

# **Lähetysteologinen Aikakauskirja**

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## **Journal of Mission Theology**

Volume 1 – Fasc. 1 1991

HEALING MINISTRY  
CONCEPT OF HEALING IN THE RELIGIONS –  
CHALLENGES TO THE HEALING  
MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH IN MISSION  
HELSINKI 16 – 18 AUGUST 1990  
NORDIC INSTITUTE FOR MISSIONARY  
AND ECUMENICAL RESEARCH (NIME)



Edited by  
**TIMO VASKO**

Institute of Mission Theology Church Mission Centre  
P.O. Box 185, 00161 Helsinki, Finland

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Prof. dr. theol. Jan-Martin Berentsen  
Misjonshøgskolen, Stavanger  
Chairperson, NIME

#### OPENING ADDRESS

It is a privilege and a great pleasure for me on behalf of the **Nordic Institute for Missionary and Ecumenical Research (NIME)** to welcome each one of you to our **Healing Ministry Seminar** here in Helsinki.

It is already a couple of years ago since we in NIME accepted the idea of having a conference on a theme that was tentatively formulated somewhat like "Religious therapy - therapeutic religion". It was early decided that the seminar should be held in Helsinki, and thanks to the excellent work of the preparatory committee headed by Dr. Timo Vasko and to the cooperation of the Church Mission Centre and the University of Helsinki we convene here today for a program that seems to be very exciting.

**Religion and healing, missiology and healing** - why such a combination? The question is not profound, neither is the answer difficult. Even a superficial knowledge of both religion and mission reveals that the two are closely linked to the concept of healing, at least if we understand the concept in its broad and general sense. And when I say "religion" I mean old religions and new religions of all kinds, and Christianity itself. Among all the things on which the religions disagree, may we not dare to say that at least there is a fundamental agreement that **something is wrong, something has to be healed?** And in some way or other people - in religion and ethics - try to come to terms with the question how that which is wrong can be corrected, how that which is broken can be healed, both on the individual, communal and global level. An old Oriental - probably Confucian - proverb goes like this:

"A physician who cannot heal illness but rather bothers the patient is a bad physician, he who can heal only illness is an insignificant physician, he who can heal illness and human is a mediocre physician; he who can heal illness, human and his country is a great physician."

Who, then, is the "great physician"? Where is the "great physician" to be found? And what is the "great physician" to do in order to heal and to cure illness, human and country? When answers to these questions are being spelled out, there is agreement no more in the world of religions. The Buddhist points to "the eightfold path" as the way towards perfect alleviation of all suffering. New religious movements present old answers in new editions apparently fit for humankind in a post-modern world. And then there is the testimony of him and to him who very early in his ministry was rejected in his own village by reference to an old Jewish proverb: "Physician, heal yourself..." (Lk 4,23)

Now, what is the **purpose** of a seminar like this? Doubtless it is to gain knowledge and information from knowledgeable and informed people. Knowledge about the relationship between religion and healing in various contexts. I look forward to the papers to be presented as I think a highly qualified group of people have come to share with us from their own studies and insights. We especially welcome you! And we already at this point express our gratitude for your presence in our seminar. - But the purpose goes deeper than sheer information. Hopefully the seminar will put us on the track to the deepest existential problems of humankind; problems that today seem to haunt humankind globally and universally in an unprecedented way - leaving us all in a gruelling tension between hope and despair; problems to which Christian mission - from all churches - has to address itself in all earnest if it will remain faithful to its cause. So, after all, a seminar on **Healing Ministry** is deeply meaningful in the context of an institute that is expected to promote missionary and ecumenical research.

By this very brief greeting I welcome you all to our conference.



Prof.  
 Tuomo Manermaa  
 Department of Systematic  
 Theology  
 Helsinki

## WELCOMING ADDRESS

On behalf of the Faculty of Theology and, in particular, the Department of Systematic Theology, it gives me great pleasure to welcome each of you. I have been asked to make a short presentation of our department.

The Department of Systematic Theology has three disciplines, each of which has its own professorate: Dogmatics (Prof. Eero Huovinen), Ecumenics (Prof. Tuomo Mannermaa) and Theological Ethics, combining the Philosophy of Religion (Prof. Simo Knuuttila). These disciplines have their own special fields of interest, but with cooperation and dialogue between them.

In the field of Theological Ethics, combining the Philosophy of Religion, many current ethical, socio-ethical and philosophical themes are under study. By contrast, one of the most important endeavours is, however, the project on Medieval Philosophy and Theology, concentrating on medieval logic and ethics.

In Ecumenics the main interest lies in the study of Reformation Theology, especially that of Martin Luther, as seen in the context of ecumenical thought. Consequently, the emphasis is on the patristic and scholastic background of the reformer. Concurrently, the philosophical presuppositions of modern Luther studies (following Albrecht Ritschl) constitute an important field of reappraisal, the results of which are applied to several bilateral ecumenical dialogues and to various theological questions of current interest.

One of the main interests in the field of Dogmatics is the research on Post-Reformation theology, up to the Enlightenment. Many developmental trends can, thus, be viewed in a manner departing from the ordinary, especially when taken in conjunction with the above-mentioned studies on medieval and reformation thought.

I do hope this short introduction familiarizes you with our basic work and in so doing helps you to feel more at home as our guests.



Th.D. Timo Vasko

Director of The Institute of Mission Theology

Church Mission Centre

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Helsinki

#### OPENING

This year last May I visited the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago and also its very good library. I recommend! There I found an interesting review of health and medicine in the catholic tradition. Under an title: "Ethical Guidelines for Catholic Health Care Institutions" there is an introduction - I think - also for our conference. That is: "The Church's mission is to reveal and mediate the healing redemptive love of Jesus Christ in the world... health care institutions exist to be a visible expression of this mission. They should powerfully embody the Church's commitment to promote health and wholeness and to extend Christ's healing love to people whose lives have been disrupted by sickness, injury, or death... Health includes the integration of the spiritual, the physical, and the psycho-social in every human person. Furthermore, the patient is an integrated whole, sometimes an individual, but often a family, a parent bonded with child, or community... health care institutions affirm the centrality of the patient in the health care decisionmaking process. Moreover, the significant moral community surrounding the patient should provide support, counsel, and guidance in the decision-making process. The health care institution, as an extension of the religious and moral community of the patient, stand committed to provide compassionate support for the pursuit of the welfare and integrity of the patient. "... In light of this broad notion of their mission ... health care institutions ought to give sensitive care to the whole person, spiritual care as well as care for physical and psycho-social needs. Thus, pastoral care personnel have an indispensable role in the health care ministry".

In an ecumenical atmosphere today it is important and usefull for us to get a worldwide perspective on healing ministry. This kind of ministry is a great biblical and human task of mission in every church. Most of us in this seminar are Lutheran Christians. I think we don't know very good different or similar traditions of healing ministry in many Christian traditions or many religions of other faiths in many contexts of Asian, Africa or Europe. Therefore, this seminar will provide us with new informations in many both theoretical and practical presentations. On behalf of the Finnish arranger, The Institute of Mission Theology in The Mission Centre of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, I have the great pleasure to welcome you to the seminar "Healing Ministry".

Prof. Johannes Aagaard  
 Institute of Missiology and Ecumenical Theology  
 University of Aarhus, Denmark

### THE COSMOLOGY BEHIND HEALING TECHNIQUES<sup>1)</sup>

At first sight the therapy market make an incoherent impression. However, behind the vast offering of health and greater comfort you find a distinct world view determining the basic concepts behind alternative healing. This world view has decisive traits in common with ancient Asian religions, Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism.

The individual healer very often is unaware of this connection because he or she has only mastered part of the whole. But if you want to understand the meaning of healing and therapy you better acquaint yourself with the cosmology of energies.

There is a recognized conflict between chaos and cosmos in most religious systems. This holds true also for the Biblical world views. Cosmos is the meaningful coherence that has come about in creation which comes into being by subduing the powers of chaos.

In the New Testament these powers of chaos are understood as demonic powers that is being subdued by the new creation at the arrival of the Kingdom of God. This is the basis of the healings in the Bible.

The task of the Kingdom of God is to drive away the chaospowers from cosmos or to oust them again, if they have returned. This cosmology (a word meaning "knowledge of the universe") is the frame of reference for the entire biblical preaching of God and

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1) This is one chapter out of four chapters. The three others can be had from the Dialog Center: Dialogcentret Danmark, Katrinebjergvej 46, 8200 Aarhus N, Danmark

His Kingdom. It gives the very circumference for the comprehension of the necessity of salvation. Cosmos itself is at stake in salvation, nothing less, and salvation reaches man both in the preaching of the Gospel and in healing from disease.

So cosmology is a necessity, for without cosmology salvation is reduced to individual salvation out of this world. Salvation becomes the salvation of my soul out of the body and away from the world. But the goal of God's Kingdom is to save the world. The goal is "the rebirth of the world" as Grundtvig sings in No 205 in the Danish hymn-book: "The rebirth of the world causes the joy to be born anew..."

When modernistic and conservative sections within protestantism agree that salvation certainly concerns the individual and the soul of the individual in particular, but not the world and the bodies of men, a serious decay of Christian belief has taken place. This decay is the background for the present-day interest in occult healing, for such a onesidedly individualistic christianity cannot communicate the Christian tradition of healing even if this is a decisive element in numerous Bible texts.

#### Micro-macro ideology

Behind most alternative healing performed today is a world view quite different from the Biblical one. In short you can term it the micro-macro cosmology.

According to this world view there is a close relation between the great outer world and the small interior world. For instance it is taken for granted that there is a connection between the heavenly bodies and the individual bodies. Likewise there is a connection between the course of a person's life and the lines in his palm. Many such analogical examples could be mentioned.

Within the frame of micro-macro cosmology it is a obvious thing that you can manipulate one level by means of the other. You can gain power in the great outside world by changing the small interior one. And the other way round, for you can also win inner power by means of outer manipulations.



"All of nature is to be found in the smallest things" is the motto for the micro-macro cosmology, and it means that you draw analogical conclusions from one level to the other. By studying the iris of the human eye you can gain insight into the medical history of that same person, just to mention an example. But since the goal is transformation rather than cognition, the analogies are first of all used as a basis for healing manipulations.

In this way man becomes fully embedded in the world. There is really no room for anything unique in the small which isn't also present in the big. This "naturalisation" of man probably is the most dangerous consequence of the micro-macro cosmology. In this way there is no real room for such phenomena as freedom, conscience and responsibility. In this way man's nature as a person is lost, because man as a personally responsible and personally active being merge with man's cosmic nature and it's processes.

From a Christian and theological perspective micro-macro cosmology is unacceptable for two reasons: partly because it is a manipulative cosmology and partly because it is a naturalizing cosmology.

#### Elements: the realities of macrocosmos

If you are looking for a common religious language you should be aware of the importance of the elements.

Apart from China the same interpretation of the elements are dominant in Asia and Europe. Four material elements are taken into consideration: earth, water, fire and air (often named wind). These elements take you to a fifth element, ether. Sometimes a sixth element is present in the occult tradition understood as consciousness or mind, in a form which involves "clear-sightedness" (clairvoyance) and "clearness of hearing" (clairaudience) and other supernatural abilities.

Each element corresponds with a sense, so that "the sixth sense" is analogue with the sixth element, consciousness. The fifth

element at times is called "the quintessence" (quint is the number five in latin), designating that the dimension of this element sums up all the lower rungs of the ladder.

Each element has its own colour. In spite of the fact that the colours are not quite alike in all traditions, they still do correspond rather well with the elements. The earth-element is yellow (or brown or green), water is blue (or grey-blue), fire is red, air whitish blue, and ether is white.

