

Appendix IV: Evaluating Methods and Theories of Healing

Sheila Fabricant, M.Div. and Douglas Schoeninger, Ph.D.

Criteria for evaluating methods and theories of healing, from the perspective of Christian faith, are suggested. A primary concern is how to be open to new discoveries and unfamiliar concepts without losing one's centeredness in Jesus Christ. Several perspectives of the authors are shared. Then criteria are proposed. Finally, questions and issues for further work are posed.

INTRODUCTION

Each of us can identify certain healing methods, theories and philosophies of which we are suspicious for theological and spiritual reasons (e.g., psychotropic medication, therapeutic touch, biofeedback). For example, I (Doug) have been suspicious of hypnosis. I have conceptualized my suspicion as spiritual caution and concern with the role of conscious will and choice in protecting one from vulnerability to evil powers. Actually, I am not very articulate on the subject of hypnosis since I have never been hypnotized (explicitly) or studied hypnosis in depth. So I cannot fully explain my cautions.

I meet some Christians who have grave spiritual cautions about hypnosis. They reinforce my own sense of caution. On the other hand, I also meet Christian psychologists who use hypnotic techniques integrated with healing prayer and who are spiritually comfortable with these techniques. 1 They have caused me to reevaluate my sense of caution.

What healing methods make you cautious? Your caution may have grown because you or someone you love became involved in a healing method or spiritual practice that caused damage. Or you may be cautious because your religious tradition, or current community, views such a method as non-Christian or, even worse, as drawing power from evil sources. You may suspect that a particular method encourages self-idolatry, entices one to acquire personal power, or seduces one inherently evil practices or practices that make one vulnerable to evil.

It is important that each of us attend to the caution that arises inside. No one should participate in a practice that violates his or her spiritual integrity, even if the caution is due to lack of experience and understanding. On the other hand, we need to recognize that the caution we feel may reflect sources of anxiety not entirely spiritual. For example, I may be alarmed by hypnosis because I have an excessive need to remain in control at all times. Or I may be rightly uncomfortable with the hypnotist but attribute my discomfort to something inherently spiritually amiss in the method. Or I may be correctly cautious about hypnosis because, while others can glean truth from it and remain Christ-centered, protected, and discerning, I cannot. What is good and safe and fruitful for others may not be so for me.

Suppose I wanted to study more about hypnosis and consider experiencing it myself. What guidelines would I use in evaluating my study and experience, so that I can be open to God's truth and guard against being deceived?

In this paper we are initiating a dialogue about criteria for discerning the variety of healing methods, therapies, and philosophies we encounter. On the one hand, we want to be careful not to be seduced into promoting methods that undermine faith in Jesus Christ. On the other hand, we do not want to close ourselves to the truth and help for our clients available in a particular method, just because it has been designated "evil" by certain Christian groups or because it has been developed within a non-Christian tradition or secular context.

We want to acknowledge our bias. In our own lives, neither of us has had destructive experiences with nontraditional methods of healing. Rather, our negative experiences have been with what appear to us to be overly cautious, fearful, and fundamentalist approaches to the unfamiliar. Therefore, we tend to think and write in a direction that encourages more openness, while recognizing the need for balance and caution. If we were in a different environment, one that appeared indiscriminately open to spiritual experimentation, then our emphasis might be in the opposite direction, that of encouraging more caution.² We do not intend this to be a comprehensive treatment of criteria, but rather a stimulus for dialogue which will lead to a more comprehensive understanding among us all.

First we will share some general perspectives and assumptions. We do so to acknowledge the underlying orientations that influence us. These perspectives reflect our biases. Then we will list some suggested criteria for discernment, which flow from these orientations.

GENERAL PERSPECTIVES

1. *A positive God-image provides a sound basis for discerning truth.*

The image of a faithful, abiding God who endows us with freedom to explore Creation and gave us the gifts of intuition and reason leaves us able to see truth. Truth cannot be apprehended without freedom to investigate and make mistakes, gradually discovering what is and is not of God.

