

Discernment of Energy Healing

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For two years now a circle of inquiry about energy healing has been working on principles of discernment. Most practitioners of energy healing use an underlying New Age way of understanding energy healing. They appeal to a kind of energy that brings us in touch with the divine. In different cultures it is called by different names – *Chi* in China, *Ki* in Japan, *Prana* in India, *Mana* in Polynesia, *Jesod* in Jewish Cabala, *Holy Spirit* in Christianity (though the Spirit is personal), etc. More recently there have been scientific studies to develop the principles of this energy. Dr. Ted TePas cited the book by Paul Pearsall, Ph.D., *The Heart's Code* (Random House, 1999) which named several characteristics of this energy. Those he highlighted were: 1) “L” (Life) energy travels faster than the speed of light. Actions in one part are simultaneously received in another part. 2) “L” energy is literally everywhere at the same time. Tuning into it is not a matter of “sending or receiving” as “connecting.” It is a kind of 5th dimension (or at least not one of our usual 4 dimensions) of our world. 3) The heart is not a creator of this energy, but is the main organ that transmits it. At times Pearsall seems to equate it with LOVE. 4) Once objects are connected in this energy they affect one another forever. This is very important for our close relationships, even back through time and into the future.

What is most significant for our purposes is that this energy seems to be the source of healing when it is released in the person. There are many different ways to access this energy, and many different healing methods. For example, Reiki is based on accessing cosmic and internal energy. Rei (universal energy) and ki (internal earth energy) are brought together in a spiritual experience (attunement) and when the practitioner places his or her hands on the recipient in various positions (according to the chakras), healing occurs. It is as though the practitioner, being centered in that life energy him or herself, activates the life energy in the recipient which releases the blocks to healing. (see David Herron, Internet articles on Reiki).

Therapeutic touch, developed by Dolores Kramer, is another type of energy healing. Recent studies have indicated that the human body, and in fact all living beings, is surrounded by various fields of more and more subtle energy. Barbara Brennan, in her book *Hands of Light*, Brennan has seen seven layers of such energy fields, associated with the seven chakras of Kundalini Yoga.¹ Research on some of those fields indicates that the energy field is prior to the physical manifestation. A diseased field will later show up as a disease in the body. If the practitioner can alter the field to bring it to health, the body will be healed. These different fields communicate what is needed for healing. Kramer developed ways of sensing the energy fields in a person, whether they were healthy or diseased, and by moving her hands to balance those fields, healing was effected. Again, one had to be introduced to a sensitivity to such energy fields.

Another method that has recently been developed by Dr. Mary Lynch, a graduate of Georgetown Medical School, is Consegrity (see www.consegrity.com). Her specialty was sports medicine, but she found after 13 years that she was only managing illness, but curing it. She could do a knee operation, but later arthritis would develop, and so on for her other methods. She was determined to learn what illness was and how it might be cured. After traveling around the world and sampling some 70 different therapies, she

found some worked for some people, others for others, but nothing worked for everyone. What was the common thread? Through trials, she learned that cells have a particular electrical wave pattern that is unique to each individual organism. Trauma hinders and eventually blocks energy exchange in the cell, which then leads to degeneration, a change of cell structure (like cancer) or death. She found that one could tune in to that pattern, with its distortions, by means of questions asked silently of the spirit of the person. If the facilitator kept a healthy awareness in the NOW as he/she tuned in to the person, the blocked cells in the person would begin to be restored to their original structure.² In other words, they would heal themselves. Life energy in this method is communicative, and when communication is freed, healing occurs. Her method reminds one of homeopathy in a psychological sense, for the homeopathist tries to match the vibrational pattern of the disease with the remedy, and when it is accurate, healing occurs. When we feel understood, you might say, healing is released.

Other examples from different fields could be given. Richard Schwartz, a family systems therapist, developed a method that he called Internal Family Systems Therapy (IFS). He discovered that it wasn't enough for people to work on external relationships to get healed from anorexia or bulimia. The personal problems persisted despite successful structural therapy interventions. There were internal parts that he called by the generic names of exile, manager and fire fighter, which were particularized in each individual and underlay the dysfunctional behavior. When he communicated with these parts and assisted them to resolve their differences, healing finally began to happen. In the course of discovering this truth, he also discovered that deeper than the parts was the "I", the person him or herself, what he called the true Self. When the therapist was acting out of his or her true Self and accessed the Self of the client, then true healing occurred. The Self was like an internal therapist, able to compassionately understand each of the parts so that they could integrate with each other. The Self had all the qualities of Life-energy that we spoke about, NOW, contacting a sort of "divine" energy, compassionate and wise.

