

Healing and Spirituality

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Every year I would do a routine mammogram. The year 2006 was no exception. It was July, and the school year was over. Time for reflection. Our seminary president, Dr. Hendricks, thought the same and initiated a staff retreat. It was on a Monday, and part of the retreat was a 2-hour time of silence. I decided to spend this time at the labyrinth that is located on the Seminary's property. I walked the labyrinth, got to the center and prayed, and returned to the exit. Just before the exit gateway, I heard a voice clearly saying to me: "Now is the time to take care of your body." I said flippantly to myself: "That's no problem; sure I can do that." Two days later I received a call from the hospital, asking me to return for a sonogram to clarify an object on my mammogram.

Just prior to that I had decided to participate in the "Registration Workshop." This 21-day workshop from our church was usually held in Korea at Chung Pyung,[1] but this summer a special providence was given and it was held on the Seminary grounds. It was designed as a period of praying, singing, studying God's word, having anu sessions,[2] getting in touch with your inner self, and in general to get away from your usual environment and behavior.

I started the workshop, and during its first week I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Immediately after the workshop was over, I had surgery, which was followed by chemotherapy and radiation therapy. To my big surprise, I was able to continue to work during this period, and did in no way feel depressed or down. During the whole ordeal I had the solid feeling that God was right there with me, taking care of me, and protecting me. In fact, when a Church elder remarked at a Sunday service, "When you get sick with cancer, you ask how God could have abandoned you and how God could let that happen to you," I got really angry. I knew that God hadn't left me, and He hadn't let that happen to me. God was there to carry me through!

After I finished the therapy, I got in touch with a local advocacy group. Every year they put on a conference, called "Complementary Medicine Conference: A Holistic Approach to Breast Health." I attended three years in a row, and was surprised at the importance given to spirituality and spiritual practices during the conference. Several sessions dealt with these issues, and even the conclusions to the conferences always used visualization or guided meditation to send the participants off into the world again.

I asked myself, why have I not heard more about healing in my church life? Why have I not heard from my medical doctors about spiritual approaches to healing? What are the connections between spirituality and healing? Could it be that my bout with cancer was so "easy" because I went to the Registration Workshop prior to the medical treatment? These questions led me to investigate and search for information about the connection between spirituality and healing.

Health

All religions encourage their followers to lead a healthy life style. The word "health" is related to the words "whole", "hale" and "holy". In the Judaic tradition, there was no division between body, mind, soul or spirit. A human being was considered a whole, a unit, not to be divided in better or worse, good or evil parts. To be healthy meant to be pure physically and morally, and to stay healthy was considered a religious command. "The neglect of one's health was regarded as a sin." [3]

Jesus came out of this tradition. For him every person was a whole as well. When someone approached him, he dealt with him or her as one: "Nowhere in the New Testament does it say Christ came to save souls; he came to save human beings -- body and soul." [4] There are more accounts of Jesus healing the physical body than Jesus forgiving sins.

Why, then, do many Christians today consider the body as base or sinful, and the soul as holy? The division of human beings into body and soul came from Plato, Manichaeism and Gnosticism, all ancient philosophies that influenced early Christianity. The view arose that the body is stopping mankind from being dedicated to God, and that Christians should be looking forward to that time when the soul is being released from the flesh. The body became an enemy. The healing of the body was then relegated to the medical profession, while the healing of the soul became the purview of the Church and the clergy. Many Christians today consider the body as something evil that only is glorified after the resurrection.

However, our physical body and presence is a gift from God to be taken care of. "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16) When our body is well, we are able to live our lives fully for God. But often when our body is well, we forget about God and His will for us. In that case the body may be healthy, but the spirit is unhealthy.

The Divine Principle states clearly that a human being is whole only when s/he achieves mind-body unity. Human beings are created with a body, that is the external form, and a mind, that is the internal character. Only by having harmonious give and take action between these parts, humans can become perfect objects of God.[5]

Why Are We Getting Sick?