The rainbow includes all colours and is a well-known symbol in large parts of the new religiosity, summarized in New Age.

Furthermore each element has its geometrical form. Earth is square, water is circular, fire a triangle pointing upwards, air is a horizontal crescent, and ether is drop-shaped (or a pearl, a diamond, a jewel etc.).

Each element has a corresponding vice and a wisdom, both of them in mutual correspondence, and there are numerous other analogies built into the system.

#### Chakras: the functions of microcosmos

Each macro-cosmic element corresponds with a micro-cosmic chakra. The term "chakra" derives from the Yoga tradition of India, and it means actually "circle" or "discos" in Sanscrit, but are also called padmas, i.e. lotusflowers.

The idea is that there is a series of "wheels" in the human body. They are six in number and they are placed above each other along the middle axis of the body. Different traditions are not in complete accordance on the precise location of the chakras, but by and large they are found in those areas that are known by lovers and torturers: the rectum, the genitals, the diaphragm, the solar plexus, the throat and the eyes.

Even more confusion surrounds the true nature of the chakras. In some new religious books they are described as physical realities, in others as organs in the ethereal or astral bodies, and in still

other books they are seen as concepts or symbols without actual reality. But most of the time chakras are described as a little bit of it all, that is, as dim postulates, a sort of imaginations creating an occult body-consciousness, but somehow related to physical realities in the glands.

Each chakra corresponds to an element, and it is this analogy that gives significance to the chakra theory, which is the fulfillment or the realization of the micro-macro cosmology.

The lowest chakra by the rectum corresponds with the earth element. The sex chakra corresponds with the water element. The belly chakra belongs to fire and the digestion. The heart chakra (close to the lungs) relates to the element of air and breathing. The throat chakra matches with ether and with speech and words. And the eye chakra ("the third eye") relates to purified consciousness and light.

#### The aura

Since each chakra corresponds to an element it also - as mentioned already - has its own colour. The exact colour of the individual chakra varies because different cultures has differing perceptions of colours.

But the basic idea is this, that each chakra shines in its particular colour, visible however, only to persons capable of clear-sightedness (clairvoyance). As a logical consequence clear-sighted people must have their "third eye" opened - by activating their eye-chakra.

If the colour of a chakra has a wrong shade disease is the cause. Accordingly healing uses techniques of changing the aura so it again becomes normal. These techniques often are composed of strokings and different kinds of body massage. But most important is the influencing of the chakras by means of yogic manipulations such as breathing exercises and prolonged repetition of mantras.

This is self-evident, for the influencing of chakras is the very essence of yoga. Yoga-techniques are exactly made up of



manipulations of chakras in order to bring man's microcosm in accordance with macrocosm. The state reached by the yogi thereby often is termed balance and harmony, but that is only and solely an assertion in this context.

Considerations of time and space will not permit the different ways of yoga to be described here. They have been thoroughly dealt with in the educational material published by the Dialog Center under the title "New Religiosity and Christianity". This can be ordered from the secretariat in Aarhus.

### Life Force as Snake Power

In Hindu and Buddhist and Occult religiosity it is not God who is the active subject as creator and saviour. It is man himself who is the world creator and the world savior via the life force. In these religions the divinisation of man is the center.

The decisive thing therefore is man-turned-god, the superhuman. He - or She - is the present godhead. The enlightened master, the guru, has replaced God, because the guru has realized the possibilities which are latent in all humans in the shape of the sleeping life force, Kundalini, which means "the coiled one" in Sanscrit the Snake Power.

It is this Snake Power which is referred to with the term Energy, one of the most characteristic expressions in the literature of healing and therapy. The original term behind the prevalent talk of "energy" and "energies" is Shakti, another Sanscrit word which denotes the primal power of the world, the creative, cosmic mother-force. Kundalini is also called "Kundalini Shakti" because the Snake Power is identical with this cosmic primary power. Kundalini is "Shakti in me", so to say as is Prana.

With ordinary people the Snake Power (Kundalini) resides in a dormant state in the lowest chakra. By means of yoga techniques it is made to rise up through the series of chakras. For each chakra it passes, man becomes a little more divine and powerful.

Everyone should be able to understand that it leads to confusion and fatal misunderstanding if you, inside this system, mistake Energy for energy. The idea is absolutely not that people should be made a little more "energetic" and active inside this system. The idea really is that people should be awakened up by the great Energy, the Force, the Power, the Godhead, that will lead them beyond the borders of normal human existence and make them gods.

In the end this is not healing and therapy at all but growth and development away from the human world and into the sphere of the superhuman.

### Life Force and the energies

The different healing-systems had this in common that they presupposes a certain life force which in one way or another is linked with two vital functions in man: the life-breath, respiration (named Prana in Sanscrit), and sexuality (the above mentioned Kundalini).

Prana actually means "that which breathes", hence not breath itself but the force or the energy behind breath. And likewise Kundalini is not sexuality itself but the force behind it, symbolized as a snake.

This basic motive is recurrent in most Asian religions and cultures. In Chinese and Japanese areas the life force is termed chi (in Chinese) and ki (in Japanese) and its symbol is not so much the snake as the dragon.

Basically the aim is not really health and healing but immortality and divinity. Health and healing is so to say bieffects of the system itself. According to this "energy" view of life it is inescapable that you become still more healthy the more divine you become. According to a Christian philosophy of life it is just the other way around: you naturally become sick when you move away from the conditioning of life.

On his way to the final divinization the yogi acquires a number of supernatural abilities, named siddhis in Sanscrit, thereby

breaking all human limitations. A yogi who has acquired siddhis can float in the air in spite of the law of gravitation, he has clear sight and sees the invisible, he has clear hearing and hears the music of the spheres. He can make himself big as a mountain and small as a mouse etc.

The obtaining of siddhis is a side-effect of the rising of the Kundalini (the Snake Power) and of the manipulations of Prana which has activated all the chakras of the yogi. In them the supernatural powers are deposited and can be liberated.

As already said, the yoga techniques are decisive for the methodology of healing. These techniques are decisive for the forms of healing, which happen as biproducts of the entire yogic game. Healing techniques and yoga techniques are very closely related.

But many healers are not aware of this relation. Most of those who exercise healing and therapy certainly know in part the meaning of their own systems. Therefore their techniques function not because of their factual reality but inspite of the factual reality. Their effects are as a whole dependant on their religious and spiritual dimensions.



## REDEMPTION AS HEALING

### An ignored aspect of the Lutheran tradition

*Juhani Forsberg*

#### 1.

Christ's work for the salvation of the world has been described in several ways in the history of the Christian theology. Already the New Testament contains several expressions in explaining the meaning of the death and the resurrection of Christ. Many of them have an important background in the Old Testament. Some of them have then gained a more central position than others in the later developments of the dogma. In the Lutheran theological tradition first of all two concepts have got a key position. In the language of the motherland of reformation they are *Erlösung* and *Versöhnung*, in English *redemption* and *reconciliation/atonement*. This elementary distinction is important to notice as information therefore because the choice between those two as a key or prevailing concept result significantly different consequences for other areas of the Christian life and thought.

In the Lutheran Orthodoxy and in the Lutheran tradition afterwards emphasis has undoubtedly been put on the concept of reconciliation / atonement / *Versöhnung*. The work of Christ for the salvation of the world culminates in his vicarious death on the cross. Christ is the sacrifice for the human guilt before God. The reconciliation between God and man happens in the forgiveness of sins which means that God does no more reckon the sins of man as his guilt. Justification is a forensic act before the heavenly court (in foro coeli). The justified sinner is not made new but he has come into a new relation to God. The sacraments are means of grace which strengthen the believer in this new relation.

#### 2.

This a little bit rugged picture of the Lutheran tradition does not fit Luther himself. We shall later come to Luther's own views which are of importance for our subject. But it must still be mentioned an other factor in the difficulty of treating our subject on the ground of the Lutheran tradition. It is the new-protestant research on Luther and the Reformation with Albrecht Ritschl and Adolf Harnack as its two leading representatives. Tuomo Mannermaa has shown on several occasions that they represented on the ground of the philosophy of the Kantian tradition an idea of religion which is determined by the concept of *value*. The genuine religion

does not deal with the questions about "nature" or "ontological truths". The task of the religion is to raise man above the nature and show him the real values of life. The historical Christianity contains of course a lot of material which belongs in the sphere of the "nature", but the task of a theologian and of a modern Christian is to go forward on the way of the Reformation and to separate what is spurious away from the religion.

From this point of view it is very interesting to read Adolf Harnacks *Das Wesen des Christentums* or his *History of Dogma*, especially its last hundred pages where Harnack presents his interpretation and critique of Luther. In his *Wesen* Harnack represents the idea of the "original spiritual religion of Jesus" and describes the later developments of the Christian faith, how its original spiritual elements flow out and get an alien Hellenistic "body". The genuine original religion of Jesus does not contain anything which belongs to the "nature", "history" or "future". The preaching of Jesus did not contain metaphysical, cosmological or historical questions. The sensible world is not included in the true religion. The true religion is a central part of the inner life of man, where the "soul" meets God. It does not contain or offer any kind of intellectual knowledge but an inner experience of value. After its adaptation to the Hellenistic culture and religiosity the Christianity became a physical and metaphysical religion. Luther restored the original Christian faith, but his work remained half-finished and thus his own thinking contained still many Catholic elements alien to the original Christianity and inconsistent with his own leading ideas.<1>

In his *Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums* Harnack deals with the question of healing in the Old Church <2>. But also there the main point is the *healing of the soul*, and he underlines at the same time the decline of sacrament practice into the religion of pagan mysteries.

### 3.

If we accept the new-protestant view on Luther, we must reduce his theology and spirituality so that the whole Luther is no more recognizable in the final result. Therefore it is extremely important firstly to sketch the total view of Luther concerning our theme and secondly evaluate the relevance of his thinking to us.

There has been a debate about whether Luther represented in interpreting the work of Christ more the Anselmian concept of the vicarious atonement or the concept of redemption from the power of death, evil and sin. Gustaf Aulén called the former "Latin doctrine of reconciliation" and the latter "Classical doctrine of reconciliation" and maintained that Luther represented the latter type which was also the dominating doctrine in the Old Church. Some

others are of the opinion that Luther's basic doctrine of reconciliation was that of the Latin (Anselmian) type, and at the same time those theologians emphasize the continuity between Luther and the Lutheran Orthodoxy.

After reading Luther's writings in some extent it is easy to realize that both types are represented in his theology. But nevertheless, I am inclined towards the opinion of Gustaf Aulén: The "classical" doctrine of redemption dominates the works of Luther and the vicarious death of Christ on the cross is a part of the whole doctrine of redemption. Anyway, Luther's view on redemption is not reducible to a onesided juridical interpretation of the vicarious atonement.

Especially in Luther's late dogmatically "heavy" writings as e.g. in his voluminous Lectures on Genesis <3> the classical concept of redemption is dominating. In exposing the Old Testament texts of Creation, Fall and promise given to Abraham Luther describes the work of Christ as a victory over sin, evil and death. The forgiveness of sins and the non-imputation of guilt are a part of this whole.

In his Lectures on Genesis Luther not only uses the word *redemption* as the main concept of the salvific work of Christ but he also uses such words of the Church Fathers as *restoration* and *restitution* in describing God's work for the restoration of Creation. This is very important for our subject.

Luther's view on redemption comes more clear when examined on the background of his doctrine of Creation and Fall.

When God created man He gave him the "double life" (*duplex vita*), the "spiritual" and "animal" (*vita spiritualis, vita animalis*). The spiritual life signifies man's life before God, in fellowship with God and even still more: in the original state of innocence the man was "full of God" (*voll Gottis*). The animal life signifies the psycho-physical reality of man and its functions. In the original state the first man and woman lived totally happy, wholesome and healthy life both spiritually and corporeally.<4>

The Fall of man did not only break the relation between God and man, that is the spiritual life. Sin and evil damaged and corrupted his animal life, too. Luther can very extensively illustrate the broken state of the whole creation and nature - not only the state of man - as a totally corrupted reality after the Fall.