There is growing interest in such energy healing. Barbara Ryan, in her 2002 talk to the energy seminar, noted that since 1992, the federal government, through the National Institute of Health has actually funded research into the effectiveness of alternative medicine, particularly in the areas of stress, chronic pain and life-threatening illnesses. Known as the Office of Alternative Medicine, it has given out money to researchers testing acupuncture, hypnosis to relieve pain and heal bones, massage therapy for surgical patients, dance movements for cystic fibrosis, macrobiotic treatments for cancer, biofeedback for diabetes, yoga for heroin addiction, tai chi for balance disorders and massage therapy for AIDS babies. The NIH definition of alternative medicine is: any method that is not taught in medical schools, not covered by insurance, and not considered to have sufficient documentation in the US to prove its safety and effectiveness.

What used to be relegated to religion -- contemplative life, discovering our spiritual self -- is now being investigated scientifically as a way to healing. This would all be to the good if these methods did not at times lead people away from Christianity. Mary Lynch herself was a Catholic, but her work with energy led her in the direction of New Age thought. Reiki was by legend developed by a Christian minister, Dr. Mikao

Usui, who went off to discover how Jesus healed and why we were not healing that way today. Recent research indicates that Dr. Usui was a business man whose business had failed, which left him with a desire for something more than just material gain. Through meditation and a 21 day fast he had a satori experience (enlightenment, contact with Reiki energy) which gave him a glimpse of a higher order of truth. Some time after this experience, he opened the Usui Reiki Healing Society. His enlightenment experience was not so much Christian as Buddhist. As such it could lead practitioners away from Christianity.

Despite the danger, however, there is a realm of experience that these practitioners have contacted-- a powerful realm of energy -- that heals. Some, like Fr. Francis Martin, warn people away from Reiki as dangerous to faith.³ Others, like one ACT member I know, felt called to learn Reiki while centering his source of energy in Jesus. He has found it very effective for healing and his teacher even began to come to him for healing, not realizing he was praying to Jesus. One Christian group, that initially trained with Mary Lynch, left because of her New Age thinking. Another Christian felt called after prayer and discernment to stay with the method while centering it in Jesus' mirroring. She was healed of chronic tiredness and received fresh energy for her work, well beyond what she could do before.

As part of his presentation at the energy seminar in 2003, Doug Schoeninger told how he felt called to Training Workshop in Neuro-Emotional Techniques for getting in touch with painful areas and negative beliefs and helping to free them up with homeopathic remedies. In this training he began to question for in the advanced training sessions there was so much hostility toward the church and the trainer herself was extremely hostile toward the Catholic Church. One woman next to him talked about her involvement in witchcraft and he felt negative energy coming from her. He prayed but still felt called to be there. He prayed deliverance prayers, and the next day she was sick and did not come to the session. But then the trainer was very motivated to rid him of his rigid Christian beliefs. Again he prayed and heard God say, "Let her rid you of your rigid Christian beliefs! Let me use the method for my sake within you." Jesus did use the method to rid him of a lot of his rigidities and idolatries and a lot of things were causes of depressiveness within him. On coming home on the plane and he realized he felt enormously free, but also enormously empty. I knew the methods were good and the outcomes were good psychologically, but he did not feel spiritually alive. Again he prayed, and heard God say: "Ask the Holy Spirit to fill what has been done." In an instant, everything lit up within him. What could have led him from his Christian faith, actually purified him and increased his faith as he turned it over to Jesus.

In sum, we cannot simply affirm these approaches the way they are often presented. But some of them also seem to promise very effective healing approaches that it is the business of a healing association to understand in light of Christian faith. Can this be done?