There is something fundamentally wrong with human beings. Christianity and the Divine Principle calls the basic problem "fallen nature", which originated when our ancestors Adam and Eve deviated from God's plan in the Garden of Eden, creating the original sin. This fallen nature permeates human existence, it is a state of fallen from grace and being distant to God. We inherited sin from Adam and with it illness. "Because sin perpetuates itself in the world, its consequences continue to affect human nature and the cosmos as a whole."[6]

In other religions, this un-natural state is being observed as well, and is always connected to an "out of touch" situation with the Divine. The founders of the world's religions pointed out this divide and gave guidance to their followers to right this situation and become one with the Divine again. This can even be extended to New Age teachings, where humans are considered out of touch with their inner self, which is existentially identical with the Divine.

Having a fallen nature, then, is a state of disease. It is a spiritual disease, an illness of the soul. When the soul is sick, it will often express itself in physical illness. Conventional medicine accepts psychosomatic cause and effect for some illnesses. Larry Dossey says that up to three quarters of all patients who go to medical doctors for help have nothing physically wrong with them.[7] Some Christian teachings say that all illnesses are the effects of sin. Larchet states that illnesses basically come from two sources: sin and demons. The possession of demons can be again related to spiritual weakness or sin: if we are strong in faith and our relationship with God, demons cannot get a foothold in us.

This demonic view of illness is not only Christian. All shamanic traditions consider most illnesses the work of demons, and their healing methods are always trying to move the demons out of the person. Native American healers call upon helping spirits to do this work. Asian shamans do the same. The healing sessions at Chung Pyung stem from this shamanistic tradition.

More moderate Christians do not go so far as to reduce illnesses to sin or demonic activity. They divide the reasons for illnesses in those that are derived from sin and demons, and those that are due to accidents. However, even accidents can be avoided if everyone lives according to God's will.[8]

According to the New Age tradition, people are out of balance with their inner self. This expresses itself as illness. If we regain the balance, we are healed. Edward Tolle in his bestselling book *The Power of Now* goes so far as to say that our own bodies are creating illnesses in order to force us to turn inward.[9]

Some of these ideas or theologies put a heavy burden upon the sick person. As Christians, we may ask ourselves: "What have I done wrong to become sick? Is it a punishment from God? Is it because I do not have enough faith?" In New Age the question is just as heavy: "What made me and/or my body seek this kind of illness? I am responsible for the sickness, so is it my responsibility to get rid of it. What if I can't heal myself? Am I not enlightened enough? Am I not smart enough to understand the practices?" As Unificationists we may ask: "What have my ancestors done wrong to bring about this illness? What kind of indemnity do I have to pay to restore this? Or is it my own fault?" The patient is being put on a guilt trip, which actually may deepen the problem instead of helping. Jesus weighed in when he was asked if an illness was the result of a personal sin or the sin of the ancestors: "Neither this man nor his parents sinned." (John 9:3)

Healing

When sickness strikes we are looking to be made healthy or whole again. The process of restoration from being unhealthy to being again healthy can be called "healing". But there are differences between spiritual and physical healing. Some people like to differentiate between healing and curing. When the body is being restored to function properly, it can be called "curing". When the soul or spirit of a person is being restored to function properly, it can be called "healing." Therefore, a person may be healed, even though s/he may die from the sickness. "In the old days healing started with healing the spirit and then the body was automatically healed as best it could be. And even if there was not perfect cure of the body, the spirit was eased. If the person did die from the particular illness, he usually died in good spirit." [10] On the other hand, some sicknesses may be cured, but the spirit may not be healed. For example, a person may have been wounded by an attacker with a knife. His physically wound will be cured, but the psychological wound of the attack will stay. It needs to be dealt with as well, or the person will never be really healed. Many people carry such a wounded soul with them.