Salvation pertains equally to both parts of the corrupted life. Salvation means forgiveness of



sins and abolition of guilt and freedom of the soul before God but at the same time it means restoration of the human life as a whole. In its fullness salvation means resurrection of the body. So the salvation is redemption, restoration, restitution and - we can also say - healing of the human life. At the same time this restoration is something much more than returning back to the original innocent state.

#### 4.

Luther does not limit his speaking of salvation as restoration on the fundamental level of Christ's work. It has important consequences also for his doctrine of Sacraments, hamartiology and ecclesiology.

In Luther's Large Catechism is an important passage in the treatment of Baptism which is worth of notice:

"In Baptism, therefore, every Christian has enough to study and to practice all his life. He always has enough to do to believe firmly what Baptism promises and brings - victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God's grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with his gifts. In short, the blessings of Baptism are so boundless that if timid nature considers them, it may well doubt whether they could be true. Suppose there were a physician who had such skill that people would not die, or even though they died (addition in a later version: would be restored to life and) would afterward live forever. Just think how the world would snow and rain money upon him! Because of the pressing crowd of rich men no one else could get near him. Now, here in Baptism there is brought free to every man's door just such a priceless medicine which swallows up death and saves the lives of all men" (Luther, Large Catechism, Baptism 41-43. The Book of Concord, transl. and ed. by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959. S. 441-442).

We can firstly see from this text, that in his interpretation of Baptism Luther starts with the expression of the classical doctrine of redemption: Baptism means victory over death and the devil and then also forgiveness of sin. Secondly this text is one of the strongest testimonies of Luther's sacramental realism. Baptism not only promises something for the future but it brings God's grace. Further, it not only brings God's grace as if it were merely God's merciful attitude towards us. Baptism brings the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with his gifts. Then Luther illustrates this real presence of the Triune God and his salvation with an example of a very skilful physician who can make men immortal. Finally, Luther calls in harmony with the language of the Old Church that Baptism is a priceless medicine which swallows up death and saves the lives of all men.



A second passage from Luther's Large Catechism speaks about Eucharist in the same manner: "We must never regard the sacrament as a harmful thing from which we should flee, but as a pure, wholesome, soothing medicine which aids and quickens us in both soul and body. For where the soul is healed, the body has benefited also. Why, then, do we act as if the sacrament were a poison which would kill us if we ate of it?"

Of course, it is true that those who despise the sacrament and lead unchristian lives receive it to their harm and damnation. To such people nothing can be good or wholesome, just as when a sick person will fully eat and drink what is forbidden him by the physician. But those who feel their weakness, who are anxious to be rid of it and desire help, should regard and use the sacrament as a precious antidote against the poison in their systems. For here in the sacrament you receive from Christ's lips the forgiveness of sins, which contains and conveys God's grace and Spirit with all his gifts, protection, defense, and power against death and the devil and all evils" (Luther, Large Catechism, Lord's Supper 68-70. The Book of Concord, transl. and ed. by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia 1959. S. 454).<5>

This text is fully parallel with the previous passage. The Sacrament of Eucharist is also a pure, wholesome, soothing medicine and a precious antidote. This medicine is not only for the soul or for a man's inner well-being. The Eucharist quickens also the body. It could be seen a slight preference for the soul in the sentence: "For where the soul is healed, the body has benefited also". Anyway, it underlines very strongly the psycho-physical unity of man. But the sentence could also be interpreted in such a manner that it speaks about the healing and blessing of soul and body at the same time.

On this background it is only natural that Luther can describe sin as poison (venenum) or illness (morbum). Sin is not only human guilt or break in the relation between God and man. Sin is a real corruption of the human being. Luther's hamartiology is thus possible to describe as a counterpart of grace and sacraments as medicine.<6>

In the ecclesiology of Luther the concept of healing occurs in the connection with the image of the Church as a hospital or a sanatorium for those who are ill. In a sermon Luther says:

"This is the sum of the Gospel. The Kingdom of Christ is a Kingdom of mercy and grace where there is nothing else than bearing and bearing (of each other's burdens). Christ bears our miseries and illnesses. He takes our sins on his shoulders and he is patient when we go astray. Always and constantly we lie on his shoulders and he does not become weary of carrying. Preachers in this Kingdom have to comfort consciences, to keep friendly company with men, to nourish them with the Gospel. They must bear the weak, heal the sick, and they have to be able to find the right word in accordance with everyone's needs. This is the ministry of a true bishop and preacher. They may not use violence as our bishops now do.

They put people in the stocks and on the blocks and say: Hey, up with you; if you do not want you must. That is not right, but a bishop and preacher has to act as he were a nurse. He keeps careful company with him who is ill, distributes good words, speaks friendly to him and does this all very diligently. In this way have also a bishop and pastor to do and he may not think otherwise his diocese and parish is a sanatorium and hospital (of incurably ill), where he has many and many kinds of sick people" (WA 10, 1:2 /Sommerpostille 1526/, 366; engl. translation of mine).<7>

These passages of Luther remind us clearly of the sacrament theology of the Old Church. Already Ignatius of Antioch called the Eucharist "a medicine of immortality (phármakon athanasías) and many other Church Fathers both in East and West have used the same phrase. The new-protestant theologians consider this thought the most obvious sign of the development of the original Christianity into a mystical or even magic religion. If it can be found in the texts of Luther some traces of that kind of thinking it must be considered a Catholic element, a relic which has nothing to do with the proper goal of his reformatory idea.<8>

But this interpretation of the new-protestantism is a forced and violent reduction of Luther's theology as a whole. Salvation as restoration, sacraments as a salutary medicine and the church as hospital are exponents of the "ontological realism" which Luther's thinking can be called. The real presence of God is not only a question of Eucharist but it belongs to all areas of faith.

## 5.

Someone may comment my presentation of Luther as follows: I can well agree with you that Luther represents the classical doctrine of redemption and that his speaking about salvation as restoration and about sacraments as a medicine is not only a relic or by-plot in his theology, but is Luther's language in above-mentioned passages only metaphorical or allegorical so that it does not in reality help those who are suffering from serious illnesses?

This question may be answered with following points. Firstly, it is true, that many parts of the quotations above are written in a metaphorical language, but not all of them: When Luther e.g. writes that the Eucharist "quickens us in both soul and body" or "where the soul is healed, the body is benefited also", there is not a question of a metaphor. And secondly, Luther's theory and use of metaphorical is much more "realistic" than in a conventional language. At least some central Biblical metaphors are interpreted by Luther in such a way that they are in a



higher degree true in their significance than in their "natural" meaning. So e.g. Christ as the true vine (John 15) is more "real" than a "natural" vine. I am sure that Luther would count the expression "Christ as the true Physician" among this category of metaphors.<9>

Luther's concept of redemption as restoration and of sacraments as medicine can of course be misinterpreted as a magic superstition. I suppose that fear of this has left some traces in the later Lutheran tradition. E.g. the

Catechism of O.Svebilius - which was in common use in Sweden-Finland through past centuries - does not contain any directly positive word about an effect of Lord's Supper on human body. On the contrary, the Catechism puts the following question (§ 20): "Do the consecrated bread and wine... contain any kind of hidden power, more than some other bread and wine?" Answer: "Not the least, but it is a damnable sin and idolatry when someone wants to cure bodily illnesses with them. It may not be allowed but those who seek and ask it must be punished and driven away".<10>

It seems probable that this article is directed towards a (popular) magical use of sacramental elements against diseases outside the right use of sacrament (*extra usum*). As such it does not fit Luther's thinking at all, because Luther also would have reacted very severely against such abuse of the Sacrament.

But it is very important to keep in mind two aspects in Luther's theology which can obviate the misunderstandings and misinterpretations of his sacrament realism.

Firstly, Luther's realism must always be seen in the context of his concept of faith. The sacraments benefit only when received in faith. Thus Luther can also say that the faith heals and renews. <11> Faith makes Christ and all his gifts - above all love - present in the believer. The love of God then renews the selfish love of man and even his affects which are corrupted and put into disorder by sin. The saints are justified sinners who are renewed by faith and love so that even their affects have become sensitive to the needs of the distressed.

Secondly, Luther's realism can be understood correctly only in the context of the theology of the cross. God reveals himself in a contrary shape (*sub contraria specie*). The real presence of Christ is not perceptible to the senses but it can be received only with faith. The Eucharist is purely a gift of God. A human being can administer it but not manipulate. The minister can assure the communicant that God blesses his soul and body with, in and through the Sacrament, but he cannot promise that the Sacrament will cure his actual illness.

Thirdly, Luther's realism can be rightly understood only in the context of his eschatology. Through Baptism both the soul and the body of the believer are made totally new, but this

remains hidden until his death. Baptism and Eucharist give already in this life a medicine against sin, evil and death, but the total healing of soul and body i.e. immortality is attainable not until in heaven. Everybody needs this medicine through his/her life, even he/she who is incurably ill or he/she who has some time recovered from an illness.

## Notes

- <1> See Adolph Harnack, History of Dogma. New York 1961. Vol VII, p. 168-274; Adolf von Harnack, What is Christianity? New York 1957, passim.  
For the interpretation of Harnack see Tuomo Mannermaa, Kristillisen opin vaiheet (= Stages of the Christian Doctrine). Helsinki 1975, p.14-21.
- <2> Adolf von Harnack, Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums. I Bd. 4. Aufl. Leipzig 1924, p. 129-150.
- <3> WA 42-44.
- <4> WA 42. See also Eero Huovinen, Kuolemattomuudesta osallinen (= Sharing in Immortality), in: Minä kuolevainen. Helsinki 1981, p. 159-266.
- <5> For the interpretation of these two texts is important: Eero Huovinen, Kuolemattomuuden lääke (= A Medicine of Immortality), in: Elävä dogma (= Living Dogma), STKS 155. Helsinki 1987, p. 218-227.  
See also Virpi Loikkanen, Ein Kuchen mit Christo. A Thesis for Master of Theology at the Univ. of Helsinki (mimeographed). Library of the Theol. Faculty Helsinki 1989, p.44-46.
- <6> Asmo Koskinen, Synti sydämen syvyydessä (= Sin in Depth of the Heart). A Thesis for Master of Theology at the Univ. of Helsinki (mimeographed) Library of the Theol. Faculty Helsinki 1989, p. 48-50.
- <7> See also Tuomo Mannermaa, Kaksi rakkautta (= Two Kinds of Love). Helsinki 1983, p. 91-92.
- <8> "Just as little did he rise clearly above the view of the Ancient Church and the Middle Ages in the question of the Sacrament. It is true, certainly, that he not only took steps towards breaking through this view, but really cancelled it by his

doctrine of the *one* Sacrament, the Word; yet there still lingered with him a hidden remnant, a real superstition (*superstitio*), with regard to the Sacrament, and therefore also with regard to the "means of grace", and this superstition had the gravest consequences for his construction of doctrine." Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, Vol. VII, p.235-236.

See also Alfred Adam, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Bd. 1. Gutersloh 1965, p. 103: "in den Ignatianen ist *phármakon athanasías* ein bildlicher Ausdruck gleichnishafter Art, der das geheimnisvolle Geschehen der Eucharistie dem Verstehen näherbringen soll; das 'pharmacum immortalitatis' der lateinischen Uebersetzung aber ist eine magische Formel, die das naturhafte Geschehen des Sakramentsvorgangs beschreibt."