On the other hand, subtle fears of rejection or condemnation by God are not a good basis for discernment. There is a proper fear of God, an awe in the face of Majesty. There is a good fear of losing intimacy or of not pleasing the One we love. But fear of rejection or condemnation by God, or anyone else should we become involved in a questionable practice or spirituality is not a good basis for discernment. In fact, an image of a God who controls us through threats of abandonment operates to separate us from truth by keeping us fearful of making mistakes and hostile toward God. For we must carry hostility (perhaps concealed in self-hatred) toward a rejecting God; it is the only sane thing to do. And however we try to appease God's wrath, we will be bound to deify human constructs and call evil that which is culturally unusual because it is unfamiliar and upsetting. We must do this because we are not free to trust God and therefore cannot handle anything unusual. This same dynamic applies in our relations with anyone from whom we fear rejection and condemnation.

Thus in any process of discernment we must take care to focus on God's love and watch for hidden but operative images of a condemning, rejecting God. When we fear God (as distinct from appropriate awe), we hate God. Then, afraid to hate God, we hate creation. And finally, we cannot hate Creation without hating ourselves.

2. *A basic question to keep asking in evaluating anything is whether it leads us toward or away from Jesus.*

We tend to see traditional "scientific" medical methods as "safe" and unlikely to disturb our relationship with Jesus, while nontraditional methods such as hypnosis or therapeutic touch are more likely to be suspect. However, traditional medical methods may be no more truly Christian and no less likely to lead us away from Jesus than nontraditional (or less understood) methods. While certain methods may hold the danger of leading us to spiritualism (seeking power or knowledge from spiritual beings who are less than God), traditional medical methods may hold the danger of leading us into materialism. An example of materialism would be the assumption that taking a pill equals a cure.

As we raise discernment questions about less familiar healing methods, then perhaps we need to raise similar questions about our traditional methods. For example, in the case of hypnosis, the hypnotist might be challenged on the grounds of controlling the client and thus establishing an "I/It" relationship rather than emphasizing the value of a more mutual, dialogical, "I/Thou" relationship. This may be a valid question about hypnosis, but it can be raised equally of any traditional treatment, medical or psychotherapeutic, through which the person is treated as an object rather than a person.

The avoidance of spiritualism and the shunning of materialism are equally serious concerns. Another facet of this question is whether use of a healing method (or the theory behind it) opposes or supports simple faith in the authority of Jesus to heal. The Gospels' healing narratives emphasize that faith in Jesus' authority is central to healing, as in the healing of the centurion's servant (Matt, 8). Thus we can ask ourselves if we are being drawn more deeply into appreciation of Jesus' lordship, or if our dependence on his authority is being subtly eroded. But again we need to ask the same question of that which is familiar and seems "safe" that we ask of that which is more unfamiliar to us. Sometimes even in learning techniques of healing prayer we can depend more on a technique than on Jesus the Healer.

3. *Different perspectives may be based on differences in faith and/or personality development.*

Could the value and attraction of exploring new areas of knowledge depend on one's degree of conversion, on personality type, and on how one found God? For example, a person who is still integrating basic Christian doctrine may not be centered enough in Jesus to withstand ambiguity. Similarly, a person whose thinking function is underdeveloped may need to practice the logico-deductive method so as not to be carried away by the fascination of new insights. On the other hand, a person who has integrated basic Christian doctrine and is at ease with ambiguity and the "unexplainable" may be able to explore new horizons without losing a center in Christ. Or a person skilled at logical thinking may need to explore more intuitive ways of seeing the world in order to grow.

Further, according to Bernard Lonergan, conversion precedes method. What we perceive as leading toward God depends on *what we have previously experienced as leading us toward God*, i.e., the experience that brought about our own conversion. Thus, a person who was converted to Christianity

through the experience of God's presence in all Creation will perceive openness to such presence as leading one closer to God. But one who was converted through an experience of deliverance from evil will be likely to perceive avoiding certain aspects of Creation as leading one closer to God.³

4. *The genuine pursuit of truth may require stretching our boundaries and expanding our vision beyond the logico-deductive method.*

