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**CARETAKING OF THE TEMPLE:
HEALING AS PART OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN LIFE**

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By
Marilyn L. Buehler

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The blind, the deaf, the dumb, and those obsessed were there, and Jesus spoke the Word, and they were healed.

On some he laid his hands, they were healed; to others he just spoke the Word, and they were full restored to health; but others had to go and wash in certain pools; and others he anointed with holy oil.

A doctor asked him why he healed in divers way, and he replied.

Disease is discord in the human form, and discords are produced in many ways.

The body is a harpsichord; sometimes the strings are too relaxed, and then inharmony results.

Sometimes we find the strings too tense, and they another form of discord is induced.

Disease is many-formed, and there are many ways to cure, to tune anew the mystic harpsichord.¹

Spiritual healing was a part of the early Christian life. Jesus was a master healer; and his ministry was one of healing body, mind, and spirit. Jesus is the model for Christian healing and disciplines. In the early Christian communities, healing was part of the daily life, and at first not separated into the liturgy of the church. The early Christians believed they should first turn to God for healing. They were willing to heal, and would care for the sick.

This paper will touch on the how healing was part of the early Christian practice and the lifestyle the mystical Christian sect called the Essenes. Healing of mind, body, and spirit took different forms. Christian healing practices included prayer, fasting, laying on of hands, anointing, use of essential oils, diet and spiritual lifestyle in community, and the holy Eucharist.

Prayer

Jesus sought solitude to pray to his Father. He taught us how to pray.

¹ Levi, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* (Marina del Rey, Calif.: De Vorss & Company, 2001), 104-105.

But when you pray, go to the closet of your soul; close all the doors, and in the holy silence, pray.

You need not speak a multitude of words, nor yet repeat words again and then again, as heathen do. Just say

Our Father-God, who art in heaven; holy is they name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.²

Prayer is a way to make friends with God. “Prayer open us up to God, and invites Him into our life”.³ Prayer becomes a way to open up to and to be sustained by and healed by God’s loving presence.

“Through prayer, we can come to know that events that seem to be tragic are not a judgment from God but have occurred for specific reasons. This in itself is uplifting and can facilitate and speed the healing process”.⁴ Being sustained by an internal prayer life is helpful when there are challenges one has to bear.

In the Essenes prayed to both the Heavenly Father and to the Earthly Mother.

In the *Essene Gospel of Peace*, it is recorded that Jesus teaches us to

. . . pray every day to your Heavenly Father and Earthly Mother, that your soul may become as perfect as your Heavenly Father’s holy spirit is perfect, and that your body become as perfect as the body of your Earthly Mother is perfect . . . pray to your Earthy Mother: Our Mother which art upon the earth, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, and they will be done is us, as it is in thee. As though sendest every day thy angels, send them to us also. Forgive us our sins, as we atone all our sins against thee. And lead us not into sickness, but deliver us from all evil, for thine is the earth, the body, and the health. Amen.⁵

² Levi, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*, 128.

³ Rev. Albert J. M. Shamon, *Our Lady Teaches About Prayer at Medjugorje* (Milford, Ohio: The Riehle Foundation, , 1988), 37.

⁴ Ron Roth, *The Healing Path of Payer, A Modern Mystic’s Guide to Spiritual Power* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1997), 107.

⁵ Edmond Bordeaux Szekely, *The Essene Gospel of Peace* (U.S.A.: International Biogenic Society, 1981), 47.

Fasting

“A fast is a deed of the soul, and like a prayer, it is a function of the silence of the soul”.⁶ Fasting is an ancient therapy, and a tool towards self-mastery. “Fasting is the prayer of the body”.⁷ Fasting does not necessarily mean going without eating; it is about denying our self. One can fast from any physical or mental indulgences in order to break the ego’s attachment. Starving our cravings sets us free from their binding influence.

You fast to atone for past sins. When you do, fasting is called “penance”.

You fast to make up for the sins of others. When you do, fasting is called “reparation”.