II. World Sacral and Grace Sacral

In approaching this challenge, I find the work of the German Catholic theologian Heribert Muehlen quite helpful.⁴ Following Muehlen, I distinguished between "world sacral" and "grace sacral." Traditionally, theologians distinguished between "nature" and

“grace.” Nature is what we are on a purely human level, grace is our participation in divine life mediated by Jesus and the Holy Spirit – our “new birth” in Christ. Nature and grace, however, are static terms. Muehlen wanted to understand dynamically how we can differentiate the operation of nature and grace in our living experience. Nature is not just a given, but a process of unfolding to ever greater experience, understanding and expanded choice. It beckons through “fascination.” What motivates us to grow in knowledge? To seek love? To expand our experience of the world and space? Is it not nature – what Muehlen calls “world sacral,” the kind of fascination the world holds for us? Is this “world fascination” not what led Mary Lynch to discover her way of healing, or the discoverer of Reiki to find his way? World sacral is what motivates most of our actions – our desire for home, for security, for a greater responsibility for others, etc. This is what it is to grow up to be fully human.

On the other hand, grace also is not a static “sanctifying grace,” but it also operates in our living experience. However, its movement is usually more subtle, and initially not as forceful. It comes from God through Christ and returns to God. It is like the “still small voice” that Elijah heard after God was not in the wind or fire or thunder (1 Kgs 19:12). It doesn’t force but invites our free response. Looked at dynamically, grace-sacral presents subtle differences from world sacral. Muehlen calls attention to one major difference: *world sacral* is always reaching to what is “*not yet given*.” We fall naturally in love only to find ourselves falling out of love. We are drawn to the moon, only to find it a barren wasteland in comparison to our earth. We can never learn enough, never get enough money or power or security. On the other hand, *grace sacral* rests in the presence of the future, the “*already*” is predominant even though open to the “*not yet*.” If we experience graced love, we rest in the future even as we open to receive it as gift. We are already loved in an absolute way. If we are drawn to the moon, it is to experience more deeply the mystery of God’s creation which we already possess. Learning is a response to God’s gift, not a power we gain more and more of. Money is a trust for helping God’s people, not a source of personal security.

There are many other differences: 1) Grace touches our person and elicits a free interpersonal response. Nature draws us to develop our freedom and gifts, but it is left open how we will decide to use them. 2) Nature is drawn by the fascination of human potential, grace by the touch of God’s love in Jesus and the invitation to grow in that love. 3) Nature focuses on increasing knowledge and power, grace springs ultimately from Jesus’ death/resurrection by dying to self out of love for God and others and one’s true self-giving Self, etc. etc.

What comes out clearly as we consider these differences is that both nature and grace deal with the same realities! It is not as though “love” is only nature, nor is it only grace. Both dynamics can be at work at the same time. In fact, all natural fascination is ultimately grounded in grace, for it is God who creates us as free human beings in order that we might surrender ourselves to God’s grace. Nature by itself is ultimately grounded in emptiness. It is to die to its independent existence in order to be surrendered and raised with humanity to union with God. Rom 8: 20 says, “Creation was made subject to futility [of emptiness]...that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.” What Doug Schoeninger experienced after being purified of his idolatries was emptiness, but God filled that

openness with the Holy Spirit when he prayed. You might say that grace itself drives our nature to grow to its full potential so that it can die and be transformed by God. We cannot love God “with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our body” unless we develop all our heart, soul and body. We develop our heart through releasing our affectivity, etc. which is the work of psychotherapy and relationships with family and friends. We develop our soul (mind and human spirit), through schooling and learning, and through the arts, etc.. We develop our body through exercise but also through healing, through freeing our cells to be restored to their healing ways. But this development is not its own end. Our final goal is to be surrendered to God in Christ.

We know what can happen when we only focus on God and spirituality. We can become narrowly fundamentalistic, unaware that we are distorting God’s call to love through projecting our own lack of openness and fullness onto God. It is precisely this narrow judgmental God-image of some of the Scribes and Pharisees that Jesus broke open by eating with publicans and sinners. On the other hand, we can become so fascinated with human growth that we miss the call of grace to surrender all to God. Then we end up as enlightened humanists but not saints. God has subjected all creation to futility (emptiness) for the sake of the freedom of the children of God. Christian faith frees us from worshiping world powers, but by that very fact it frees us to investigate all the potentials of creation.