- <9> See Luther's Great Confession of Lord's Supper (WA 26, p. 274-275). See also Horst Hirschler, *Biblisch predigen*. Hannover 1988 (2nd print), p. 125-127.
- <10> O.Svebilius, *Lutheruxen Wähän Catechismuxen Selitys* (= Exposition of the Small Catechism of M. Luther). Stockholm 1746, § 20, p. 100.
- <11> AWA 547, 12-21 (*Operationes in psalmos*). See Kaija Kumpukallio, *Ristinteologia Lutherin ensimmäisessä psalmiluennossa* (= The Theology of the Cross in the *Operationes in psalmos*). A Thesis for Master of Theology at the Univ. of Helsinki (mimeographed). Library of the Theol. Faculty Helsinki 1989.

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## MARTIN LUTHER ON SICKNESS AND HEALING

The charismatic movement as well as the faith movement have once again actualized the questions about healing in different Christian churches. The charismatic movement, which spread not only among free churches, but which also challenged the Roman Catholic church and the Lutheran Churches, emphasized the rediscovery of the different charismata to which the gifts of healing belong (1 Cor. 12:14). The charismatic movement has not always been kindly received especially among the Lutherans, which Martti Miettinen also indicates in his recent dissertation.<sup>1</sup> The strong emphasis on the Third Article can be seen as one of the reasons to this reservation.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless prayer for the sick has become more and more common in our churches. According to Larry Christenson the fruits of the charismatic movement nowadays can be seen in all the continents of the world.<sup>3</sup>

The aim of my examine-work *Sickness and Healing in the Theology of Martin Luther* was to investigate and present Luther's view on sickness and healing. My thesis was the following: Luther's theology of creation and his doctrine on redemption give the basis and the frame to something we could call a theology of healing. This theology of healing he implicitly presents in his theology of creation but in the practical application of his theological understanding he does not draw any far-reaching conclusions or consequences from this understanding. As far as I am concerned very little has been found

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1. Miettinen 1989, 11.

2. In his book *Hjärtats teologi. Mystikens plats hos Martin Luther* Bengt Hoffman points out three different censors in the western intellectualism and within parts of the traditional research on Luther. These censors can be of importance when we talk about healing, since healing often is assigned to the mystic experiences. See: Hoffman 1989, 21.

3. See: Christenson 1987, 17 f.



about these things in the research on Luther.<sup>1</sup> Luther himself did not with a dogmatic purpose penetrate on the questions about sickness, although he and his family were familiar with the theme. The material I used in my work was mainly both the Catechisms, the Church Collection of Sermons (Kirchenpostille), the Commentary on Epistle to the Galatians, *De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae praeludium* 1520 and some of his letters and colloquia. Since Luther himself didn't present any coherent theological explanation to this theme, my task was to collect, group and analyze the relevant material and try to structure a theological understanding of the subject.

In his understanding of the Trinity Luther unites to the doctrine proclaimed by the Roman Catholic church and the other Christian churches. God is one God in three persons: the Father who creates and constantly sustains his creation, the Son who sacrifices himself on Golgotha and the Holy Spirit who brings to life this work of Christ. The triune God is omnipotent, which means that he can use even the devil for his purposes. The work of Christ implies a new creation of the fallen man. This new creation will be completed in heaven when the victory over the devil is a fact.

### Sickness - theological models of interpretation

According to Luther one of the consequences of the Fall was the coming of sickness into the world.<sup>2</sup> I have found that Luther understands sickness in at least three different ways. First of all, sickness can be seen as a *tribulation sent from the devil*. According to his explanation to the Lord's prayer Luther sees the devil not only as a liar and a murderer, he also seeks man's life and vents his anger by causing accidents and injury to man's body. The devil breaks many a man's neck and drives others to insanity. The physical tribulation is however by Luther seen as a lower tribulation compared with the higher spiritual tribulation. A sickness seen as a tribulation sent from the devil can and should be subject of prayer. Two examples from Luther's own experience of this are his prayers for Melanchthon, who 1540 laid sick in Weimar and Luther's letter to pastor Severin Schulze in Belgern. In this letter he

1. Some remarks have been given on this theme, see: Bühler 1942, 28 f; Kelsey 1973, 221; Christenson 1987, Räsänen 1990, 45.

2. WA 42, 83 f.



recommends Schulze to go together with some believing brothers and pray for a person suffering from something Luther does not want to call melancholy but an attack from Satan.<sup>1</sup>

According to von Loewenich the Theology of the Cross is the character of Luther's theology. It is obvious that a sickness also can be seen as a *consequence of the theology of the cross*. "Dominus percussit me in posteriora gravi dolore",<sup>2</sup> Luther writes in one of his letters. Another example is his letter to Spalatin, written in 1521, where he says: "Dominus ita me visitat, ne sim sine reliquiis, benedictus, Amen."<sup>3</sup> The suffering of Christ is the example the Christian has to follow. Compared with His suffering, man's sickness and sorrow is nothing. It is though interesting to notice that Luther in contrary to many of his followers does not understand Paul's thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7) as being a sickness sent from God.<sup>4</sup> Neither does he assume that Paul's weakness (Gal. 4:13-14) was some kind of a sickness. In both situations Luther means that Paul was suffering from a spiritual attack coming from Satan.

According to Luther a sickness also can be seen as a *punishment sent from God*. According to the large Catechism Luther assumes that God can punish the ones who do not obey his commands. In one of his colloquia Luther points out that God can let sicknesses happen in human life because he wants to punish the man who despises him. It is the original sin that is due to sickness, not the actual sin.<sup>5</sup>

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1. WA Br 11, 111 f.

2. WA Br 2, 333.

3. WA Br 2, 354.

4. See: Glennon 1982, 158.

5. WA Tr 5, 6023. An inconsequence can though be seen in Luther's understanding of the connections between sickness - original sin - actual sin. In one of his sermons on Luk. 7:11-17 he says: "This young man does not die because he was a murderer, adulterer or obvious sinner who because of his evil has to be punished, but before he can be considered as guilty because of his actual sin, death withdraws him because of the sin in which he is born; so that this mother surely had a reason to be sorry for her own sin, when she now lost her son who had inherited sin and death from herself. KP II 1987, 311.

### Healing - theological models of interpretation

In Luther's thinking healing can be seen as *a fruit of the theology of creation*. Since God is a God that creates and constantly sustains his creation, healing can be understood as a result of this his sustainment. During life on earth, man can get the opportunity to experience that the redemption in Christ has consequences for both body, soul and spirit. According to Luther it is obvious that Christ both preached the Gospel and performed miracles during his life on earth. The heart of Christ melted when he saw the sick and for him nothing was impossible.<sup>1</sup> In the large Catechism Luther strongly emphasizes that man in times of need always should trust in God and in his help, not only in spiritual trouble but also in times of physical need.

The *medicine* and the *doctors* can, according to Luther, be considered as an expression of God's sustainment of his creation. The medicine is a gift from God, the work of the doctors is a divine service. According to Küchenmeister, Augustin Schurf and lic. Melchior Fend were doctors Luther used in times of sickness.<sup>2</sup> In one of his colloquia Luther stresses that the doctors regard only the *causa naturales* to a sickness and provide help through medicine. They are unfortunately not aware of the existence of Satan who can send sicknesses where no natural causes are at hand. Therefore a higher form of medicine is needed: faith and prayer.<sup>3</sup>

In his sermon on 1 Cor. 12:1-11 Luther discusses the *gifts of the Holy Spirit*.<sup>4</sup> He does not pay any attention to the gifts of healing but regards the gift of faith as a power that can result in great miracles. The gift of faith, which according to Luther is not the same kind of faith through which man can receive forgiveness and righteousness in Christ, is a *special* gift and power from God, a gift that enables man to do great miracles with frankness and

1. KP 1987, 215.

2. Küchenmeister 1881, 51.

3. WA Tr 4, 3945; 4784.

4. WA 22, 170-187.

faith. Throughout Christianity there have always been believers possessing the Holy Spirit in great measure.

### **Some critical remarks**

Although Luther has a rich theology of creation it is obvious that he in a way reduces the redemption of Christ to concern only man's spiritual needs. When Luther talks and preaches about sin he often uses the word sickness. Because of the Fall man is spiritually sick and needs God's spiritual cure. Characteristically Luther underlines: Come to Christ, our Healer, he cleanses you from your sin. Very often he emphasizes that man should accept sickness as being the will of God.

Finally Luther has an ambivalent attitude to the gifts of the Spirit and to miracles in general. In his sermon on Mark. 16:14-20 he stresses that men in his days ponder whether miracles, signs and wonders have ceased or not. He underlines that miracles were needed in the days of the apostles when the Gospel hadn't been spread around the whole world. Nowadays, he says, when the Gospel of Christ has been preached everywhere, the miracles are not needed in the same way. Therefore, he means, it is not strange, that they now have ceased. The greatest miracle is that Christ through the Gospel, the baptism and the holy Communion spreads his kingdom on the earth.

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#### THE HUMAN STRUGGLE WITH GUILT

An anthropological case study with some theological reflections

Some years ago I was planning for my journey to Bangkok, Hongkong and Japan. A friend of mine who knew about my cross-cultural study of human guilt gave me this advice: "Keep you eyes open in Japan. There you will meet a culture without any ideas of human guilt and a happy people without guilt-feelings." The advice was given in the spirit of Ruth Benedict's classic book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, where the author describes our Western culture as a 'guilt-culture' and the Japanese culture as a 'shame-culture'.

It has often been claimed that the idea of human guilt and the related guilt-feelings are typical Western phenomena. As an explanation it may be added that the whole idea of human guilt has been brought about by the Christian faith. In a very specific sense of the word this may be true. But generally speaking the idea of human guilt and the human ability to feel guilty are common phenomena in different cultures and religions. More recent anthropological and religio-scientific studies have corroborated this beyond any doubt. In fact, human guilt is one of the most common explanations of illness all over the world in otherwise very different religions and cultures.

Also the idea of 'shame-cultures' and 'guilt-cultures' has turned out to be an over-simplification and an over-schematization. Both shame and guilt are used in different societies as a means of enculturization and socialization. There may be different emphases, but in practice - as a human experience - shame and guilt intermingle and cannot be separated from each other. From the psychological point of view, it has been said that shame is related to a visual perception, guilt to an auditive perception

(Erik H. Erikson). Shame is related to a situation where one is seen, but where he or she should not be. Guilt refers to a voice inside the human (super-ego, conscience).

The purpose of the first part of this paper is to concretize the phenomenon of guilt by giving a few examples of human guilt as an explanation of illness in different cultures and religions. 'Guilt' here means a state or a position where a person is placed by his or her religion, culture or society after breaking a moral code, religious or social law, or a taboo. Guilt is defined by one's religion, culture, or society. In this sense, guilt belongs to the cultural and social level of human existence. 'Guilt-feeling' or 'guilt-consciousness' refer to an individual in a concret situation. They belong to the individual level of human existence and presuppose an internalization of guilt-related norms and values determined by one's culture and society. - In the second part of this paper, some theological reflections will be attempted upon the empirical phenomenon of human guilt in general.

#### GUILT AND ILLNESS IN DIFFERENT CULTURES AND RELIGIONS

##### Abortion and guilt in Japan

In Kyoto, Japan, there is a small temple called Mizugo-kuyō-dera. The temple belongs to the Buddhist Jodoo-Shy sect, and it is an important centre of activities related to mizugo, 'water-children'. These are babies who were never born, or who died very young. Most of the mizugo are aborted children.

In the temple, special rites are performed three times a day. People - mainly single women but also couples and sometimes single men - come in and bring biscuits, toys, cloths, fruits and other things as gifts and offerings to the spirits of children. The gifts and offerings are placed on the altar, and a monk prays for the spirits and their parent(s). The prayers are addressed to a deity in the figure of a mother and a child. In the temple, there are 3.000 small gold-covered figures of this deity.