Jesus had a healing ministry; He made people whole again. Christianity is based upon the need of salvation. The word salvation is derived from the Latin words *salus*, meaning health, safety, well-being and *salvare*, meaning to make safe, to secure. Even today, we put a salve (ointment) on our wounds in order to heal them. Christ's basic mission was to save mankind, by bringing health and safety to us. But this mission was not only his; he extended it to his followers. When he sent out the twelve apostles his charge was as follows: "As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons." (Matt 10:7-8, see also Luke 9:1-2 and Matt 6:7-13) Later he sent the seventy-two disciples by telling them, "Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near.'" (Luke 10:9)

Healing was also the basic ministry of the early church, which enabled it to grow, according to Francis MacNutt. Jim Glennon says, "Evangelism and healing were to go hand in hand."^[11] Not only did Jesus' disciples heal during his lifetime; they continued to do so after his death as well. In Acts, there are counts of individual and multiple healings, done not only by the twelve disciples, but later followers as well: Paul, Barnabas, and Ananias among others. In James' letter the congregations are charged to: "Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord." (Jas 5:14) Many early saints were recorded to have done miraculous healings. St. Augustine initially discouraged the healing ministry, but in later years he acknowledged that there happened too many miracles to ignore them.

Sadly, this inheritance has been often forgotten, by declaring the faith healings of Jesus as miracles that are only Christ's. In the Roman Catholic Church, healing was relegated to Mary and the saints. Today, when Pentecostal preachers are spreading the good news and are healing at the same time, it has been discounted as mass hysteria or given some other psychological explanation. This does not take away of the reality of the healing experience of the patients, some of which have been well recorded.

Spirituality and Healing

A broad definition of the spirituality could be: anything that brings us to a deeper understanding of our inner life; or in other words: any practice that will lead us to be closer to God. By becoming closer to God, we are getting automatically more aware of issues that are detrimental to our emotional, spiritual, and physical health. Therefore leading a spiritual life grows out of the awareness of what is the right thing to do.

If the root of all illness is sin, or separation from God and the Divine, the solution has to be being reconciled with God. As we have seen, there was a rich tradition of healing in Jesus ministry and the work of the early church. Jesus was the one who reconciled us with God. His healing was connected to evangelism, telling the good news that the kingdom of God is near. By healing the soul, the influences of the sick soul on the body are reduced. Jesus said over and over again, "Your faith has made you whole." Healing, faith, and spirituality are coupled in such a way that they cannot be easily separated.

Other religions show this healing aspect of faith as well. In Judaism God has different names, among them Jehova-Rapha, "The Lord Who Heals." In Buddhism, one of the factors that led to the awakening of Buddha was the sight of a sick man. A very important incarnation of Buddha is the "Master of Healing", who is mostly concerned with helping people change their negative habits and patterns. Those who are not enlightened are essentially ill. In ancient traditional societies there often is no separation at all between spiritual treatments and medicinal treatments: "For Native American healers spirituality is a necessary aspect of medical treatments."^[12] Indeed, "today healings are performed in every part of the world by spiritual healers of all religions."^[13]

Dr. Jeff Levin, who studied the relationship between God, faith and health states that "lack of religious affiliation was apparently a new and potent risk factor for ill health, across the board."^[14] He continues in his book to lay down how it is not the particular religion or faith that helps people live a healthy life or being healed, but that it is the fact of being religious or spiritual that makes the difference.

Spirituality and Medicine

Modern society has relegated healing to the medical arts. But without spirituality, the medical arts can only cure. Becoming aware of this reality, in the sixties (1960), people were starting to rebel against the Western medical treatments. Looking for the truth regarding their body, they were led to healing practices that had their root in Eastern religions and shamanistic traditions. These practices were usually advertised as "holistic," i.e. dealing with the person as a whole, body, mind and spirit, and were called alternative medicine. A big part of these practices are still included in various New Age teachings.