Paradoxically, **history shows** that Christianity has “demythologized” the fascinations of the world and opened the world for research. In the Roman Empire Christians were known as atheists because they did not worship the Roman gods.⁵ In our day, faith in Jesus will demythologize energy healing of whatever sort. Energy is a creature, not God, and all energy healing methods are ways of cooperating with nature for its full development and healing. The very freedom from divinizing creation should free us to fully investigate all aspects of creation and understand its working, for it is God who works for the healthy development of creation in order that it might be transformed by our graced decisions.

III. Created Energy as Revealing God

We understand God ever more deeply and widely as we open to the mystery of creation. We know the *grandeur* of God when we realize the extent of space – the billions of galaxies (some 200 billion) each with billions of stars, and each star light years away from each other. We experience the *patience* of God who waits on the smallest particle and respects the limited existence of creatures till it unfolds in 15 billion years to be ready for humans. We experience the *purity* of God as we are led through ever more subtle spheres of energy to the living source of all. We experience the *love* of God who reveals such beauty in creation and who humbled himself to become human in Christ and bring creation back to living unity with God.

God is revealed in creation to an ever greater extent. This is especially true of energy healing which teaches us many things about God and our true selves:
1) It is focus in the *NOW* that releases energy to its natural course, and God is I AM. The book by Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now*, illustrates the dynamism released by getting beyond every day attitudes to this eternal NOW.

2) Another universal healing attitude is *LOVE*. Love is what heals, whether we know its source or not. This is the insight of Louise Hay, *You Can Heal Your Life*, and of Karol Truman, *Feelings Buried Alive Never Die*, and of many other healers.⁶

3) In Consegrity Therapy, it is *compassionate tuning in* to the disturbed energy patterns of the other that restores cells to their natural functioning. God is such an interpersonal loving Trinitarian community revealed analogously in the community of cells with one another, or the internal psychological parts integrated with one another. The facilitator's "bowing" to the distorted energy pattern in the other is precisely what Jesus did (and reveals God to do) when he let himself experience our sin in himself. God made him to "be sin" so that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21). There is a similar pattern in *homeopathic* medicine, where the remedy "mimics" the symptoms and energy patterns of the disease and thus brings healing.

4) In each case, it is the energy field's balancing that is prior to the healing. One sees the fault in the energy field before it becomes visible in one's body. So also, it is the "*field of resurrection energy*, the new phylum begun in the risen Lord, that transforms us and ultimately empowers all healing. Practitioners will certainly have other ways their work opens them more to the mystery of creation and so to God the creator. Creation is not just an object outside God, but an analogous revelation of God's own way of being.

IV. Theology of Energy Healing:

Granted nature reveals God, our foundation is not there but in revelation. We do not seek human growth for its own sake, but for the glory of God. Ultimately, it is God who glorifies God. Each of us individually has to discern what God wants for us. I was pointed away from studying the Enneagram⁷ and later from studying Consegrity therapy, whereas Richard Rohr was led to write about the Enneagram in a Christian way, and my friend was blessed by God through Consegrity therapy. In both cases, it was important that God be seen as the ultimate healer. But God wants us to cooperate to the best of our ability according to God's call, whether that means going to school to get degrees, as St. Ignatius decided to do, or to find a method that meets one's healing needs, as my friend did. That might mean getting training in a particular method because of God's call, as Doug Schoeninger did, or avoiding it because of God's call as I was led to do. "Whoever is not against you is for you," Jesus said in Mk 9:40. Insofar as the method is grounded in real principles of creation it is ultimately intended to lead us to Christ and will be most fully realized in Christ. However, as created it can also be exploited by humans for human ends, however "enlightened" its practitioners may seem. Some theological reflections can help us work out principles of discernment.

A. Evaluating the Facts:

A first step in developing a theology of energy is to be clear about the facts. Do energy fields really exist such as are described by Barbara Brennan? (see fn 1). Another version of these overlapping fields of energy is given by Richard Gerber, M.D. in his book, *Vibrational Medicine* (Bear & Co, 1988), chapter 4. Gerber examined the evidence supporting six levels of energy that he concluded to from various sources: 1) *Physical* What we see, touch and hear. What ordinary medicine treats, 2) *Etheric*: An energy system surrounding the physical: acupuncture (meridian), Chakras. Illnesses can start here and move to physical. 3) *Astral*: Body that sees oneself from outside: OOB experiences or astral projection. 4) *Mental*: Ability to think about and effect previous levels, concrete thought. 5) *Causal*: Ability to grasp essences beyond the concrete, get to

realities, and 6) *Spirit*: True Self which can “choose” which body to enter. All these levels are interrelated. I examine some of the evidence in Appendix I.