In *The Sacred and the Psychic*, John Heaney quotes Michael Grosso, who has written on ego loss, both in meditation and in near-death experiences. Grosso says this ego loss is " 'not loss but letting go of thought processes,'" a release from our addiction to the "logico-deductive," a method that has "a low tolerance for 'ambiguity, logical paradox and paralogical process.'" According to Grosso, near-death experiences expand our vision because " 'Death marks the boundary the theological-deductive method is experientially incapable of crossing'." ⁴

The Sacred and the Psychic is John Heaney's attempt to study psychic experience from a Christian perspective. Although I (Sheila) have never had a near-death experience, as I read Heaney's book I noticed something like what Michael Grosso describes: a stretching of boundaries and a sense of expanded vision. I was fascinated by Heaney's description of phenomena I have never experienced myself, but without a loss of centeredness in Jesus and without any desire to seek out such experiences. Rather, I simply felt an increased appreciation for what an interesting and wonderful world God has made.

In light of Michael Grosso's words about our addiction to the logico-deductive method and my own response to Heaney's book, the question I must ask myself is, how much of my resistance to certain therapies (e.g., those rooted in non-Western cultures) comes from the exclusive use of the logico-deductive method in which most Western Christians have been trained, and how much from justifiable medical and theological caution?

In another, more intuitively oriented culture, the challenge to stretch boundaries and expand vision might be the opposite, i.e., to open oneself to the logico-deductive process.

5. *Authentic search for truth will ultimately deepen rather than destroy faith (trust) in God and God's relation with Creation.*

St. Thomas Aquinas paved the way for every Christian scientist when he said that reason pursued to its end in an honest search for truth will never contradict faith,⁵ and St. Augustine affirmed the unity of Creation when he wrote, "God does not act contrary to nature, but only to the order of nature known to us." ⁶ Truth is one, whether we search for it in a Bible-study class or a medical laboratory.

A case in point seems to be the revolution occurring in our world through discovery of new forms of energy and consciousness. This revolution may be as great as that brought about by Galileo's discovery that the earth revolves around the sun. The Christians of Galileo's time could not trust his discovery because it contradicted both their belief and the science of their day. We may be in danger of responding just as fearfully to modern discoveries if we, too, limit the places where truth can be found.

When we are quick to condemn something as "demonic" or "occult," is it really our fear of going beyond familiar boundaries? Is our discernment of the demonic *sometimes* ⁷ our fear of the unknown? As science begins to stretch its own boundaries and explore new understandings of consciousness and energy, can we let its discoveries refine our Christian understanding? Exploring realms of consciousness and energy may deepen our appreciation of God and our capacity for genuine relationship, intimacy, and responsibility.

For instance, words like *energy flow* may sound unfamiliar and therefore suspicious, and we may automatically discount healing methods simply because they use such words. One of the more well-known healing methods that speaks of "energy flow" is therapeutic touch. In therapeutic touch, the healer moves his or her hands over the patient's body, diagnosing by sensing where the energy flow is blocked and healing by the free gift of the healer's own energy. This may sound like an "occult" technique, and perhaps it sometimes is. But is this way of diagnosing and healing through energy flow really that different from testing the circulation of the blood and giving blood transfusions when necessary? Whatever differing spiritual uses are made of either technique, the only intrinsic difference seems to be that therapeutic touch focuses on a less material substance than blood tests and transfusions. "Energy flow," "Ki" and "life force" are unfamiliar words for traditional medicine and Christianity, but are they any more mysterious than the remarkable healing power of the human immune system? Perhaps what bothers us is that we can see white blood cells, but at present we can't see "energy."

Yet physicists are increasingly aware that the line between matter and energy is very fine, if it exists at all.