Behind the mizugo-rites is the belief that the deity takes care of the children's spirits helping them to grow 'in the world beyond' and to reach finally the 'pure land', the final human destination as understood by the Jodoo-Shy sect. More important to our topic, however, is the belief that if a spirit is neglected or otherwise insulted, he or she may cause quarrels or illness to the parent(s) or the family. Hence the prayers to the deity and the gifts to the spirits, though the distinction between these two is not quite clear in people's mind.

The Mizugo-kuyō-dera temple is by no means a unique place in Japan. Similar temples as well as many cemeteries advertise their mizugo-services in the newspapers and on TV. As one walks, for example, by the gates of the Ninnaji-cemetery in Kyoto, his or her attention is caught by a text on the wall: "If you have troubles that may have been caused by the spirit of a water-child, kindly contact us for advice." What is this all about in Japan, in a highly educated and industrialized society?

Since 1948, it has been easy to get a legal abortion in Japan for medical or social reasons. The record was made in 1955 with 1,2 million legal abortions. In recent years, the number of legal abortions has been approximately 600.000 - 700.000 per year (the rate of birth about 1,5 million). People may speak of abortion lightly, but in reality an act of abortion seems to create a lot of shame and guilt. This is understandable in the sphere of Buddhist influence: the Buddhist principle forbids the killing of any living being (in some advertisements an abortion is called a murder). - Also in the Christian church, abortion is one of the most common reasons of people's coming to confession and counseling.

The cult of water-children's spirits and the related beliefs are not just something superficial, "remnants of an ancient paganism". Rather the rites and beliefs are symbols and manifestations of human shame and guilt caused by abortion in the Japanese society and cultural context. The mizugo-ritual is a Japanese way to face and to deal with the human feelings connected with abortion. And as such it should be looked at with respect and compassion.

Curse as a symbol of broken human relationships in Tanzania

My second example - or rather a case - takes us to the other side of the world, to East Africa, to Tanzania. During my 8 years in Tanzania, I made a study of the ethnomedicinal repertoire of Mirau, a well-known Meru healer in the Northern Tanzania. Among the Meru, a curse is a common explanation of many kind of illnesses. In order to get an idea of this role of curse, let us move to Kikatiti, a village near Arusha, to observe how mwaanga Mirau treats a patient who is suspected to have been cursed (Harjula 1989:129).

We are sitting with Mirau in the yard of his home. Being afternoon, the shadows are already longer, the heat of the day starts to be over. The patient who has come to see the healer is a woman, approximately 50 years old. She is suffering from long lasting headaches.

The woman has already earlier visited Mirau. The remedies prepared by the healer from different plants, however, have not been of any help. At Mirau's suggestion, the patient has also visited the nearby clinic of a church hospital, but the medicines given there to the patient have not brought her any relief in her pains.

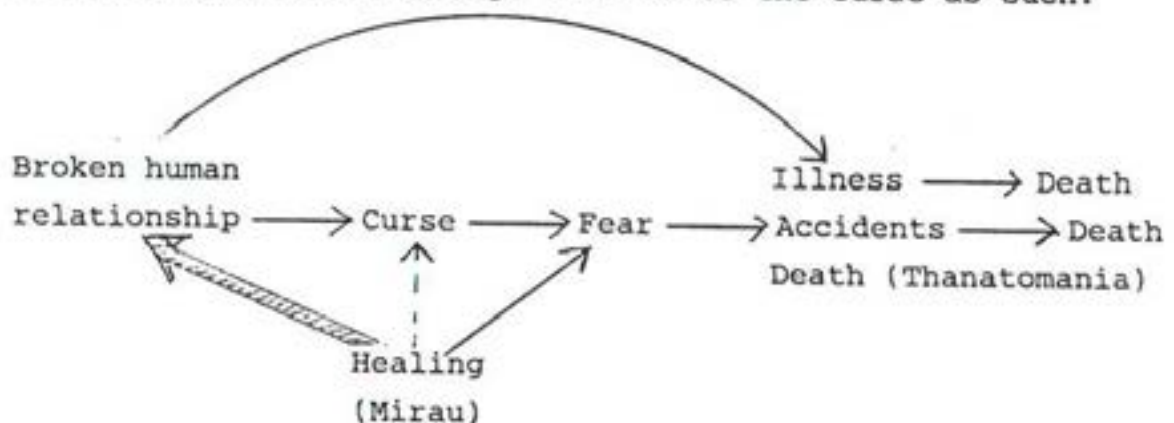
During the diagnostic discussion, Mirau suddenly states as a lure: "But if you have been cursed?" The woman seems to grab this possibility, assenting thoughtfully. Mirau now begins purposefully to analyse the patient's human relationships. "How do you live with your neighbours? With whom have you lately quarrelled?" On the basis of the hundreds of years old African ethnomedicinal knowledge of the human, as well as on the basis of his knowledge of the human relations in his own community, Mirau slowly but surely finds out from the patient's life the broken human relationship from where the curse has been sent.

When the origin of the curse has been located, the human relationship in question seems to be discussed in detail. "What was the quarrel all about? When did this take place? What did you say? What happened then? What did the other person say?"

With his skilful questions the healer makes the patient tell everything about the situation.

At the end of the diagnostic discussion, Mirau clearly states that in order to be healed the patient must first be reconciled (with the neighbour). Only after the broken human relationship has first been mended, can the healer's remedies become effective and the illness be cured, the healer assures. If the reconciliation cannot otherwise be reached, Mirau promises to arrange for the patient and her quarrelling neighbour a special reconciliation discussion - a well-known and an often used institution in Meru life.

For the purposes of this paper it is vital to observe that the curse is not only a popular explanation of illness in the collective Meru tradition in general, but it also appears in the same function in the specific ethnomedicinal tradition and practice. The healer takes a curse seriously, and tries to penetrate behind the curse and find the broken human relationships in the patient's life. The whole healing process is oriented toward the human relationships and not to the curse as such.



In summary, a curse as an explanation of illness in the Meru culture would seem to be a symbol and a manifestation of a broken human relationship in the patient's life. A curse thus - at least indirectly - becomes also a symbol of guilt related to or involved in the broken relationship with quarrels, hate and other feelings.



The Kitchen-God and super-ego in Taiwan and Hongkong

The third example brings us back to the Far East (to use our Eurocentric language), to Taiwan and Hongkong. One of the most important gods in the Chinese folk-religion is the Kitchen-God. He has got his name from the fact that his picture is placed on the wall above the stove in a Chinese kitchen. During the whole year, the picture remains there on the wall - smeared with fat, smoke and dirt. But then during the Chinese New Year, things start to happen. The picture is taken from the wall and cleansed. A festival meal is prepared to the god, he is well fed, smeared with honey, dipped in wine and finally burnt together with a paper-horse. In this way, the Kitchen-God is sent to heaven where he is believed to appear before the Highest God to report about the life of the family during the past year.

This ritual is full of colourful symbolism. The picture of the Kitchen-God is smeared with honey so that he would speak with a sweet tongue about the life of the family and the conduct of its members. The deity is dipped in wine in order to make him happily forget all the things that have happened in this home. If the Kitchen-God's report is favourable, the Highest God will bless the family with wealth and health.

The Kitchen-God is the protector of a home and the guardian of the family's moral life. He may be understood as a projection of the family's super-ego. The use of honey and wine in the ritual would seem to indicate that the family is aware that the life at home has not been as it should have been. There are events, words, quarrels, attitudes and conduct in the past year that must be kept from the ears of the Highest God. If the Kitchen-God mentions these in his report, the Highest God may punish the family with illness, economical misfortune or other troubles. Thus also here human guilt is implicitly, through a ritual symbolism, connected with illness as a possible reason for a family member's getting ill.



One could continue with similar examples from other parts of the world. The belief in karma, a basic concept in both Buddhism and Hinduism, includes a clear connection between human guilt or fault and illness. Among some Red Indians, a traditional healer would not even consider other means of treatment before the patient has confessed the evil deed that is believed to be the cause of the illness. And last but not least, also here in Finland - in the "most Lutheran country of the world" - in case of a sudden illness people often ask: What have I done, where am I guilty, being punished in this way?

What, then, has made human guilt such a common explanation of illness in otherwise very different cultures and religions? The famous scholar of Comparative Religion, Mircea Eliade, has claimed that human suffering becomes more tolerable if it can be explained and its reasons are identified. But still - why guilt?

Could it simply be that a human being has - in different times, places and cultures - through experience got the insight of a connection between illness and guilt? What role do guilt-feelings play in psychosomatic illnesses? Is the idea of human guilt as a cause of illness based on common human experience, insight and understanding?

Be it as it may, the anthropological observations presented in this paper raise many questions directed to the healing ministry of the Christian Church:

- The idea of human guilt as a cause of illness is common also among Christians. But what does the New Testament really teach about guilt and illness?
- What is the role and significance of reconciliation and forgiveness in the healing ministry of the Church?
- In the theology of success, there is the danger of making good health a criterion of faith. Yet, for example, St. Paul had to carry on with his illness. Is there a theology of illness and suffering in the New Testament?

- Can guilt-centred Christian teaching and preaching cause illness, or at least block a person's getting healed?

It is not the purpose of this paper to answer these questions, as each of them would require a thorough theological study. Nevertheless, the anthropological observations presented in this paper invite us to attempt some theological and missiological reflections upon the empirical phenomenon of human guilt in general. It is hoped that this kind of an attempt could serve as a point of departure for further and more detailed studies on the questions and themes listed above.

#### SOME THEOLOGICAL AND MISSIOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE EMPIRICAL PHENOMENON OF HUMAN GUILT

In the Christian mission, we meet our fellow-human who often is deeply involved in the struggle with human guilt - within his or her own socio-cultural context and with their own means. Even if this struggle is being fought in different ways in different contexts, the basic fact of the struggle is there as a manifestation of the human need to make a distinction between good and evil, and the ability to be conscious of guilt. This manifold phenomenon is of great relevance to the Christian mission, and as such it requires a theological interpretation.

##### A person created into the image of God

The Christian understanding of human is crystallized in the idea of person being created into the image of God. Within the Old Testament and a wider Semitic context, the 'image' (tzelem) is a relational concept. An image stands there for something, it represents something or someone with which or with whom it has a special relation. A person, having been created into the image of God, is God's representative, envoy and ambassador in this world (Gen. 1:26-31, Ps. 8). As such every human being lives in a unique relation to God, in a relationship of responsibility.

The relationship of responsibility with God belongs to every person's nature. It can be distorted, even denied, but never lost.

At this point, Emil Brunner's classic distinction between the formal and material image is helpful. The fact of human's responsibility before God (the formal image) always remains there, even if a person as a fallen being and a sinner is not able to fulfil the actual demands included in his position as God's responsible representative in this world (the material image). Perhaps it could be said that it is the never lost formal image of God in a person that is manifested in the common human need to make a distinction between good and evil and in the human ability to be conscious of one's guilt. Thus the need and ability in question - not necessary the contents and directions of these - are the mark of the Creator's hand in his creature.

#### Conscience as a manifestation of natural law

Literally, the word 'conscience' (the Greek syn-eidēsis, the Latin con-scientia) means 'knowing together'. A person knows together with his or her culture, tradition, education, reference-group or God, what is right and what is wrong. Conscience, the God-given ability to know together, is a manifestation of the 'natural law'. This law is related to God's general revelation. Whenever the natural law requires the same as the law of God as it is revealed in God's special revelation, the natural law concretizes and realizes God's general revelation in a person's conscience (Rom. 2:14-16). - Luther emphasizes that a Christian's conscience always must be bound to the Word of God, because in the last instance we can 'know together' with God only in and through his Word.