Traditional Western medicine did not approve of this trend at all, by refusing to accept the spiritual aspect of healing, and by treating most illnesses as results of viruses, bacteria or genetics, that can be treated with drugs or the surgical knife alone. But people were searching for alternative procedures, those that would cater also to their spiritual needs. For example, acupuncture, acupressure, herbal treatments,

meditation and Yoga became fashionable, mostly practices that have their foundation in Eastern religions and ancient cultural traditions. These treatments were not used in standard Western medicine. The problem that arose, medically, was that these practices replaced the conventional Western medicine, and while some people were cured, others did not. The medical profession was very against these alternatives, because in their mind it was killing people who otherwise, with conventional medicine, could have been saved. The people who choose alternative methods often "religiously" defended their choice, even if leading to death. I know personally of at least one member of our Church who refused to go the conventional medical route to deal with his life-threatening sickness. He decided to try "alternative" medicine -- and now is in the spirit world.

A more wholesome trend developed when instead of exclusively utilizing either method, conventional or alternative, these alternative practices were used complementary, i.e. supplementing the Western style of medicine. Now they were called therapies, used in addition to conventional treatments, often to help with side effects of drugs, stress or anxiety related problems. Because they were not part of Western medicine, doctors were not prescribing them, and health insurances were not covering them. It was up to the patients to find the therapies that may help them, and then to inform their doctor that they were using them.

Most recently, a new trend is developing, called integrated medicine, where medical doctors or teams of doctors prescribe these alternative practices because they see the benefit for the patients. Research into the effect of hormones on the body shows that emotions influence the wellbeing of people. Fear, anxiety, stress and negative emotions weaken the immune system. Complementary health practices affect the emotions of people and therefore can help to strengthen the immune system, and help the body to heal. Even prayer is now considered medically beneficial. Dr. Dossey, a great advocate of the power of prayer for healing, says that there have been over 130 studies on the effects of prayer on healing, of which over 50% showed significant statistically difference that it is effective.[15] While some medical doctors still refuse to see the evidence, others wholeheartedly embrace it.

Christian Healing Ministries

Where do Christian Churches stand? The Roman Catholic and similar traditions that have declared the body as a necessary evil, even contrary to the doctrine that God created humans as whole beings, have pushed Western modern man to look to the East. However, there is a well developed healing ministry in many Churches today, even apart from publicity-seeking televangelists. One example: based upon the tradition that the evangelist Luke was a physician, "The Order of Saint Luke" was founded, an interdenominational group that encourages Christian healing.[16] Many Pentecostal churches have active healing ministries.

Christian healing ministries are based upon the belief that Jesus is God, and for God anything is possible. Christian healing is mostly done with prayer, with laying on hands, and with the anointing of oil. All these practices have a biblical foundation. Prayers can be divided into those given for someone else and those the patients pray themselves. It is generally advised not to go alone, but rather have a group to minister. There is power in numbers, and as Jesus said "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." (Matt 18:20)

Prayer for healing can be a prayer of petition, asking for a specific thing to happen. However, it has been shown that open ended prayers are better in outcomes than prayers that ask for a determined outcome. This does not mean however, to pray "If it is your will then let it be done." We do have a loving heavenly Father, and to question his love in this way is to either doubt or fall into resignation. When you ask for healing you need to be willing to be healed.

Another prayer for healing is a prayer of command. This prayer is being used when expecting demonic activity. It is telling the spirits that in the name of Jesus or another spiritual authority, they are commanded to leave the patient.

Because there are many different reasons for illnesses to occur, and patients have different attitudes, there are also different outcomes. Some people will be healed and some will not. The reasons why healing occurs or does not occur vary. Usually there are obstacles to overcome. Faith is often a precondition for being healed. The faith can reside in the patient, in the minister, in relatives or friends who are praying for the patient, or as Francis MacNutt notes, "Sometimes it just seems that God wants to manifest his goodness when no one in particular seems to have faith." [17] This faith is not faith in my own faith, but faith in God. If we are starting to look into our own faith, it will lead to doubt and guilt, which may even make the condition worse than before. This is a major difference between Christian healing and New Age healing. New Age insists that it all lies within you, but Christians point to God, and know that God is the one who works.