Modern physics seems to confirm what some healing methods are suggesting: there are higher laws of energy that are not "occult" but simply previously unknown to us,⁷ and all matter is in fact energy. Some theologians concur; for example, "Karl Rahner said that matter is congealed spirit and Teilhard [de] Chardin said that spirit is the outcome of energized matter."⁸

6. *Refusing to integrate the unfamiliar risks the development of heresy.*

Heresy is a distortion of a truth, or a partial truth treated as if it were the whole. People search for truth and the fulfillment of needs as best they can, and if they cannot find what they search for in orthodox faith or practice, they may look elsewhere. The Protestant churches emerged in part because the Roman Catholic Church had emphasized certain truths to the neglect of others, such as the primacy of faith over works. Christian Science, for example, despite all of its distortions, does remind us of what Jesus told us repeatedly: our thoughts and beliefs affect our health. And spiritualism, dangerous though it is, offers grieving people an ongoing relationship with their departed ones and confirms their longing to know that love never ends. If the church fully lived out what it says about our ongoing relationship with the deceased through the Communion of Saints, perhaps grieving people would less frequently turn to spiritualism.⁹ Paradoxically, even witchcraft can be seen in this light. If Christians were always affirmed as uniquely special individuals and encouraged to take appropriate control over their lives, perhaps they would not be as tempted to seek inappropriate control through witchcraft.

An understanding of heresy as a distorted truth that may have been neglected by orthodox faith and practice suggests that some healing methods are simply reminding us of elements of reality that Western medicine and theology have neglected, such as the role of intuition and mystery in healing.

7. *God's love and goodness underlie the universe.*

From a biological viewpoint, the fact of natural healing power in the body implies a basic goodness in the cells that constitute the human body. This is not inconsistent with St. Paul's assertion to the Colossians, "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17, RSV).

It seems to us that whether we begin in the biology laboratory, in Scripture, or in prayer, we will discover that God's love and goodness underlie the universe. For example, as Fr. Dan O'Hanlon began to use a simple form of awareness prayer, he made the following discovery:

... it is possible to allow love to simply emerge out of awareness, without making its cultivation the first object of concern. Note what I am saying here: not that love is unimportant, not that its direct cultivation is a poorer path to follow, but that there are other ways to go as well. In the East great attention is paid to awareness, free of clinging to what is there or trying to get rid of it. More attention is given to this simple awareness, this bare immediate attention, than to the direct cultivation or excitation of feelings and desires. This practice seems to spring out of the conviction that *love and compassion are the natural movement of our true self. When the surface mind and disordered desires are still, the true self awakens without need of any further assistance from us.* Indeed, our clumsy efforts to poke at it and deliberately rouse it often have the same effect as poking at a sea anemone. It simply closes up tight. But give it stillness, leave it undisturbed, and it opens wide like a water lily in full bloom. 10 [emphasis ours]

This seems relevant to our discussion of healing methods, because if a fundamental truth of Creation is the indwelling love and goodness of God, it does not seem likely that we can find the truth about any part of Creation if we approach it with an assumption that it is basically corrupted and separated from God. With such a distrustful attitude, we may accurately identify cautions and dangers, but will miss the deeper truth that we have something in front of us from which we can benefit and which may need our help to realize its full potential.

One criticism of nontraditional healing methods (e.g., those involving energy systems) is that they are used by a "New Age Movement" that denies the reality of sin and our need for a Savior and deifies men and women. This can be a valid concern, but if it springs out of a fundamental distrust of Creation, it can also blind us to the underlying value and potential of a given method.

The problem at issue here is the problem of evil, of the Fall. Various Christian traditions deal with **this** problem differently. Some traditions take a more optimistic approach, emphasizing the fundamental goodness of Creation and seeing Jesus' work as redeeming that which was flawed but never destroyed. Other traditions take a more pessimistic approach, emphasizing the radical depravity of Creation brought about through the Fall, and seeing Jesus' work as re-creating something damaged beyond repair.

We ourselves identify with the optimistic approach. We do not discount the reality of evil, or our human capacity for sinful choices. Rather, we affirm that the indwelling love and goodness of God is always prior to and more fundamental than evil in every human being and in every aspect of Creation. Much human evil to us seems rooted in ignorance of the fundamental goodness and loveliness within us, leading to desperate efforts to manufacture self-worth through power, money, sex, drugs, etc.