You fast to gain future strength in the struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. When you do, fasting is called “mortification”. Mortification open up the heart of God and to others and disposes you to follow the dictate of your reason illumined by faith.

So important is fasting that Jesus began His public life with it.⁸

Fasting from food also has healing effects on the body, in that it gives the digestive system a chance to rest. When there is an intake of excessive food, food is not completely digested and creates toxins in the body. “Fasting is a radical cure which counterbalances the evil effect of overeating and unwise choice of food. If people were to feed upon a healthy diet and not to overeat, the I should not advise fasting as a therapeutic method, as it would be unnecessary.”⁹

⁶ Ibid., 128.

⁷ Rev. Albert J. M. Shamon, *Our Lady Teaches About Prayer at Medjugorje*, 38.

⁸ Ibid., 40.

⁹ Edmond Bordeaux Szekely, *The Essene Science of Fasting and the Art of Sobriety, Guide to Regeneration in Health and Disease* (U.S.A.: International Biogenic Society, 1990), 14.

Laying on of Hands

The early Christians were a healing community. Christians were eager to heal, and sought out the sick to care for them. It was believed that mental illness caused by possession, and exorcisms were a part of the Church's ritual.

Healing became less a part of the daily life in 313 C.E. Emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion and many less devoted Christians joined the church. The healing nature of the community changed and healing was more associated with the liturgy of the church, and less with the personal Christian practice. The sacraments of laying-on of hands and anointing with oil were done more during church services.

Laying-on of hands is a method by which someone is the receiver and transmitter for the life of God. By laying one's hands on another who has requested healing, the power of God is allowed to manifest and move through the person. The hands act as instrument of the Holy Spirit. The one laying-on of hands is a conduit for God's healing presence, and God does the healing.

“This is the oldest of all methods of healing, and it is the simplest. It is the method that Jesus used, and that he taught His disciples to use. He interposed His whole being between God and the patient, so that He might be used as a channel for the life of the father, who alone, He said accomplished the works.”¹⁰

Anointing

Oils have been used for healing for many centuries. In the early Christian church, “baptism was not only pouring on of water; the ritual included laying-on of hands and anointing with oil”.¹¹ Anointing was used in the sacrament of the sick. As the centuries passed, the anointing ritual was used primarily when preparing for death. The

¹⁰ Agnes Sanford, *The Healing Light* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), 81.

¹¹ Linda L. Smith, *Called into Healing, Reclaiming Our Judeo-Christian Legacy of Healing Touch* (Aravado, Colo.: HTSM Press, 2000), 126.

Second Vatican Council returned the intention of anointing to be used as a sacrament to restore health, not just at the time of death. As the healing properties of essential oils are revealed, one can imagine the importance of anointing the sick with these oils in ancient times. The oils were the medicines of the time.

The Healing Properties of the Essential Oils Used in Biblical Times

Essential oils are the volatile oil constituents of the aromatic portion of a plant. One could think of the essential oil as containing the life force of the plant. “The potent concentrations of essential oils combined with their unique capabilities to pass through all the tissues of the body and interact positively with cellular intelligence, plus their ability to make a direct contact with our emotions and awaken past memories, sets them apart from all other natural medicines.”¹²

During ancient times, these oils may have been used for different reasons than they are today. Regardless of their use then, their healing properties were recognized and valued. “Oil was indeed a sacrament of physical and spiritual health . . . The anointing with oil symbolized the healing power of the Holy Spirit and thus was a holy anointing. It contained the spiritual power that it signified”.¹³

Essential oils can balance and support all systems of the body. The oils can be applied on the body or inhaled. Incense is made using these oils. When the scent of an essential oil is inhaled, the essence of the oil is taken into the lungs, then goes into the

¹² David Steward Ph.D., *The Healing Oils of the Bible* (Marble Hill, Mont.: Care Inc., 2002), 81.

¹³ Linda L. Smith, *Healing Oils Healing Hands, Discovering the Power of Prayer, Hands on Healing and Anointing* (Arvada, Colo., HTSM Press, 2003), 29.

blood stream and through out the body. The healing effects are as varied as the plants from which the oils are extracted. Below are descriptions of the healing properties and common ancient usage of twelve essential oils mentioned in the Bible.