One other obstacle for healing to occur has to do with forgiveness. Unwillingness to forgive others or yourself is a major stumbling block. Here we can see Christian healing and New Age healing coincide. In both belief systems it is acknowledged that without forgiveness the soul festers and is nourishing

diseases. Having to let go of personal resentment and grudges is a difficult thing to do. They hold us fast in the past with all the painful emotions attached. Our resentments are like children that we have nurtured and let grow in us, and we do not want them to leave us. We love them and to let them go is painful. But this is where the similarities between Christianity and New Age teaching end. Christianity sees the importance of being forgiven as well. God has to forgive us, for our own sins and shortcomings.

Because healing is based on an inner attitude, it is important for the patient to be ready to address the sickness of the soul. Therefore a big part of the healing ministry is counseling. This is similar to the young man who asked Jesus what he had to do. Jesus told him to sell everything and follow him. The young man sadly turned away, because he was rich. So is it with us sick people, if we ask what we have to do to be healed. We may be told to change our lifestyle, attitudes, belief system. Then we turn away sadly, because we are comfortable with our life and do not want to change.

It has been observed by Christian healing ministries, that healing does not always happen in the same way. Some healings are immediate, what we would consider miracles. Others are partial. Partial healing can manifest itself in a physical healing where only some part of the ailment is resolved, or in a healing that shows itself as emotional improvement but not in a physical healing. Some healings occur slowly, over time. They are compared to growing a plant, where the seeds are sown but need time to come to fruition.

Unificationists and Healing

As Unificationists we are standing on the foundation of the older Christian churches, and have also the wisdom of the East. With this in mind, we should have no problem to adopt complementary or integrated approaches to healing. However, it seems that the members I know are falling into three categories: those who go the conventional route in the US, those who go to Chung Pyung for the healing services there, and those who go to Korea or Japan in order to access the more holistic approach of the Church sponsored hospitals which combine Western and Eastern styles of healing. But why do we have to go to Korea or Japan? Many of the spiritual practices that help healing are available in the US as well.

I feel that we as Unificationists are afraid of non-authorized spirituality. Having sometimes been burned in the past by spiritual phenomena, we are scared to practice something that may open the way to unhealthy influences. But once the leadership of the Church approves a specific kind of spirituality, it is okay to use: Dae Mo Nim's style has been authorized; therefore we can go to Chung Pyung.[18]

A big danger to religious healing is the tendency to make experiences or theologies absolute. When we are told that only this one method or this one prayer will do, we limit God. But some books on the market do just that, insisting that only within Christianity can true healing occur while all other practices are occult, or against the will of God.[19] Some Christian groups go to the extreme of not even allowing their followers to use conventional medicine, relying wholly on God's power. This may work out for some, and miracles do happen, but for those for whom it does not, the accusation of being faithless will raise its ugly head. This holds true for Unificationists as well.

Some New Age teachings are being based on a "do-it-yourself" approach with problems of their own. If healing does not occur the patient is left alone with his/her doubts and pains. The book *Psychic Healing* proposes that there is an easy visualization that anybody can do, and that will bring healing to any and every disease.[20] If it were that easy, there would be no one left on earth with illnesses! But reality shows that this is not so, and it is not because we are not enlightened enough.

Those spiritual practices that are based on ancient religions have often hundreds of years of practice and experience behind them. They have been proven throughout the ages to help, for example to experience less pain. Francis McNutt encourages Christians to work together with all healing agencies, especially to bridge the gap between medical practitioners and faith healers, because "The ones who suffer are the sick who may be dissuaded from seeking the means of healing they most need." [21] Who are we to limit our fellow sufferers to get relief from pain? Is it right to refuse a treatment to a patient because the treatment arose from an "alien" spirituality? Have Unificationists to be afraid of this alien spirituality? I do not think so. God works in mysterious way. If we are well grounded in our own faith, there is nothing to be afraid of.