8. *A primary issue is not only whether a theory or practice is basically good but also how we use it.*

There are three spirits: the good spirit, the human spirit, and the evil spirit. But there are only two directions: toward God and away from God. Nothing is neutral as soon as it comes into relationship with a human will. Nature has a meaning in and of itself, but it has no destiny separate from ours. Thus at a certain point it becomes irrelevant to say that a method or created thing is basically good because it is "natural." As soon as a human being interacts with it, we need to ask whether that interaction leads the person (and the method or created thing) toward or away from fuller union with God.¹¹

God wishes not only to draw us toward fuller union, but also to draw all of Creation through us. "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons and daughters of God" (Rom. 8:19). Similarly, all knowledge waits for enlargement, correction, reordering, and integration with spiritual truth by faithful stewards who yearn to find the center of all things in Christ through the power of the Spirit.

Thus we need not be defensive in approaching particular healing methods. We can open ourselves to God's presence in each method, letting God work with us to discriminate and integrate, even as we rely on God to protect us from harm. We become God's agents of transformation as Creation is redeemed in and through us.

9. *God dwells within us as well as beyond us.*

Do we locate God as living within us and wanting our will lovingly united with her/his (meaning our deepest questions and desires can be trusted as ways God speaks to us)? Or do we tend to locate God "out there," requiring that our wills be submitted to his/her will (meaning our deepest questions and desires are suspect)? Both perspectives are needed/min balance.

It is interesting to note that one way of seeing God is more feminine and the other way more masculine. Psychologist Erik Erikson writes that women focus more on "inner space" and men more on "outer space," with a corresponding emphasis in each one's image of God. Women locate God more within (as immanent), and men locate God as more without (as transcendent). While both are needed/the immanent God who dwells within the still mystery of our being and the transcendent "Christ the King" who rules the universe, Western Christianity has emphasized the masculine way of seeing God. And Western science has similarly emphasized the masculine way of seeing the world: through the logico-deductive method rather than the more feminine, intuitive knowledge emphasized by many nontraditional healing techniques. To what extent does our Western emphasis on masculine ways of doing both science and theology lead us to fear certain techniques simply because they are more "feminine" (emphasizing immanence) and therefore more unfamiliar?

10. *Personal experience of expansion of perspective.*

Since personal experience shapes our process of discernment, I (Sheila) want to share an experience of healing from an unexpected source. I recently "had my colors tested." For those who don't know what I'm talking about, it is currently popular to go to a person trained in color analysis who can tell the customer what colors are best for him or her to wear. The color analyst tests skin tones and then assigns a person to one of the four seasons, each with a distinctive set of colors.

Several friends (who I noticed looked better than I had ever seen them look) encouraged me to have my colors tested. They said that people not only look better when they are wearing the right colors, but also feel better in the presence of those colors. One friend showed me a chapter in *Prayerways*, by Louis Savary and Patricia Berne, that relates different spiritual energy centers in the body to different colors and encourages readers to be around certain colors depending on which spiritual energies seemed to be in a weakened state.¹² The whole thing sounded a little weird to me, and Savary and Berne's chapter even sounded slightly occult. But I trusted my friends' discernment, and I sensed God encouraging me to go ahead when a color analyst attended a retreat I was giving and offered me a large discount on her services.

After I had spent a few hours in her studio, the analyst told me I was a "Picant Spring," meaning very early spring. She gave me a set of swatches and told me to wear those colors. Most of them were colors I had never worn before, and many of the colors I usually wore were not included.

A few weeks later, a friend took me shopping. She picked out two things for me, in colors that were

among my swatches but that I had never even had near my face before: a spruce green dress and a peachy (yellowish) pink blouse that is almost exactly the color of my skin. I was so used to thinking I couldn't wear these colors that I had walked right by them. As soon as I put on the dress and then the blouse, I noticed something quite dramatic. First of all, I noticed how good I looked. My skin seemed to come alive in a way I had never seen before. But something else happened that went beyond knowing I looked good: I noticed a deep inner sense of harmony and at-homeness, as if something in the energy frequency of these two colors is precisely attuned to the energy frequency of my own being.

Since that shopping trip, I have noticed the following. First, I keep wanting to be around spruce green and peachy pink. I've become aware of a certain delight and restfulness in myself when I see these colors in nature, e.g., in a spruce tree. I may have always felt this on some level but just never attended to it before. Second, for the first time in my life I like the color of my skin. I had always felt it was too yellowish and wished it were more pink. Now I like the skin color God gave me. Finally, I have a general sense of increased appreciation for the variety and wonder of all Creation.