In the Christian mission, it is not our task to make people guilty through our preaching and teaching. People already are guilty, and they often know it in one way or another. Rather it is our task to use the human's need and ability to make a distinction between good and evil and the ability to be conscious of guilt as a point of contact for the Christian proclamation. It is our task to help people move from the sphere of the natural law into the realm of God's law, to show people that our human tragedy is not the guilt before this or that spirit or principle, but the guilt before God.



### God's final solution to the human problem of guilt

There is one common feature in the means by which human tries to solve the problem of guilt in different cultures and religions: the solution never is the final one. Ancestral spirits become insulted anew, the report to the Highest God must be fabricated again and again, the rituals and sacrifices must be repeated regularly or occasionally, one can never be sure of the favour of Higher Powers or of the balance of good and evil in one's karma.

But how could it be otherwise, as a human being cannot produce the final solution to the basic problem of guilt (the repeatability of human reconciliation rituals is one of the basic themes in the Letter to Hebrews). A religious law can never be a way to salvation. According to the Christian faith, the role of God's law - in the sense of the primary use of law, as we Lutherans would say - is a completely different one: the law reveals a person's guilt before God, reveals his or her impotence before God (Rom. 3:19-20). In this way the law (also the natural law to some extent) prepares the way to the Good News, to Christ himself (Gal. 3:24).

The final solution to the human problem of guilt must come from outside - and it has been brought about by God in Jesus Christ. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). Jesus Christ carried the whole burden of human guilt to the Cross (1 Pet. 2:24, Jn. 1:29). He was judged and cursed for our sake, instead of us (Gal. 3:10-13, Isa. 53:4-6). In the reconciliation with God, our guilt is changed into forgiveness, punishment into the joyful promise and right of a new start, fear into safety.

Reconciliation means peace with God (Col. 1:20). In the new relationship with God, in the God-given new life, there is also a new freedom - freedom from the worship of idols and the fear of spirits (1 Cor. 8:4-6, Col.). There is also a new freedom from trying to accomplish the impossible (Rom. 10:4). Peace with God means a new relationship of love and responsibility to the fellow-human, too (1 Jn. 4:19-20). And finally, we may learn to live at peace with ourselves, too (1 Cor. 15:10).



God's final solution to the human problem of guilt is actualized and made a reality to a person by the Holy Spirit through the Word of reconciliation that has been entrusted to us for all the nations (2 Cor. 5:19-20). The Gospel, being the power of God (Rom. 1:16), is both a message and an event at the same time.

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## HEALING AND EXORCISM IN JAPANESE FOLK RELIGION

Definition: By "folk religion" it is here referred to the various, not always clearly defined, religious and superstitious beliefs, found among the japanese of all ages and from almost all walks of life; as well as the various religious semireligious and magic practises and rituals used for promoting these beliefs.

In much the same way that USA has been called the melting-pot of races and cultures, - japanese folk religion may be called a melting-pot of asian religiosity.

There are clear traits of direct influence (mostly through migration) from Polynesia, Mongolia, various Siberian tribes; as well as Chinese and Korean tribes. There is also a very distinct taoistic influence, especially in the more esoteric trends of folk religion.

Traces from other religions and cultures that lined the ancient Silk Road are also evident; and many ancient rituals which have long been extinct in the countries of their origin, are being meticulously kept and regularly performed in this melting pot; which goes for the oral traditions (prayers etc.) as well as for the world famous Gagaku music and Bugaku (sacred dances).

Buddhism serves as a very good example. Several of the earliest buddhist-sects to reach the japanese islands have been extinct on the asian main-land for hundreds of years - but still survive in Japan, - if with no more than one or two temples each.

What maybe is most intriguing to a student of japanese religion, is the way all these originally foreign thoughts and ideas have

undergone a transformation and become a natural part of the indigenous japanese paradigm. As one scholar of Buddhism most presicely expressed: "Japan has changed buddhism more than buddhism has changed Japan."

The japanese relate himself as an intrinsic part of the context in which he lives. Man has his identity, and thus his value, as a part of a larger unit: - the family, -clan, -local community, -village, -town or county, - the nation ..... even the nature that surrounds him. He is as much a part of cosmos as are the stars.

Most japanese are not conscious of the need to worship any specific god or goddess more than others, and when it comes to folk religion, we find that most shinto-deities, as well as the various incarnations of Buddha and the Boddhisattvas along with taoist and confucian deities, are equally revered and respected. (Or shown the same lack of respect.)

Animism is one of the key terms in understanding japanese folk religion. The universe is inhabited by the YAESU-NO-KAMI - the eight million myriads of kami, - a verbal symbol for the countless numbers of gods, demi-gods, spirits, demons and ancestral spirits.

Wonders of nature, - as well as smaller, but spectacular rocks, trees, ponds, rivers and lakes etc., are said to be the outwardly sign of the presence of one ore more kami, and are being revered as such. The surrounding area is considered to be of a very potent nature, and is marked with sacred ropes (of twisted straw) - so that no one will enter the premises, however small, without taking the proper precautions.

In most communities we find a certain "specialization" - e.g. the kami of the mountain, the kami of the river, of the lake etc.

We find this diversification also in the relationship between the human world and the kami: the kami of the well, the protector of the roads, the kami of the kitchen-fire, protector of the children - as well as the kami protecting the different trades and vocations (the kami for the merchants, for the sailors a.s.o.).

Honouring these spirits/gods in the proper ways - by making festivals, offering prayers, chants, observing the ancient rituals, - making food or flower - or money-offerings, is a necessary part of keeping the nature (and thus the entire cosmos) in balance. There is really never any questions as to whether one believe in the kami or not, - as long as they are being revered.

Asking a shinto-priest if something really bad would happen if the rites were not properly conducted, - he answered, with a smile; "We wouldn't know, would we, - nobody has ever tried to!"

A touching example of this kami-belief is to be found among the older wood-cutters. Before cutting down a large tree, they would make an offering of sake (japanese rice-wine) at the foot of the tree-trunk, apologizing to the spirit of the tree for the disturbance and inconvenience - and begging him not to be angry with them, but would he please move into some other tree.

Often a tree-sapling was planted in the vicinity for the kami to move into.

Each village has its own guardian deity. In the large present-day cities, we usually find one in each neighbourhood vicinity. This kami is worshipped by most of the members of the community - regardless of family-, religious- or political relations. Even ardent buddhists, and sometimes converted christians as well, can be found in the shrine-compounds during the seasonal festivals and celebrations. Being present at these festivities are considered as showing loyalty to the community, - more than an affiliation with the celebrated kami.

In addition, each clan (today - extended family) usually has its own guardian, - and the shrine is often to be found in the garden or the back-yard. These kami are honored, - although not worshipped, by the other inhabitants of the village.

There are kami guarding the borders of the village, keeping evil spirits (- and people...?) from entering town, - and there are kami protecting villagers having to travel elsewhere. There are



kami who guard the crops, and others guarding the life-stock or protecting the fishermen. (In Hokkaido there are kami guarding the oyster-fields as well as blessing the sea-weed harvest.)

The children have their own guardian deity (originally a buddhist saint - but worshipped along with the shinto-deities); and the high-school- and university students have a special kami to whom they turn for help in passing the arduous entrance-examinations.

Since man is an intrinsic part of nature, he is also imbued with some of the same qualities and nergies as the rest of cosmos. When he dies, his soul is released from the body and is, in principle, free to roam about at its own pleasure. However, - just as a man only was a "somebody" inasmuch as he was a part of a larger unit (family, clan etc.) - the spirit can only continue its excistence as being an extended part of the very same family. You are somebody only as long as you are remembered and revered by the other family or clan members. If - or when forgotten - the soul will become just another of the many distressed, homeless spirits roaming restlessly about the countryside, in the deep forests or in the mountains, - sometimes taking possession of weak or tired souls.

The spirits that are well tended to, however, will guard and protect the family and make it prosper in many ways.

The ancestral spirits are worshipped regularly when the present head of the family offers rice and wine, - sometimes fruits and vegetables, at the kami-dana, - a shelf placed directly above ore close to the entrance door - so that the spirits may enter (and leave) easily.

Since there in most japanese homes also are buddhist altars for honoring the ancestral spirits as well, there is often some confusion as to what rites are to be performed where. The average japanes just doesn't bother too much about it - performing many of the religious obligations rather superficially; - while the zealous buddhist, or a true believer of Shinto, will see to that the correct rituals are performed at the proper moments, - calling

for the buddhist priest or the shinto kannushi at the special anniversaries.

In ancient times, the japanese did not bury their dead, but believing that the corpse was of use to no-one, - it was thrown over the steep cliffs and into the deep canyons of the sacred mountains - where it would be returned to nature. Even though the excuberant buddhist funeral-practices attracted most japanese families, - a few people, especially in the mountain regions, continued this ancient practice up to WW II. (This is now prohibited by law.)

As he is a part of creation, man is considered to be basically good. Japanese folk-religion, as well as the traditional Shinto, knows no such terms as "sinfulness" or "ungodliness".

Mans duty is to work together with nature, the visible - as well as the unseen forces in the universe - in order to establish and re-establish harmony. Man, along with the plants, the animals, the insects and the kami has his duties, as well as his privileges in order to up-keep the balance.

When everything is in order - there are bountiful harvests, - an orderly balance between rain and sunshine; and there will be peace and harmony in the nation. There are no such things as sinning againts the commandments of the gods, or going againts doctrines or dogmas (as there are indeed few). Men and kami are considered equal in this universe - both are neccessary to keep cosmos in order; although the kami are acknowledged with supra-natural powers that the average human being does not possess.

It is not pictures or images of the kami that are kept in the inner sanctuaries of the Shinto shrines - but a mirror!

What disturps the harmony of the cosmos, is breaking the moral-codex (e.g. by breaking the rules of the clan or the village; not performing the proper rites or making the correct offerings). However - this is not thought of as "sin" but as guilt. And is a very large part of the japanese psyche which I do not find it the time or place to discuss here; - as this maybe more often than

being guilt in relating to the kami, is felt as guilt towards the family or the community. Breaking the rules of the offerings, or entering a sacred place without performing the prescribed cleansing ceremonies is also considered as disturbing the harmony, - in this case, however, one does not talk so much of guilt, as of "pollution" - and what is needed to restore the proper balance, is purification.

- So, when disasters like famine and war, - or personal tragedies like accidents, illness or distress strike - this is not considered as being a punishment from some kami for breaking the law; - but rather as an indication that something in the nature, - in the nation, - in the community or in the family is "off balance", not in harmony with cosmos.

In order to cure this, one has to find out what caused this particular incident. (There is no use in bandaging your toe if it is your nose that is running.)

To simplify things we can list three main causes for illness/distress.

1. Impurity
2. Angry, unsatisfied spirits (ancestral)
3. Spiritspossession.

1. Impurities may be caused by widely different incidents like having approached a sacred place without observing the proper purification rites. Eating contaminated food, - or keeping an improper diet. Committing crimes, or failure to observe the moral codex. Excess of eating or drinking etc.
2. Spirits, both ancestral as well as certain village-kami, that have not been "taken care of" - worshipped or revered in the proper manners, may show their anger or distress in by imposing ill-fortune or sickness on the family-members or inhabitants that have not been performing their duties.
3. Sometimes certain animal-spirits (usually the fox-spirit), or evil spirits (more rarely spirits form dead persons) will take possession of an individuals mind or soul. This is often done



to convey a message of some kind (from one of the gods), but sometimes also in order to damage or destroy the person, or his immediate surroundings.

In order to cure sickness, distress or misfortune the first thing to do is to make a diagnose.