Aloes/Sandalwood

Sandalwood oil is cooling and moisturizing with a sweet-woody scent. Its actions include being “an alterative, homeostatic, antipyretic, nervine, antiseptic, antibacterial, carminative, sedative, expectorant, moisturizer, antispasmodic, diuretic, and tissue regenerative.”¹⁴ In ancient times, sandalwood oil was used for meditation, to revitalize the skin, and for embalming.

Cassia

Cassia is similar to cinnamon, less sweet in fragrance.¹⁵ It is effective in fighting bacteria and viruses. Inhaling this oil, or rubbing it on the feet supports the immune system. It was used as an ingredient in holy anointing oil.

Ceaderwood

Cedarwood has heating and drying properties. Its actions include “antiseptic, expectorant, diuretic, nervine, rejuvenating”.¹⁶ It was used in combination with hyssop as a cleansing ritual for leprosy. It was also used for embalming. Due to its antiseptic properties, it was used for cleansing after touching anything unclean.

Cypress

¹⁴ Dr. Light Miller and Bryan Miller, DC, *Ayurveda and Aromatherapy, The Earth Essential Guide to Ancient Wisdom and Modern Healing* (Twin Lakes, Wisc., Lotus Press, 1995), 290.

¹⁵ Linda L. Smith, *Healing Oils Healing Hands, Discovering the Power of Prayer, Hands on Healing and Anointing*, 142.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 235.

The essential oil of cypress has a warming and drying energy. Its actions include “astringent, antispasmodic, expectorant, antiseptic, regulates female hormone system, deodorizing”.¹⁷ Cypress supports the immune and cardiovascular systems. The ancients used this for arthritis, reducing scar tissues, and cramps.

Frankincense

Frankincense was extremely valuable oil used to fumigate the home, especially sick rooms. Considered as a holy oil to be used for anointing, it was considered a cure-all for diseases. Newborn kings and priests were anointed with frankincense. Used to anoint the dying, “for assisting in the transition and keeping the soul connected to its divine essence”.¹⁸ It preserves spiritual energy and is used for meditation. Frankincense has been burned in Catholic churches for centuries.

Galbanum

The ancients used this as holy anointing oil. The scent is uplifting, and was used to relieve pain, spasms and cramps.¹⁹ It was used in various medicines and as a perfume.

Hyssop

Hyssop has a drying and heating energy. Its actions include being a “diaphoretic, diuretic, carminative, anathematic, vulnerary, alterative, mental stimulant,

¹⁷ Ibid., 248.

¹⁸ Ibid., 255.

¹⁹ Linda L. Smith, *Healing Oils Healing Hands, Discovering the Power of Prayer, Hands on Healing and Anointing*, 156-157.

centering, stomachic, antiseptic”.²⁰ It was believe that hyssop repelled evil spirits. It was a spiritually cleansing, help for meditation, and purification from sin and destructive habits. Hyssop also provides respiratory relief and can be used as a decongestant.

Myrrh

Myrrh has a warm spicy scent. As one of the oldest essential oils, it was one of the gifts brought to the baby Jesus. It can be used to facilitate healing and prevent infection. It was used on umbilical cords to prevent infection, and this is perhaps the reason this oil was presented to the baby Jesus. Myrrh can also be used to remove the stretch mark of pregnancy. The scent promotes a feeling of peace and security. It was also used for skin conditions, and as an insect repellent. Myrrh’s actions include being an “alterative, analgesic, emmenagogue, rejuvenative, astringent, expectorant, antispasmodic antiseptic”.²¹

Myrtle

The essential oil of myrtle is effective in normalizing hormonal imbalances, and soothes the respiratory system. It was used in religious ceremonies, and for purification. It actions include being an “expectorant, antiseptic, astringent, tonic, strengthens meditation, balancing”.²²

²⁰ Ibid., 260.

²¹ Ibid., 272.