As I reflect on this experience, I am aware that I thought color analysis was weird or even occult simply because I didn't know anything about it. Now that I feel more open to it, I see that the idea of different colors' having different effects on us due to different frequencies of light is no more weird than the idea of different types of music's having different effects on us due to different frequencies of sound.

A scientific experiment has encouraged me even further to be open to the different effects of colors. An Italian scientist, a Dr. Ponza, experimented with putting people in different-colored rooms and measuring their physiological responses. He found that when people were placed in a red room, their blood pressure, muscle tone, and breathing rhythm increased. In a green room, the blood pressure was lowered and capillaries were dilated. A blue room lowered the blood pressure, pulse rate, and breathing rhythm. Then **Dr. Ponza** tried the same experiment with a group of blind people . . . and got the same results! 13

Apparently color is an aspect of Creation that is always affecting us physically, emotionally, and spiritually whether or not we are consciously aware of it. Although I imagine occult systems could be devised using colors (and in fact colors are used to designate various hierarchies in witchcraft), all I can say is that the fruit of "having my colors tested" has been to help me appreciate God, myself, and others more. My experience with colors has taught me how quickly I can discount a way God wants to love and heal me through Creation, simply because it is presented in a language unfamiliar to me.

CRITERIA FOR DISCERNMENT

Based on these general perspectives, following are some suggested criteria for discerning healing methods, theories, and philosophies:

1. *Is Jesus present in the beginning, the middle, and the end of our involvement with any method, theory or philosophy?*

Do we begin by asking Jesus if this method is right for us and do we sense him leading us to use it? Do we keep inviting him to guide us in our use of it? Are the fruits in our lives and the lives of those we minister to good or bad? One fruit of our involvement with any healing method should be that it deepens simple faith in the authority of Jesus to heal, rather than contradicts or "fights" such faith.

2. *Have I invited the Holy Spirit to speak to me through study of Scripture and church tradition in relation to this method, therapy, or philosophy?*

If a healing method is of God it will not conflict with Scripture or church tradition. However, what **at** first appears to be a conflict may sometimes be a sign that we have not really understood Scripture or tradition. Scripture and tradition do not interpret themselves. Different people read them from different perspectives (e.g., a social view, a depth-psychological view, etc.). Hence, ongoing dialogue among perspectives is needed. Otherwise, Scripture study and calling on tradition may be misused to block insight.

3. *Is there a quality of death to self-centeredness, in the sense of not seeking personal power or prestige in my use of this method, theory, or philosophy?*

Jesus warned us, "Don't rejoice that you can cast out demons" (Luke 10:20). This warning must be addressed to our use of all healing methods, whether traditional (in the West) or not. We can seek power and prestige by trying to perpetuate a world in which we have all the answers according to the logico-deductive method,

4. *Does my use of a particular method promote appropriate care for myself and others?*

Am I becoming more sensitive to ethical concerns, fairness, repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation?

The pursuit of healing can become self-absorbed. How do I balance legitimate care for myself with accountability to others; what I am due with what I owe?

5. *Is everyone welcome to come and learn, or does this method have a gnostic quality in the sense of an emphasis on elitist knowledge available only to a special few?*

Although Jesus was not the only religious leader to heal the sick, he was the only one who invited all his followers to do the same. This is not to deny the need for training or for special aptitudes in the use of any therapy method. Rather, the issue here is an attitude of openness to the basic equality of persons. Jesus both encouraged all believers to pray for healing rather than initiating a select few and said that those who were "trained" in the spiritual laws through prayer, fasting, and forgiveness of enemies would have more power to heal (e.g., Matt. 16:18; Mark 9:14-29).