If the person in question suffers from an ordinary physical disease, most contemporary japanese will first see a medical doctor. If the doctor seems hesitant as to what causes the disease, however; or if it takes a while before the person gets better, a surprisingly high number will take steps to see a diviner, astrologist, clairvoyant or a shaman. (NB - most people hesitate to use the term "shaman" and instead use words like "people with special spiritual gifts" etc.) A high percentage of the japanese also seek help from more traditional folk-medicine, like kampoyaku (herbal medicine), hari (akupuncture), shiatsu (aku-pressure) etc.

If the diviner or shaman sees that the cause of the sickness or distress is of a no-bodily origin, - the reason for the ill-fortune is to be found in the spiritual world. It may well be that one has broken a moral, or spiritual codex thus having angered one or more kami. One may have become "contaminated" from accidentally having entered a place where the "ghosts" (dissatisfied spirits from the corpses thrown over the steep cliffs) roam about in the mountains, or one has not fulfilled ones obligation towards one ore more of the ancestral spirits. In these cases, the misfortune is not considered a punishment, but a reminder - as soon as the proper amendments have been made, and the rites are being reassumed and being performed properly and regularly, the spirits will be satisfied. The proper balance having been restored, life will again return to normal.

Means of purifications are many. The most simple is going to one of the many shinto-temples, having the kannushi perform prayers or incantations on your behalf. More active means are walking the "hyakudo-ishi", i.e. walking back and forth between the shrine and a stone placed about 150 m. away, while praying to the kami of the premises, touching the top of the stone for each turn. Some



believers will go to the "taki gyoba" -sacred waterfalls usually close to places in the mountains where spirits are said to wander about, letting the stream of water hit the places of the body where they (or the person they are praying for) hurt. This is done while chanting prayers to the shinto kami or buddhist saints.

Others will write their problems on wooden sticks; which are either placed on special places in the temple - or shrine compounds; - or are burned in special ceremonies on the shrine festivals.

In the cases of spirit-possession, the persons can only be cured by exorcism. Exorcism may only be conducted by persons with special gifts. Some buddhist-priests and shinto-kannushi are trained in this; but most usually it is the shaman who is able to conduct the exorcist-rites.

In some cases a spirit-possession, especially by the animal-spirits and some kami, - is an indication - not of illness or impurities, - but that the person has been "chosen", and the spirit-possession is an outwardly sign of his (or her) gifts as a healer, a medium or even a shaman. In modern Japan, more women than men seem to be among "the chosen", although no through research has been done on this topic. Many visitors to Japan, both scholars and tourists seem to be taken by surprise that in this technically advanced nation, which in many fields seem way ahead of the rest of the world, these old traditions and folk-religious practices still can be found - not only in the sheltered countryside and in the mountains, but in the large, bustling cities as well.

However, seeing to what extent the japanese nationals observe their old rules of conduct, and piously take care of their traditions, it should not surprise us that folk-religious practices survive. What may be surprising though, is that the number of younger japanese, between the ages of 30 and 50, who seek for advice and help from the diviners, healers, astrologists, shamans etc., is not decreasing but seems to be increasing.

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## HEALING IN THE NEW RELIGIONS OF JAPAN

### 1: Terminological Issues.

(a) The new religions of Japan are known as healing religions. It does not mean that all of them consider bodily healing to be their main object. However, this feature is the outward attraction par excellence. As it frequently provides a standard according to which claims of the religion are evaluated, its role in the new religions is important indeed.

(b) 'Healing' is a concept which can apply to many fields; healing of human beings, healing of society, healing of nature etc. In this paper I understand healing as 'bodily healing'. If any other or wider connotation is included, I will mention it explicitly.

(c) In the debate on the new religions, healing is brought into scope by believers' frequent testimonies of successful healing. On the critical side, though, the validity of these testimonies is seriously questioned. Frequency, extent, duration and reasons for the healing are disputed as a matter of course. There is, however, general agreement about the fact that some of the claimed healing really occurred - and occurs.

### 2: Literature

The literature on the Japanese new religious movements already has a long history, interested people should consult the bibliography by H Byron Earhart, The New Religions of Japan: A Bibliography of Western-Language Materials. I also want to direct

your attention to the existence of a recent publication, Kobundo: Shin Shukyo Jiten (Handbook of New Religions). This handbook (1150 pages) also presents an updated list of literature on the Japanese new religions. The most serious Western study of healing in Japanese new religious movements occurred in 1963, entitled Modern Japanese Religions - with special emphasis upon their doctrines of healing. Although the authors Clark B. Offner and Henry van Strahlen have based their conclusions upon studies in the 1950s, the book can still be said to give a good introduction and generally valid interpretation of the attitudes to healing among Japanese new religions.

Due to subsequent changes in the new religious world of Japan, however, the study by Offner and van Strahlen has to be updated by recent observations and literature. The traditional thinking of the new religious world still remains largely unchanged. However, the relative emphasis upon bodily healing within the new religious movements is somewhat changed. There has been a broadening of the interest of the religions to include political, environmental and spiritual aspects of human suffering- and a corresponding widening of the concept of healing has taken place in the new religions.

Liberalization of the whole concept of healing is seen f.i. in Soka Gakkai. It effects the understanding of causes and treatment and turns out to be a rationalizing trend.

Occurrence of new religious trends and bodies are other features which reflect changing positions among the new religions in the race for popular appeal. The rise to prominence of the Mahikari religions and fast growing religions of esoteric Buddhist background such as Shinnyo-en and Agonshu illustrate developments in the 1970s and 80s.

### 3: Healing: Eschatology and pars pro toto

The concept of salvation in the Japanese new religious movements is of an "immediate" character. Salvation is present, or at least in the process of immediately breaking through. This "newness" of the salvatory concept is basic in the new religions.

It contrasts with the salvation offered by the old religions.



Neither in Shinto nor in traditional Buddhism is the present or immediate outbreak of salvation completely lacking. Healing rites also take place in the realm of these well established religious institutions. Prayers for welfare in the most practical aspects of life, such as successful entrance examinations, safety on roads, familiar harmony and personal health are conducted in most traditional temples. Likewise are prayers for world peace and national prosperity held. Such gokoku (national safety) rites were introduced already in the early Buddhist history of Japan. Non the less, a general dissatisfaction over and against these established rites prevails, and is reflected in the new religions. Different from the prevailing ideal of status quo in established temples, the new religions prophecy a new, all embracing and personal reality to the individual believer. In new religions, changes are believed to occur. The awaited newness kindles a fresh hope for salvation, not matched by established rituals.

The notion of healing in the new religions, is also colored by a relationship to society. Hospitals and doctors have proved unable to help. Personal care and concern is lacking. People therefore turn to the new cults when they are disappointed or frustrated with the medical methods of society. The old establishment has proved unable to help. In a stage of increased despair, the last hope is for an in breaking reality, an eschaton, which rational methods are unable to offer. The new religions, geared to meet this increased "last" demand, naturally develop a sincere and "eschatological" attitude to healing.

There is a typical structure in the healing activities of new religions. Healing has a threefold pars pro toto role in the dynamics of the new religious movements. This logic works contrary to the idea of Western medicine in established hospitals. In "established" hospitals and "established", Western, medical science, a person is often considered sick in one separate part of the body. But to new religious movements sickness in a part of the body demonstrates a sick totality. Health and sickness are, contrary to the notions implied in Western medicine, considered to be total concepts, relating the whole individual to a



cosmic totality. To the new religions, healing and its antithesis sickness, are part and parcel of a universal interrelationship.

The pars pro toto thinking further leads new religious movements to universal claims. Many of the organizations conduct mission-projects overseas, the underlying universal ambitions and hopes thus being amply demonstrated. Lacking logical proof or demonstration of the exclusive validity of this or that religion, they rely upon the testimonies of the believers. The numerous testimonies of healing-experiences not only attract new believers and practitioners - they also illustrate an alleged universal validity of the religions. Healing is salvation and apology. To take a general example: As the patient Mr. Tanaka was healed from his terminal cancer, due to a certain cult or rite, the world at large will proceed toward eternal peace, if a sufficient number of people follow the practice prescribed by the same cult.

This pars pro toto logic also structures large processes of healing. The most outstanding example in the new religious world of Japan is provided by Sekai Kyusei Kyo. This religion, in a tradition from its mother-body Omoto, intends to create models of health and world peace, believing in an extension of this ideal state according to innate cosmic laws. The religion runs two "paradises", one in Atami and one in Hakone, two spots in central Japan. The idea is that these beautiful gardens, once founded, are real germs of social development. The small units will grow into larger and larger parts of the universe. Healing of one person is similarly included in a wide cosmic process of salvation.

#### 4: Historical Background in Shugendo.

Shugendo is a distinctive Japanese heritage which assimilated elements of many religious traditions. In fact this religious practice is a way of mastering religious and magic powers. But shugendo does not imply the attainment of the powers solely for the sake of the practitioner. Through Japanese history the

attained spiritual powers are applied to healing and various other social needs. During the Tokugawa period (1600-1868) the practitioners of shugendo became increasingly active in Japanese villages, serving the needs of the ordinary people. This socialized shugendo is one of the basic roots of the forthcoming new religious movements in modern Japan.

#### 5: Diagnosis and treatment

In the study mentioned above, Offner and van Strahlen emphasize on one hand the Buddhist point of reference in the doctrine of karma (metaphysical cause of sickness), but point on the other hand to various other causes: physical, mental, religious and spiritual (i.e. caused by spirits), (Offner 1963: 157ff).

##### Physical causes

The possible existence of physical causes to sickness is a seriously debated issue in and among many of the new religious movements. Most new religions, however, admit outer and physical causes for sickness, although these causes are not considered complete or total. Personal, volitional or moral dimensions are also identified. There is always a "dimension beyond" the physical or personal cause; although the type of dimension is seen in various ways, such as Buddhist karma, divine pedagogy or evil spells by spirits and gods.

The use of medicine presupposes acceptance of physical causes of sickness. Although considering any drug insufficient, Soka Gakkai, Konkokyo and a majority of new religions accept the use of medical treatment to fight sickness. The "superficial", medical treatment has, however, to be completed by a spiritual treatment according to the doctrines of the particular religion.

##### Treatment

New developments of thought and practice concerning use of medicine still appear. Whereas the 100 year old Omoto-kyo and its offspring Sekai Kyusei Kyo previously emphasized a strong anti-drug position, the positions are now softened. But liberalization may imply severe repercussions. The postwar liberalization of the clear cut Sekai Kyusei Kyo prewar "no to drugs"



has to be seen as a basic reason for the organizational split by 1990 into three Sekai Kyusei Kyo groups.

The problem of healing orthodoxy in Sekai Kyusei Kyo is however an exception, in other organizations the confrontation between drugs and spirit seldom occurs. It has to do with the Japanese social and medical situation as a whole. As mentioned above, involvement with the new religions follows unsuccessful experiences with established medical treatment. The need for alternative treatment generally arises when drugs turn out to be inefficient. After bad experiences with drugs, the offer of alternative drug-less treatment appears attractive. The treatments offered by the new religions are therefore not considered exclusive but additional. They are a hopeful resort when Western medicine fails.

#### Spiritual causes of sickness

In Japan the common word for sickness, byoki, "sick mind", indicates that in the popular imagination, sickness is related to the mind. In the most radical way, this is stated by the idealistic Seicho no Ie. Sickness not only originates in the mind, it even is a phenomenon of the mind, a delusion. A basis of this idea is the notion of ningen kami no ko, byoki nashi (Human beings are Gods children and not sick). The firm belief in the divinity of human beings thus leads to an equally firm denial of the reality of sickness.