B. Interpreting interlocking energy systems theologically:

How are we to interpret these different views from a Christian theological perspective? It may help to compare them with the stages of faith development that I have discerned from salvation history.⁸ There is not a clear correlation but many of the same principles apply to faith stages as to energy levels. The five faith stages are:

- 1) ***Initial Faith***: the beginning stage of the child, and body
- 2) ***Familial faith*** –the socialization process, traditions of family, church and culture.
- 3) ***Individuating faith*** – immediate contact with God, NOW, beyond time and space.
- 4) ***Communitarian faith***: the forming of individuated community, forgiving enemies.
- 5) ***Mission faith***: life in the power of the death/resurrection of Jesus as Holy Spirit.

The period we are now experiencing culturally to a great extent, I believe, is transition to individuating faith. This explains why people are so affected by “centering prayer” and “new age,” and “God within.” The majority of any culture are in the “familial faith” stage, and so those looking for a personal, individuated experience of God will create conflict. The individuating faith stage is a breakthrough to an immediate relationship with God, a “new creation” springing up amidst what are perceived as inadequacies in the previous “familial faith” system. It opens to new creative energies.

As with the different energy levels, each higher faith stage includes, heals and transcends the lower stages. The only difference is that the faith stages are not ultimately grounded in experience but in revelation. They are not just energies, but an interpersonal relationship in the Holy Spirit, through the Son with the Father. *Their ground is Trinitarian Love*. Our Triune God has incorporated all created energies, all creation, into God’s own life. As we saw, all creation “is condemned to futility” for the sake of the children of God. (Rom 8:20) By dying on the cross for our sins and rising in the Spirit, Jesus has actually re-grounded all energy fields in their final ground in God. (Eph 1:20-21; 4:9-10; Col 2:8-9) What Brennan and others have discovered on the level of created energies is included yet transcended in this new ground. As all created energies, they are meant to lead beyond themselves to God, but can become ends in themselves and lead to emptiness and futility. It is not “energy” that is the ultimate ground, but its creator, our infinite God, who transcends creation and all energy. To end in “energy,” no matter how universal, is to end in oneself (as a hologram of the cosmos, a micro-cosmos). In this sense, Jesus’ life/death/resurrection incorporates all previous energy fields since he is fully human, while re-grounding them in Trinitarian life. He has established a healthy template, which can reorder diseased or incomplete functioning on each of the underlying levels.

C. The Role of Created Energies

To be grounded in Jesus, however, is not to ignore those created energies. Jesus assumed a full human nature and all that involved. All things are to be subjected to him

as he subjects all to the Father (1 Cor 15:27-8). Hence, whatever reality we discover rests in the ongoing creative presence of God and is ordered toward transformation in Jesus. The saints themselves exemplified the types of experiences now being evidenced by Barbara Brennan. They, as Jesus, had insight into past influences. They bi-located and saw things at a distance. A Christian friend of mine gets insight into generational influences. She touched someone's ailing knee and saw an image of the client's grandmother who was similarly wounded. There is nothing in these experiences themselves that need prevent them from being Christian. However, as created, they can be influenced by attitudes and spirits that separate from Christianity.

This means, firstly, that as Christians we have to see our spiritual "*Self*" as united with our physical being. Our *spiritual body* includes all dimensions of our physical body. To become centered spiritually, we need to be purified by the Spirit of Jesus by what John of the Cross calls a dark night of senses and spirit to be thus transformed, but from this purified center our way of sensing and experiencing the world must also be transformed. Jesus is the perfect expression of the union of physical and spiritual, and we are gradually being brought into that unity through cooperating with Jesus' Spirit.

