-time medical best sellers,” producing the equivalent revenue of about \$150,000 that Wesley either gave away to the poor or used to underwrite the cost of producing more copies of the book (1969:34).²² King is a little more cautious, but allows, “Even the most critical would admit that the book was a success . . . It is] a medical text which enjoyed a fabulous popularity” (1971:34). Before Wesley’s death, there were twenty-three editions produced with many more afterwards, including “at least seven American editions between 1764 and 1839,” and translations into other languages (King 1971:34).²³

“Primitive Physic was Wesley’s way of utilizing an active faith to provide much needed medical advice to the laboring poor. In so doing, he managed to tackle the interrelated problems of health, hygiene, and nutrition while addressing the crucial issues of accessibility and cost” (Madden 2004:757-8). This kind of compassionate advocacy, intercession, and provision through medicine is at the heart of healing-as-salvation “religion” for Wesley.²⁴ Wesley demonstrated that medicine and medical intervention was an important element in the missionary/ministry work. God not only works through direct intervention but through medicine, as well. Wesley used whatever means was biblical, ethical, and theologically expedient for Christian mission. If it was “good,” then it was fair game for use in reaching people for Christ and helping to heal their hurts, no matter what caused them.

Conclusion

John Wesley approached Christian mission through a biblically understood therapeutic motif (salvation-as-healing). Wesley’s comprehension, discovery, development, and practice of healing concepts shaped his thoughts, words, and activities in applying holistic salvation in his context. Wesley and the Methodists used physical, spiritual, and social healing to further Christian mission. Wesley’s healing practices highlighted the ways and degrees of care for people that allowed him to reach the masses in 18th Century England, and beyond.

The Methodist movement promoted social reform, welfare provision, schools, prison reform, hygiene movements, nutrition, exercise, medical dispensaries, medical advice, financial loans, and more, but especially focused on the spiritual health and vitality of people as their chief aim in Christ’s name. The church should be involved in healing ministries like Wesley advocated and exemplified—but not practicing medicine without a license! Although the major stress is laid on the eternal spiritual nature of Salvation as Healing to bring persons into a right relationship with God, the outflow of the healing of that breach is the consequential healings in the other dimensions and arenas of the human theater. People listened to Wesley and the Methodists in general, because they could see in his/their lives a consistency with the glad tidings of the gospel message and their actions of loving-kindness.

Thus, Wesley and the Methodist stand in their era as shining examples of the effect of the gospel to bring healing to the neglected

masses while contributing to nation-wide reform movements. This legacy calls, at least, Wesley's ecclesiastical heirs in the contemporary churches, to evaluate our reasons, levels of compassion, efforts, methods, and means to touch the depth of human need with Christ's transforming love.

End Notes

¹ This paper was excerpted from a presentation given to the Yale-Edinburgh Group meeting from June 27-29, 2013.

² Maddox calls attention to "how offering medical advice is central to the role of a parson in George Herbert, *A Priest to the Temple; or the Country Parson* (London: T. Garthwaite, 1652), ch. 23 (Wesley read Herbert in July 1730). Cf. A.W. Sloan, *English Medicine in the Seventeenth Century* (Durham: Durham Academic Press, 1996), 138–140; and Robert Heller, "'Priest-Doctors' as a Rural Health Service in the Age of the Enlightenment," *Medical History* 20 (1976): 361–383" (2007:5).

³ See Ken Collins, *A Real Christian: The Life of John Wesley* for a brief overview of Wesley's life & ministry.

⁴ In this short paragraph from "The Mystery of Iniquity" (2 Thessalonians 2:7), Wesley is drawing on at least Ecclesiastes 7:29, Hebrews 1:3, 1 John 2:2, Colossians 3:10 and Revelation 13:8 for his remarks.

⁵ This paper acknowledges gender equality, but does not adjust Wesley's use of masculine pronouns.

⁶ See letter of Mar. 28, 1739. Albert Outler noted that tradition incorrectly dated this letter as March 20 and written to James Hervey. He believed it was addressed "to some clergyman (possibly John Clayton) who had already raised the issue of Wesley's right to invade other men's parishes without invitation (see Letters, Vol. 25 in this edition, pp. 614, 616). See also Wesley's conversation with Bishop Butler of Bristol, August 16, 1739, in WHS, XLII.93-100" (*WJW* (Bicentennial Edition) CD-ROM. Richard P. Heitzenrater, ed. "Introduction", Part 1, footnote 47).

⁷ *Wellness* refers to that quality of life that we experience lived in Christlikeness and the image of God. A right relationship with God centers us, makes us whole, and brings healing. This is a relationship of love that entails God justifying us, regenerating us, adopting us, sanctifying us, and making us whole persons.