²² Ibid., 273.

Onycha

Onycha was used to speed the healing of wounds and prevent infection. It was used as a perfume, was blended in holy anointing oils. Onycha has a comforting, soothing and uplifting scent.²³

Rose of Sharon

The oil of the rose of Sharon or rock rose flower was found to have healing properties which helps to heal and sooth cuts and abrasions.²⁴

Spikenard

Spikenard was used by the ancients as a perfume, skin tonic, incense and mood enhancer. This oil was used for anointing high initiates. Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus' feet with the oil of spikenard.²⁵

The Essene Way of Life

The ancient Essenes (a sect of Judaism which flourished around the time of Jesus in the desert of the Holy Land near the Dead Sea) were noted for their devotion to health and purity, through mystical asceticism, fasting, and eugenics. The very word "*Essene*" comes from the Greek word "*hasen*," related to the Hebrew word "*hasid*" (as in the sect known as "*Hasidic*" Jews) and which means literally "*pious*" or "*holy*."

The Essene way of life was dedicated to healing. What we know of the Essenes has been learned from the translations of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In 1947, these ancient manuscripts were discovered. The scrolls were left in caves where there was once a monastery called Qumran.

²³ David Steward Ph.D., *The Healing Oils of the Bible*,???

²⁴ Ibid.,???

²⁵ Ibid.,???

The Importance of Community

The Essenes lived as a community based on their religious beliefs. All expenses and clothing were communal; all ate together at a common meal. Communal living supported their spiritual life. In preparation to live in the community, they were on probation for a year, then given two more years of study, and tested before becoming full member. After being accepted, one gave up all personal possessions, as they lived guided by a set of spiritual disciplines called the Halakoth.

The Essene “Halakoth” was the entire set of rules, conduct, spiritual disciplines, and lifestyle practices given by their line of chief priests call Teachers of Righteousness. The “Halakoth” given by the line of Essene Teachers of Righteousness was consider binding on all Essenes; indeed, the observance of the various elements of the Esen Halakoth was what constituted being an Essene . . . They found that following the Essene way of Halakoth was much more feasible – and fun! – in the supportive atmosphere of an Essene communal village.²⁶

Essene Lifestyle and Diet

Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? And whoever defiles the temple of God, God will destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and that temple is you." (I Corinth 3:16-17).²⁷

²⁶ *Essene Communalism, a Study of Ancient Essene Communal Villages*, available from http://www.essene.org/Essene_Communalism.htm; Internet, accessed June 24, 2004.

²⁷ George M. Lamsa, *Holy Bible from the Ancient Eastern Text* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1968), 1139.

“A harmonious diet helps us honor, maintain, and purify the body as the physical aspect of the spirit and as the temple for the spirit in a way that keeps our minds clear and our bodies physically able to cope with the demands of our unfoldment.”²⁸ The Essenes felt it was important to seek peace with the body, first in order to reflect the greater peace. The Essenes lived away from towns near rivers or lakes. They lived with nature. They were strict vegetarians, eating a simple diet of raw fruits and nuts, vegetables and grains.

But I say to you: Kill neither men, nor beasts, nor yet the food which goes into your mouth. For if you eat living food, the same will quicken you, but if you kill food, the dead food will kill you also, For life comes only from life, and from death comes always death. For every thing which kills your foods, kills your bodies also. And everything which kills your bodies kills your souls also. And your bodies become what your foods are, even as your spirits, likewise, become what your thoughts are. Therefore, eat not anything which fire, or frost, or water has destroyed. For burned, frozen and rotten foods will burn, freeze and rot your body also.²⁹

Fasting was seen as a way in which to dispel disease. Fasting and praying near streams, the Essenes prayed to God’s angels to relieve them of any sickness. In the *Essene Gospel of Peace*, Jesus tells the people to fast on the seventh day. “On six days feed your body with gifts of the Earthly Mother, but on the seventh day sanctify your body for your Heavenly Father. And on the seventh day eat not any earthly food, but live only on the words of God, and be all the day with the angels of the Lord in the kingdom of the Heavenly Father.”³⁰

They believed it was best to eat two or three types of food at one sitting. One should not eat to fullness; to eat always by less of a third of what you would eat to be completely full. “Not to satiate one’s self with food is the science of health.”³¹ It is important to chew well every mouthful; this would allow the angel of water to turn the food into blood in your body. Eating should be a prayer to the Lord, and taken slowly.