Secondly, since we are one body with all others, each of us has a role not only for ourselves, but also for our family of origin back to Adam and Eve, always in union with Jesus (the New Adam)! Thus, the deeper we progress in spiritual consciousness, the more we will experience the unhealed issues of our ancestors and our surrounding culture. All healing is ultimately a sharing in the resurrection of Jesus and he brought healing to his ancestors and whole culture. The "*causal*" body would be this level of *multi-generational influence*, which would help explain why some illnesses cannot be healed simply on a personal, physical level. The "spiritual body" would be the resurrection body or Jesus' union with God and Trinity, which is physically made present to us in the Eucharist.⁹

Thirdly, though the levels of "*astral*" and "*mental*" bodies do not have a clear referent in Christian experience, they are exemplified in Jesus. If the "*astral body*" is our ability to enter emotionally and mentally into the personality of another and see ourselves from the "project" selves, then it is a kind of radical empathy or sympathy, a first step in collective (= subtle?) perceiving. Jesus evidenced this quality for he "knew what was in humans" (Jn 2:24). He could read hearts and see at a distance (Jn 1:28). If the "*mental body*" is the ability to "tune into" the creative ideas that are emerging in a culture, it is a kind of prophetic, creative insight into present conditions that will give rise soon to some physical expression. Jesus also predicted and creatively corrected what would happen to Israel if they did not repent and turn to God. He saw the future, and he gives that ability to prophets when needed.

Fourthly, however, the Christian does not seek these phenomena for their own sake. God needs to lead in all things. We do not just seek healing; we seek God's lead for what is to be done. God may work more powerfully through someone who is not healed, either physically or emotionally. There is such a thing as "innocent suffering," where one picks up the illnesses of ancestors in order to bring healing through intercession. Only God is an ultimate goal.

V. Some Principles and Criteria for Discernment:

An article by Doug Schoeninger and Sheila Fabricant “Evaluating Methods and Theories of Healing,” *Journal of Christian Healing*, Vol. 9, No. 1/Spring 1987, is a good springboard for suggesting some guidelines for discerning whether one is called to experience or learn about energy healing or not. I will also attend to the presentation by Barbara Ryan at the 2002 ACT Conference. Based on what I have said about nature and grace and the relevance of our individual development I will highlight and adapt several of their points.

1) *Does the therapy glorify God and bring us closer to God?* Beware the practitioner who glorifies himself/herself, however subtly. (See Acts 8:9-13: Simon the magician) Simon was lionized because of his magical power, but found Philip’s preaching and power greater and was baptized with the others. When Peter and John laid on hands for them to receive the Spirit, Simon offered them money to receive that power! He was severely reprimanded because his heart was not upright. He repented and became a true witness. These signs are for God’s glory, not ours! We can ask: “Does the form of therapy draw the recipient closer to God?” Does he/she feel a deeper desire to read Scripture, attend church services, read devotional literature, fellowship with other Christians, etc?

2) *Discernment is individual and relates to one’s stage of development.* Paul commented about eating meat sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 8:1-11) that the enlightened know that “there is no God but one,” so there would be no opposition to eating such meat. But not all have this knowledge, he goes on, and my eating may scandalize a weaker brother or sister. So for their sake he will not eat such meat. We notice two things: 1st people in different developmental stages discern differently, for the enlightened it may be all right, 2nd For any who are scandalized or who would scandalize others, it is not to be done. Can we not apply the same principle for energy healing? Some may be comfortable and even feel called to investigate energy healing, others may find it opposed to their faith. Both need to be respected and loved.

3) *Discernment presupposes a kind of co-natural knowledge* – that is, the more one is in tune with Jesus’ God in oneself, the better one will be able to tell whether some practice is in tune with God. It is very important to have a positive God-image (vs. a fearful, judgmental image) when discerning. Nature is good and its attractions are good, even though in need of a higher ordering. Nature is to be used and developed in so far as it helps us to “seek and find God” and “to glorify God.” A hidden fear of an accusing God or a rejection of the goodness of creation is not a reliable guide to discernment. Judgmental people find a judging God, even though Jesus said, “God sent the Son not to judge the world but to save it” (Jn 3:17).

3) *The central criteria: “Is Jesus present in the beginning, middle and end of our involvement with any method, theory or philosophy?”* Did we ask Jesus whether we should start? Do we discern the ongoing effects on ourselves and others of our involvement? Is involvement leading me more deeply into faith in Jesus and harmony with the Scripture? It is not just unfamiliar methods like energy healing that must be evaluated by this criterion, but ordinary medical methods. Do they increase my faith in

Jesus or lessen it? This is the criterion that led Doug Schoeninger to stay with the method he was learning. It might have led another to leave that method.