6. *Is there a quality of the warm personal presence of Christ, rather than an exclusive emphasis on abstract truth or "energy," in this method?*

Christian revelation tells us that the world has a personal center of love, incarnated in Jesus. Thus any healing method should lead us to a deeper sense of personal relationship rather than to knowledge alone. G. K. Chesterton illuminates this distinction in an essay called "The Light and the Heat" in which he describes the different emphases of Eastern and Western religion:

Buddhism stands for a simplification of the mind and a reliance on the most indestructible ideas; Christianity stands for a simplification of the heart and a reliance on the most indestructible sentiments. The greater Christian insistence upon personal deity and immortality is not, we fancy, the cause so much as the effect of this essential trend towards an ancient passion and pathos as the power that most nearly rends the veil from the nature of things. Both creeds grope after the same secret sun, but Buddhism dreams of its light and Christianity of its heat. Buddhism seeks after God with the largest conception it can find, the all-producing and all-absorbing One; Christianity seeks after God with the most elementary passion it can find - the craving for a father, the hunger that is as old as the hills. It turns the whole cry of a lost universe - into the cry-of-a-lost universe into the cry of a lost child.¹⁴

If a healing method should lead us as Christians to the "heat" of personal relationship with God, it should lead our patients there as well. And, since we image God for those we minister to, our own relationship with our patients should be warm and personal. So, we might ask, does this method lead to a greater sense of I/Thou love relationship between healer and patient, between healer and God, and between patient and God?

7. *Are we open to understanding the universe in new ways, or are we rejecting a healing method out of fear of the unknown and a legalism that wants everything in its accustomed place?*

While a new idea that is of God will not violate basic scriptural and doctrinal truths, it is also likely to help us understand those truths in a whole new way. Where the Holy Spirit is present, there is always something creative and surprising happening. Thus, if an idea too neatly confirms our traditional medical and theological ways of thinking, perhaps that's as much of a danger sign as when an idea totally contradicts traditional truths. As we consider an unfamiliar healing method, we might ask ourselves:

Do I come away more open and accepting, or more closed and judgmental?

Did I learn something new, or am I more set than ever in my old ways?

Am I more peaceful and free, or am I more afraid of life?

Do I love myself, others, and God more, or less?

8. *Is my evaluation of a healing method grounded in the integrity of my personal experience?*

While my experience should not be *the* measure of truth, it should always be *a* measure of truth. God lives in and through us and is known within human experience. Any separating of truth, of knowing, from experience separates us from our bodies and our integrity, positing truth in some external standard or tradition, such as in a particular community's interpretation of Scripture that has come to seem objective and definitive. To give up the task of interpreting Scripture in light of the Living Word being spoken in and through our experience is to give up authentic life in God. Authentic life in God is not lived by formulas or correct interpretations but rather by risking convictions in context, convictions born of a living process of contending with various traditions' interpretations of Scripture, accountability to prayerful discernment of

inenas ana authorities, and deep inner listening for the Spirit's living Word as Scripture is interpreted into one's context.

9. *Is my use of a particular method open to dialogue with persons a/questioning or dissenting perspectives?*

Have I come to appreciate the truth in positions that oppose the method or theory I am using? Openness to dialogue and questioning enhances our concern for truth, challenges our self-striving while strengthening our awareness of human limitations and our need for others, and deepens our trust in God's leading. Initially fragile insights need some protection so they can grow in clarity and conviction. Eventually, however, their inherent truth can only be refined, tested, and corrected through dialogue.

10. *Does this healing method have any verifiable connections with occultism or witchcraft, and if so, is such a connection inherent in its use?*

Some methods that initially appear to be occult may simply represent misguided uses by a few people of methods that can be used in Christ-centered ways. At the same time, other methods seem intrinsically dangerous, such as placing hexes on people and then removing them. (Even here there is a misguided use of something fundamentally good: our capacity to bless others. A hex or curse is a negative "blessing." The very fact that something is used in witchcraft may be a sign of its intrinsic goodness and even holiness; e.g., the Black Mass of witchcraft is a reversal of the Eucharist.)