Alternative medicine proponents say that the patient has to decide what treatment to use and which one to refuse. "If it feels right for you, then do it," is based on the understanding that our body will communicate with our mind or spirit what is right or wrong for us. I dare to disagree. Not everyone is so much in tune with his or her body as to understand its language. When being sick, especially with a potentially fatal disease, the mind often is confused.[22] Guidance is needed, and this guidance should come from the medical and the pastoral community. To leave it totally up to the individual is like abandoning a person in their time of need. The same is valid for the idea to leave it up to the patient to look for their cure. Again, the medical and pastoral community should be trained to approach a person as a whole, by looking at all aspects of their humanity. Let medical doctors be open to spirituality, let pastors be open to traditional

medicine.[23] They should be working hand in hand, and not divide the person up in two beings, one to be dealt with bodily, and one to be dealt with spiritually.

Epilogue

I wish I knew when I started to embark on my journey dealing with cancer what I know now. I fared well without it, perhaps because of my trust in God, perhaps because of others who prayed for me, perhaps for reasons God only knows. But instead of stumbling on the connection between spirituality and healing, I could have been taught about it. Our world needs much healing. May we and our church be God's instruments to bring it about.

Notes

[1] A Unificationist complex including a training center where workshops are held, a hospital, high school, theological school, and residence for Rev. and Mrs. Moon. The training center is presided over by a spiritualist, Mrs. Hyo Nam Kim, who purports to liberate ancestors and remove evil spirits.

[2] Ansu sessions involve continuous clapping and vigorous body massage while singing a certain Holy Song over and over again for a period of an hour or more.

[3] The Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: Ktav Pub. House, 1964), p. 294.

[4] Francis MacNutt, *Healing* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1999), p. 50. For anyone wanting to learn more about Christian healing, I unreservedly recommend this book.

[5] *Exposition of the Divine Principle* (New York: Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 1996), pp. 17, 47.

[6] Jean-Claude Larchet. *The Theology of Illness* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), p. 42.

[7] Larry Dossey, *The Extraordinary Healing Power of Ordinary Things* (New York: Harmony Books, 2006), Introduction

[8] Example: car accidents can be avoided if nobody drinks alcohol and drives; if the car manufacturers don't use shortcuts in materials; if the car repair men do their jobs right; if every one focuses on driving instead of on phone calls or arguing with passengers; etc.

[9] Tolle, Eckhart. *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment* (Novato, Calif: New World Library, 1999).

[10] John Diamond, *Notes on the Spiritual Basis of Therapy* (New York: Archaeus Press, 1986), p. 16.

[11] Jim Glennon, *Your Healing Is Within You* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978), p. 146.

[12] William S. Lyon, *The Encyclopedia of Native American Healing* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), p. xiii

[13] Andrew Wilson, ed., *World Scripture: A Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts* (New York: Paragon House, 1991), p. 373.

[14] Jeffrey S. Levin, *God, Faith, and Health: Exploring the Spirituality-Healing Connection* (New York: Wiley, 2001), p. 23.

[15] Larry Dossey, *Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine* (New York: HarperPaperbacks, 1997).

[16] See www.orderofstluke.org/

[17] MacNutt, *Healing*, p. 102.

[18] Dae Mo Nim is the spirit who works with Hyonam Kim and presides over the training center at Chung Pyung; See note 1.

[19] Norma Dearing, *The Healing Touch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2002).

[20] Sylvia Browne, *Psychic Healing: Using the Tools of a Medium to Cure What-ever Ails You* (Carlsbad, Calif: Hay House, 2009).

[21] Francis MacNutt, 132.

[22] Breast Cancer Options, my local cancer advocacy group, trains advocates to support newly diagnosed patients having medical appointments, especially to verify what was discussed. A newly diagnosed patient is usually totally overwhelmed by emotions and information.

[23] See also Francis MacNutt, pp. 206ff.

Healing and spirituality. 1,870 likes · 380 talking about this. A place to find refuge and light in a cloudy world...let's light up the world!!
And the same is true in the spiritual realm. God promises to answer your prayer, you believe Him, but your faith is the "substance" or receipt you hold while you're waiting. (2) Faith is also "evidence."