4) Related to 3, “Is there a quality of warm personal presence of Christ rather than an exclusive emphasis or abstract truth of “energy” in this method?” The God of Jesus is personal (Father/Mother not just “ground of being”). God saves us in a freely chosen covenant relationship. If our method is ultimately grounded in Christ, it will strengthen that relationship, not just be a repairing of our body. Again, this criterion, as all the others, applies both to unfamiliar energy and familiar medical methods of healing. They also can treat one as an object, not a partner in healing.

5) Is everyone welcome to come and learn? A further criterion is how open the method is to all and to be critiqued by others. “Is my use of a particular method open to dialogue with persons of questioning or dissenting perspectives?” Jesus’ healing was for all, and all were invited to take part. It was also quite open to any who would wish to critique it. “I have spoken quite openly,” Jesus said, “ask those who heard me.” (Jn 18:20-21). Does the therapist welcome ‘external verification’ of a cure or healing? Is he/she willing to encourage the opinion of competent medical authorities? Even Jesus sent the ten lepers to show themselves to the priest in accordance to the Jewish law.

6) Are we open to understanding the universe in new ways, or are we rejecting the unfamiliar out of fear of the unknown and legalism? All creation is being subjected to Christ, (1 Cor 15:27). The Holy Spirit leads us into “all truth” (Jn 16:13), so we need not shy away from any aspect of reality. However, it may be that the individual may not be called to investigate a certain area. There may even be danger for a person there, of getting fascinated by an unknown truth or of losing one’s faith because of it. It is not the truth that is at fault, but the seeker who was not yet ready.

7) Are there solid scientific grounds supporting this method? Some theories are more ideological or based on limited experience. What is true is what is ordered by God as a way to find God. If the data indicates the power of some methods to bring healing, there must be some factual reasons for its effectiveness. On the other hand, just because something works does not mean that the interpretation given by the practitioner is true. It is our call as Christian healers to see the true reason for the effectiveness of different methods and ground those methods in Christ.

8. What is the fruit of their work? The criterion that Jesus used was “by their fruit you will know them.” (Mt 7:16) Gal 5:22 describes them, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness, and chastity.” Does the form of therapy or meditation lead the practitioner closer to the God of Scripture? Is it creating selflessness or selfishness for its followers? Does it lead to charity and love for humankind and service to others?

VI. Applications:

A. Meditation: Centering is accessing higher levels of consciousness and leaving behind everyday sense experience. The phenomena of mysticism are similar for both the East and the West. Practices of meditation, biofeedback, relaxation therapy, hypnosis or mystical prayer are common factors. The body is trained to relax through

proper body posture, breathing techniques are employed to bring the mind to rest, a focal point of attention is used (Jesus prayer, mantra, charismatic tongues) and an altered state of consciousness is induced. Christian meditation and contemplation centers one in Jesus. A helpful way is to center in the heart of Jesus, the highest energy, but more importantly, an interpersonal relationship. The goal is not power, but a humble love and centering in Jesus and God in the Universe.

Accessing “higher masters” seems to be against Scriptural teaching unless they are submitted to Jesus (as the saints). Dt 18:11-12 says: “He who consults the dead in an abomination to the Lord.” Saul’s consulting Samuel through the witch of Endor (1 Sm 28) led to a prediction of his death the next day! We are to “trust in the Lord, and wait for him” (see Is 8:17-19). As Jesus says in the NT: “Do not be called rabbi (teacher), you have one teacher [the Messiah], you are all brothers and sisters.” (Mt 23:8)

B. Laying of Hands: We are members of one body and are meant to bring one another to God. Since the body is interpenetrated by different levels, discernment depends on the spirit of the one laying on hands. Reiki energy may bring healing, but unless it is surrender to Jesus it will not bring ultimate transformation. Ultimately, it is the energy from the Body of Christ that brings final healing. As with the woman with the flow of blood: “energy went out from him” (Mk 5:30). Again, we need to learn discernment, that we be centered in Jesus and God.