²⁸ Gabriel Cousens, M.D., *Sevenfold Peace, World Peace Through Body Mind Family Community Culture Ecology God* (Tiburon, Calif., H J Kramer, Inc, 1990), 3.

²⁹ Edmond Bordeaux Szekely, *The Essene Gospel of Peace*, 39.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

³¹ Edmond Bordeaux Szekely, *The Essene Science of Fasting and the Art of Sobriety, Guide to Regeneration in Health and Disease*, 40.

Eucharist

Then Jesus took a loaf of bread that had been broken not and said, This loaf is symbol of my body, and the bread is symbol of the bread of life.

And as I break this loaf, so shall my flesh be broken as a pattern for all sons of men; for men must freely give their bodies up in willing sacrifice of other men.

And as you eat this bread, so shall you eat the bread of life, and never die. And then he gave to each a piece of bread to eat.

And he took a cup of wine and said, Blood is the life; this is the life-blood of the grape; it is the symbol of the life of him who gives his life for men.

And as you drink this wine, if you shall drink in faith, you drink the life of Christ.

And then he supped and passed the cup, and the disciples supped; and Jesus said, This is the feast of life, the great passover of the son of man, the Supper of the Lord, and you shall often eat the bread and drink the wine.

From henceforth shall this bread be called Remembrance bread; this wine shall be Remembrance wine; and when you eat this bread and drink the wine remember me.³²

Jesus established the ritual of the Eucharist, in his remembrance. The Essenes shared a common ritual meal with bread and wine. Among the early Christians the form of the Eucharist that we know today was a less formalized ritual. “In the early church, the celebration of Communion was as simple as picking up a piece of bread, and saying a prayer over it, breaking it, and distributing it to the believer”.³³ The sharing of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Christ, in community is the common thread.

³² Levi, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*, 125.

³³ Robert E. Webber, *Worship is a Verb, Eight Principles for Transforming Worship* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 51.

Conclusion

Real healing is spiritual healing, whereby the soul, becoming free from desires, doubts and hallucinations, enjoys the eternal bliss of God. Untimely physical healing might retard the spiritual healing. If borne willingly, physical and mental suffering can make one worthy of receiving spiritual healing. Consider mental and physical suffering as gifts from God, which, if accepted gracefully, lead to everlasting happiness.³⁴

The art of healing must be kept in perspective, with one's mind on God. One facilitating a healing can look to many healing arts and traditions. Healing in the Christian tradition is in current times, returning from being performed only by the priests at formal rituals; healing is being returned to the hands of the laypersons. With the advent of the New Age, we see many books on angels, essential oils, and a variety of healing methods. If one prefers a Christian perspective, and wants to look to Jesus as the master of healers, there is much to be learned.

Healing can come on many levels. Physical healing is not always indicative of spiritual healing, or lessons learned. Anointing, laying-on of hands, prayer, working with the healing angels, fasting, and purifying our diet can help move the healing energy of God's presence in our body, mind, and spirit.

Healers often seek to alleviate the suffering of others, but must be mindful of the value of the other's lessons in life. We can intercede as healers, only when the other asks. When one's healing art is linked to the Christ, it leaves the outcome in the hands of the Christ. Just as Jesus used a variety of healing methods, we too can use methods for which we as healers are suited, and as appropriate for the recipient. It is best that the intent is not be to cure, but to care for another in a loving manner, leaving the results in God's hands.

³⁴ Bhau Kalchuri, *Lord Meher, The Biography of the Avatar of the Age Meher Baba* (Myrtle Beach, S.C. and Ashville, N.C.: MANifestation, Inc., 1986-2000), 11:3783.

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