⁸ Wesley wrote to Miss Bishop in the words of the archbishop mentor to Madam Guion [sic], "TRUE simplicity," Fenelon says, "is that grace whereby the soul is delivered from all unprofitable reflections upon itself." I add, "and upon all other persons and things." (*WJW* Letters 13:24). He applies this principle to his medical tips to include finding which "medicine relieves which pain."

⁹ For Wesley, this is a work of mercy. “[Our Lord] has laid before us those dispositions of soul which constitute real Christianity; the inward tempers contained in that “holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord;” the affections which, when flowing from their proper fountain, from a living faith in God through Christ Jesus, are intrinsically and essentially good, and acceptable to God. . . [and so is] everything which we give, or speak, or do, whereby our neighbour may be profited; whereby another man may receive any advantage, either in his body or soul. The feeding the hungry, the clothing the naked, the entertaining or assisting the stranger, *the visiting those that are sick* or in prison, the comforting the afflicted, the instructing the ignorant, the reproving the wicked, the exhorting and encouraging the well-doer; and if there be any other work of mercy, it is equally included in this direction.” (*W/JW Sermons* 5:328-9) (Emphasis mine)

¹⁰ Wesley offers these four points as the standard for professional medical practice: 1. Seeing life and health are things of so great importance . . . Physicians should have all possible advantages of learning and education. 2. That trial should be made of them, by competent judges, before they practice publicly. 3. That after such trial, they be authorized to practice by those who are empowered to convey that authority. 4. And that, while they are preserving the lives of others, they should have what is sufficient to sustain their own.

¹¹ Fifty-three physicians of the College of Physicians established a dispensary to aid the poor by selling their own prescriptions at a minimal cost compared to the apothecary charges. However, this was not adequate to meet the needs of the poorest of London (King 1971:13).

¹² *Physic* is the eighteenth century word for medicine. Wesley stated in Sermon 95, “On the Education of Children”, “*Physic* may justly be called the art of restoring health” (*W/JW* 3:349).

¹³ In Methodism, the division of the society into classes is an important branch . . . Opportunities are also thus afforded for ascertaining the wants of the poorer members, and obtaining relief for them, and *for visiting the sick*; the duty of a Leader being to see the members once in the week, either at the meeting, or, if absent from that, at home . . . Mr. Wesley remarked, “. . . this is the very thing which was from the beginning of Christianity (*Disc* 5:518) (my emphasis).

¹⁴ See Sermon 98 “On Visiting the Sick” 11:118ff for a full explanation.

¹⁵ Cornaro, an Italian nobleman, relates in *Trattato de la vita sobrina* (1558) how he became obese through overeating, but reversed his condition by an abstemious lifestyle.

¹⁶ Prison renewal through converted jailers, social welfare work by the Mayor of Cork, improved conditions at the workhouses, instructions for visiting the sick in hospitals, and various kinds of assistance until self-help was attained (Marquardt 1992:184).

¹⁷ Wesley's clinic was so successful that within two months, he opened a second one in Bristol.

¹⁸ Refers to a mild static shock, not a lethal jolt.

¹⁹ He concludes this journal entry with a bit of typical wry Wesley humor with pun intended, including tossing caustic critique at some of the elite medical practitioners and their avarice.

²⁰ It contained no less than 829 cures (Wesley 1992:169) and went through 23 editions in his lifetime (Maddox 2007:4, Donat and Maddox 2018:20). Referred to hereafter by its shorter title of *Primitive Physic*.

²¹ Baragar colorfully depicted these eminent physicians: "Tissot (1728-1797) of Lausanne, noted chiefly for his advocacy of variolation [smallpox inoculation] and his treatise on epilepsy and nervous diseases; Thomas Dover (1660-1742) of Dover's Powder fame, buccaneer physician and the rescuer of Alexander Selkirk in 1709; Boerhaave (1668-1738) of Leyden, a famous physician; Richard Mead (1673-1754), heir to Radcliffe's wealthy practice and the gold headed cane; Cheyne, a celebrated Scottish contemporary of Mead's...noted chiefly for his work on gout and scurvy; Huxham who recommended a vegetable diet for Admiral Martin's 1200 scorbutic sailors in 1747; John Lind (1716-1794), the father of Naval Hygiene; Sydenham (1624-1689) the great clinician of Rivière, Hill and Macbride, not to mention Galen and Paré" (60).

²² Today's equivalent is about \$950,000 (based on the cost of living being 7 times higher than it was in the 1960s.)

²³ Between 1776 and 1791, five new editions were printed in London and two in the American colonies (Rousseau 1968:252).

²⁴ In "On Former Times" (1787) Wesley clarifies, "By religion I mean the love of God and man filling the heart and governing the life. The sure effect of this is the uniform practice of justice, mercy, and truth. This is the very essence of it; the height and depth of religion, detached from this or that opinion, and from all particular modes of worship" (*WJW Sermon 102*, 3:448).

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