QUESTIONS

The above perspectives and suggested criteria for discernment are intended only as an invitation to dialogue, not as a final or complete statement. We invite readers to respond, and hope many will take up this invitation. Possible questions to be raised and articles to be written include:

Personal experiences of specific healing methods and how they have been integrated with traditional medicine and theology. For example, how might therapeutic touch be related to the laying on of hands in healing prayer and in the Sacraments? Has anyone had a positive experience with therapeutic touch, and what were the fruits? Has anyone had a negative experience, and what damage was done?

Are there any physicists among our readers or known to our readers who could speak to us about current understandings of the relationship between matter and energy?

What do we now know about the self-healing powers of the body?

What experiences did the saints have of ESP and paranormal healing?

What fears and theological or medical fallacies led to the initial condemnation of persons who searched for truth, such as Galileo and Semmelweis? How can such fears and fallacies be corrected so that we are free to recognize new truths?

What are *your* criteria for discerning methods of healing, criteria that are unique to your own needs, direction of growth, personality type, and life experience?

Reference Notes

1. John H. Court, "A Case of Congregational Healing," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 4:2 (1985): 98-102.

2. *The Spiritual Counterfeits Project Newsletter* is an example of a more cautious approach. It is published in an environment so extremely open to spiritual experimentation that such caution is understandable. (Spiritual Counterfeits Project, P.O. Box 4308, Berkeley, Calif. 94704.)

3. See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), as well as William F. J. Ryan, S.J., and Bernard J. Tyrell, eds., *Theology in Its Context: A Second Collection* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), pp. 55-67.

4. John J. Heaney, *The Sacred and the Psychic* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), pp. 147-48.

5. Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas* (Chicago: Regnery, 1957).

6. Heaney, *Sacred and the Psychic*, p. 61.

7. "Should Doctors Study Physics?" *Advances* 2:3 (1985): 13. This brief note quotes from Julian Kenyon, "The Segmental Electrogram. A Non-invasive Early Diagnostic Scanning Technique," *British Journal of Holistic Medicine* 1:2 (December 1984):

Conventional investigations, such as x-ray examinations, the EMI [electro-magnetic inference] scanner and more recently nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) all look at structure in the body, albeit in some cases

in extraordinary detail. . . The alternative view is that energetic parameters are of primary importance. The implication is that all biological events are basically electrical changes, usually of an ionic nature, and if these are abnormal and continue for long enough then eventually structural change will ensue, which of course will show up when looked at by the conventional methods mentioned. If pathological change can be detected at the energetic state, then diagnosis can be much earlier, and also pathology at this stage is more easily reversible than when a "lump" has already appeared. Unfortunately, many doctors still consider this view nonsense. This is perhaps related to the emphasis in medical training on the disciplines of biology and biochemistry. If doctors were physicists then the alternative view would appear more scientific.

8. Heany, *Sacred and the Psychic*, p. 51.

9. In his book *The World in Between: Christian Healing and the Struggle for Spiritual Survival* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984), E. Milingo (former archbishop of Lusaka, Zambia) describes how traditional African ancestor worship is enlarged and completed by Jesus, our primary ancestor, and the Communion of Saints, our ancestors who are with Jesus.

10. Daniel J. O'Hanlon, S.J., "Integration of Christian Practices: A Western Christian Looks East," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 16:3 (May 1984): 10-11.

11. Thanks to Fr. Ted Jarvis, S.J., for help with this section.

12. Louis Savary and Patricia Berne, *Prayerways* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), pp. 10-22.

13. Benz, Portmann, and Izutsu, et al. *Color Symbolism* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1977), p. 139.

14. A. L. Maycock, ed., *The Man Who Was Orthodox* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1963), pp. 180-81.

Sheila Fabricant, M.Div., is a member of the Board of Editors for *The Journal of Christian Healing*. She works full-time with Frs. Dennis and Matthew Linn, S.J., with whom she has given numerous retreats and written three books: *Prayer Course for Healing Life's Hurts*, *Praying with Another for Healing* and *Healing the Greatest Hurt* and the forthcoming *Healing the Eight Stages of Life*.

Douglas Schoeninger, Ph.D., is president of the Institute for Christian Healing and editor-in-chief of *The Journal of Christian Healing*. His doctoral degree is in clinical psychology from the University of Wisconsin. He is a deacon in the Presbyterian church.