C. Prayer for Healing: In the Spirit there is no space or time. Reiki masters and other practitioners find they can effect healing across space and time. So also, in the Spirit we Christians can bring one another to Jesus for healing in prayer from a distance. We begin with ourselves, asking God to heal us so that we can be purified channels of healing for others. This healing transcends space and time. That prayer works at a distance is illustrated by a Columbia University experiment of praying for women in Australia to get pregnant (without their knowing it!). 50% got pregnant as opposed to 26% of the control group. Columbia University expected no effect! (see *N.Y. Times*, “Magazine”).

Endnotes

¹ Brennan identifies the following overlapping bodies of energy of ever higher frequencies. 1) *Physical* (lower etheric body) Feeling physical pain or pleasure. 1 ¼” hands 2) *Emotional body*: vehicles through which we have our emotional life and feelings 3-4” emotional body (varied colors in the aura, fluid), 3) *Mental* or Linear thinking, and concrete thought, 4) *Astral body*: Associated with heart and love. This grounds Out of the Body experiences, 5) *Etheric template*: Word. Causal. Speaking things into being, listening and taking responsibility for one’s actions. 6) *Celestial body*: higher emotional aspect. Higher Love, and 7) *Ketheric body*: (higher mental aspect) . Spirit, contacting the “divine spark within.” This extends beyond the human range, encompasses all life as precious manifestations of God. It also connects to past life. This would be equivalent to what we are calling “life energy.” See Barbara Ann Brennan, *Hands of Light: A Guide to Healing through Human Energy Field*, 47f.

² A recent best seller book by Eckhart Tolle, called *The Power of Now*, illustrates how he discovered this life energy, and the principles that he developed from it. Mary Lynch refers to this book for her own understanding of this energy.

³ According to Ann Arcieri, Region 9, Fr. Francis Martin initially recommended Reiki to people as helpful for healing. Later, after a deep personal experience, he took back that recommendation and spoke of it as non-Christian and as actually detrimental to one's Christian faith.

⁴ See an article I wrote in the *Journal of Christian Healing*, "A Christian Approach to Discerning Spiritualities," Vol. 21, #1, Spring, 1999, pp. 15-34. I developed these distinctions more at length there.

⁵ This demythologizing effect of Christianity has been credited with Christians' lack of care for the environment. Nature is no longer seen as embodying the divine, as it was for the Native Americans for example. One response has been to objectify it and exploit it for narrow human ends. However, credit for this excessive exploitation is more due to science and technology than Christianity. In any case, seeing Nature as separate from God should not lead us to dishonor it. It is God's creation to manifest God's glory and help humans develop into the likeness of God. That is an even deeper reason to honor nature and work for its healthy development since our own wholeness depends on it.

⁶ See *Healers on Healing*, ed. Richard Carlson and Benjamin Shield (Los Angeles, Jeremy Tarcher, 1989) for short presentations of many well known healers like Bernie Segal, Larry Dossey, Carl Simonton and others. Liberating knowledge and love is basic to every method.

⁷ The enneagram was introduced to our Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago around 1973 by Fr. Bob Ochs. This was the beginning of what is now wide-spread theory in Catholic circles throughout the country. Bob had studied with Claudio Narangho and offered a workshop on the enneagram at JSTC, as the school was called. I was intrigued by what I heard and was about to become a member of SAT (Seekers After Truth), the sponsoring organization of the enneagram. As I was about to join, I heard the Lord tell me (not audibly but clearly), "No, I'll do it." Jesus would be the healer for me. I was more than happy to believe Jesus, so I didn't get further involved with the enneagram, beyond finding out about the nine types and their implications so I could understand those who knew it. The enneagram was a theory about the distribution of energy, based on an Eastern (Sufi) worldview. The Lord said nothing directly about it, only that He would take care of my healing. Fr. Mitch Pacwa, *Catholics and the New Age: How Good People are Being Drawn into Jungian Psychology, the Enneagram and the Age of Aquarius* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publ., 1992) gives a solid account of the occult foundations of the Enneagram and warns against it. Fr. Rohr focuses on its positive psychological uses and gives it a Christian interpretation.

⁸ These stages are explained in "Healing and Family Spiritual/Emotional Systems," *Journal of Christian Healing*, Vol. 5, No 1 (1983), 10-23.

⁹ See Gustave Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World* (Seabury, 1976) where he links resurrection with "absolute neg-entropy," or the denial of the universal degeneration of all energy. (p. 53f; 83f)