In Tenrikyo, the conception of byoki as originating in the mind. It is clearly expressed in the hymn Mikagura-uta, which says that "all suffering comes from man's heart". However, in Tenrikyo divine and human causes for sickness merge. The human cause is found in eight various types of "dust", identified as greed, stinginess, partiality, hatred, animosity, anger, covetousness and arrogance. As such dust is accumulated upon the soul over the years or even millenniums, the mind becomes clouded, dirty and loses its original purity. But, the merciful God the Parent intervenes in the form of sickness to call for repentance. (See Offner 1963: 162ff). Although the relation between divine and human elements is not clearly worked out, Tenrikyo sees sickness in a double perspective of human sin and divine pedagogy.

Mental causes of sickness are actually recognized with Seicho no Ie and Tenrikyo by all new religions. I mention at random the

"dancing religion" (Tensho Kotai Jingu Kyo), PL Kyodan, Rissho Kosei Kai and the most famous healing religion, Sekai Kyusei Kyo. For a further study of these particular religions, I refer to general literature on the new religious movements.

Most religions emphasize that a failure to worship aright or perform the prescribed ritual result in meeting with some adversity or other. Absolutely all new religions claim that participation in their particular rites have healing effects. It is worth noting that while Soka Gakkai in its dynamic 1950s emphasized that the basic cause of sickness and suffering was human failure to worship the true object (The Taiseikiji mandala), (Offner 1963: 172); it now stresses psychosomatic connections interpreted in the light of Buddhist wisdom.

Reiyukai and its offspring Rissho Kosei Kai have traditionally taught that spirits, especially one's ancestors, cause sickness. Omoto which with Deguchi Onizaburo has recognized a strong spiritual dimension has a similar emphasis. I refer to Offner 1963: 175 who quotes from an Omoto scripture that "Sickness is from ancestors seeking salvation". Up to 1990 there has in Japan been a growing emphasis on the influence of ancestors upon human beings. The trend appeared particularly with Mahikari which developed a strong religious force in the 1970s. According to Mahikari, sickness mostly originates in the evil spells of unpacified spirits. Often some suffering ancestral spirit causes sickness until proper rectification or appropriate worship is undertaken.

## 6: Methods of Cure

First of all the traditional prayer for sick, kajikito, should be mentioned, although this is not an exclusive property of the new religions, but a common heritage of Japanese temples and shrines. These kajikito incantations have a strong Buddhist background and are frequent in the esoteric Buddhist and shugendo traditions.

Goma, the burning of sticks, has its roots in popular Buddhist practice, but is taken over by some new religions, most impress-



ively by Agonshu with its tremendously large scale stick-fires.

There is also an extended use of shinto-purification, harae. It might be conducted in the form of various ceremonies, notable among which is the otefuri of Tenrikyo. Through such hand movements dust is swept away. "Ashiki o harote tasuketamae Tenri O no Mikoto" (Cleanse us from evil and save us O King of Tenri) is chanted to these rhythmic hand movements or hand dance as it frequently is called. The jorei of Sekai Kyusei Kyo is a hand movement undertaken for the sake of purification.

The concept of Migawari, representation, plays a role in healing f.i. in the ofurikae of PL Kyodan (transfer of suffering to the Founder) and in the batsukudaiju of Shinnyo-en. The latter phenomenon means that the spiritual world undertakes to carry off the sickness - to the relief of the suffering humankind. A particular mention could be made of the Founder or spiritual leader, the spiritual power and radiance of whom is stressed by the respective movements. It functions as a general power in various ceremonies, but also as a particular radiance of the very person himself, in whose presence healing occurs. The idea of substitution can be found in many rites without special reference to healing. Substitution rites are found in old shinto rituals and prayers. But there are good reasons to see substitutional healing and the neo-religious reliance upon merits of powerful persons in connection with the healing tradition of shugendo.

Closing the list of ceremonies I mention the sensokuyo, ancestor ceremonies. Rooted in Buddhism, the ceremonies play a central role in healing procedures of religions such as the Reiyukai and the Mahikari religions.

None of these methods represents any invention by a new religion. The listed procedures are soundly rooted in the Buddhist-Shinto heritage of Japanese popular religion. But transplanted into a new context these old methods exhibit newness and spectacularity. Particularly spectacular are f.i. the huge goma fires of Agonshu, or great gatherings of believers led by the religious leader and

head of the religion. These days especially Mahikari gatherings may contain impressive healing sessions.

## 7: Healing in Particular Religions

A general presentation of healing in the new religions will necessarily loose in concreteness. The "new religion" is itself an abstraction, only specific religious bodies exist, displaying a variety of features and particularities. I therefore select a few religions for a closer observation. From the shinto-based, influential Omoto-tradition I select three new religions, Seicho no Ie, Sekai Kyusei Kyo and Mahikari Bummei Kyodan. From the Buddhist tradition of new religions I observe the Nichiren-related Rissho Kosei Kai and Soka Gakkai more closely, and end up with a sketch of healing in Shinnyo-en, which belongs to an esoteric Buddhist tradition.

### Seicho no Ie

This religion dates back to 1930, when the Founder Taniguchi Masaharu started a publishing company after having left Omoto. According to its doctrines, human beings partake in divine nature and cannot in principle get sick. This basic position, which easily might be misunderstood as some primitive naivete, is primarily a principle of self-education. "Illness" is seen similarly to what is the case in the Japanese religious world, as results of ill feelings of the heart - it may be hatred, injustice or other immoral attitudes. Repentance and removal of these feelings will promote health and termination of the sickness. It is important to replace the bad feelings with gratitude, based upon the consciousness of being healthy. Here the conviction of having a healthy, divine nature plays an important role in the healing process.

The application of this basic conviction can be seen at the monthly gatherings called renjokai, training sessions. Although they do not explicitly focus upon healing, they are to a large extent healing gatherings. Slogans and sentences such as "I am healthy", "I am God's child, endowed with unlimited power" abound. Together with the instructions and readings they induce the participants to a self-education and self-instruction in order



to foster a fresh spirit which in turn is reflected in a healthy body. A method used is to write down on a piece of paper one's previous sins, troubles and shortcomings. This piece of paper is burnt at a ceremonial gathering in the evening. The whole ceremony of joshingyo (purification of heart - ceremony) intends to create new life and a new beginning removed from past plagues. It goes without saying that the rhythm of repentance and positive self-education is supposed to continue in the everyday life and to be applied to all types of troubles and adversities, from personal plagues to world peace.

Reading devotional books, particularly the writings by the founder Taniguchi Masaharu "Seimei no Jisso" and the regular periodicals are considered valuable and efficient means of healing. The psychological reasons be as they may, it functions as a kind of self-education based on the idea that the image is primary, reality secondary. This idealistic optimism ties up with a strong Japanese trust in form and beauty, not at least apparent in zen Buddhism.

#### Sekai Kyusei Kyo

This religion, which ceded from Omoto 1934, considers cure of diseases its most important task. The Founder Okamoto Mokichi started the healing practice before World War II, emphasizing distrust of medicine and voicing a critical attitude to Western medical science. He based his practice upon a theory about spiritual clouds in the organism, clouds which had to be cleared away in order that the body should become healthy. Sickness was considered a normal feature, like rain, lightning, and showers in nature. Medicine obstructed the healing process. It was poison in the body, actually adding to the unhealthy state. The actual healing had to be seen in a larger context, as a parallel to processes in nature. Natural methods of healing corresponded to natural methods of agriculture, without any use of chemical fertilizers or other chemical treatment. A natural agriculture, unpolluted food and abstention from drugs provided the terms for a long range healing process in individuals and cosmos.

Thinking in terms of models, common to many oriental traditions, is a feature of Sekai Kyusei Kyo. In simple terms it implies that models: persons, small societies, gardens - grow into an utopia.

Sekai Kyusei Kyo have founded two beautiful gardens (in Izu and Atami) with utopian aims. In accordance with spiritual principles corresponding to development of seeds in nature, the gardens and other models are supposed to grow, guiding the whole universe into harmony. Within this world view a particular emphasis is laid upon the so called jorei ceremony. In the practice of jorei, certified people from Sekai Kyusei Kyo radiate light from their raised palm. Nature and humanity has accumulated spiritual clouds as well as physical pollution. Jorei dispels the clouds and is considered to have a purifying and healing effect upon nature, fields and human beings. Sekai Kyusei Kyo also runs health centers. In spite of rationalizing developments within the organization, the anti-medicine attitude lives on and splinter-groups have evolved.

#### Mahikari

Although the religion Mahikari Bunmei Kyodan, which was founded by Okada Kodama in 1959, now is split into three competing groups, the healing method is similar in all branches. The thinking on sickness follows two lines. It is on one hand presumed that sickness is a result of pollution of the originally pure universe and due to human transgressions against the Su divinity (the supreme God). Sickness is subsequently interpreted as a divine warning, compare Tenrikyo. On another level, due to the warnings of Su, spirits which are not at ease, possess human beings. Therefore the personal diagnosis mostly states that an ancestral spirit causes sickness to remind the person of due care. The practical method of Mahikari, which shows close resemblance to Omoto and the Omoto-religions, reminds of jorei. Healing light is supposed to radiate from the palm of people certified for the performance. The act is called mahikari no waza (The work of the true light). In mahikari no waza the palm faces towards the object, causing true light to radiate into the forehead. Persons sit two and two facing each other during the waza. When the treatment of the forehead is finished, chingon no waza is conducted. This act aims at pacifying evil spirits who have possessed the object. Before the total session of generally 40-50 minutes is ended the performer shouts shizumari (Be quiet!) three times, draws the letter "hachi" (8) and finishes the treatment. The



latter part of the ceremony which includes exorcism is not found in the otherwise very similar Sekai Kyusei Kyo ritual.

#### Rissho Kosei Kai

Rissho Kosei Kai broke with its parent, the Nichiren-religion Reiyukai in 1938, due to different interpretations of the Lotus Scripture. Rissho Kosei Kai enforces under its present leader Niwano Nikkyo the bodhisattva way of love and service. Sickness is according to Rissho Kosei Kai rooted in the heart. The kind of illness is sometimes explained on the background of special mental attitudes; a special sin leads to corresponding sufferings. Stomach-trouble might f.i. be related to ungratefulness (Offner 1963: 170). The name Rissho Kosei Kai means "Establishment of Justice and Fellowship", and the religion hardly talks of bodily illness isolated. Health is seen in a wider social and salvatory context. They ordain proper spiritual attitudes according to the bodhisattva way. The organization has succeeded in developing a practical, religious profile, focusing on hoza; collective counselling groups where healing is brought up. In the hoza, concrete change of mental attitude is recommended - in correspondence with the bodhisattva ideal of sympathy and care - as a road to an all embracing health and welfare. Like its predecessor Reiyukai, Rissho Kosei Kai stresses duties towards the departed ancestors as means of obtaining fitness and harmony. Rissho Kosei Kai, which runs a medical clinic, has a serious interest in psycho-somatic medicine.

#### Soka Gakkai

Founded 1930, displaying impressive growth in the 1950s and early sixties, Soka Gakkai stabilized its formidable size of about 10 million believers towards 1970. The number of Soka Gakkai believers represent about 50% of all believers in any new Japanese religion. In spite of serious inner problems such as the relationships to Taiseikiji temple and the political party Komeito, and the unceasing dispute about the role and image of the honorary president Ikeda Daisaku, the religion has avoided schisms and managed to keep the number of believers stable. There are, however, several unsolved problems in the organization, and

trouble may be waiting at any crossroad ahead. Schisms are so far avoided due to a double policy. 1) Old ideals of expansion as well as the efficiency of religious exclusiveness are kept alive. It means that emphasis is placed upon the right worship of the right mandala at the right place. The original insistence upon doctrinal purity as a precondition for healing is maintained 2) A religious liberalism is introduced at certain levels of Soka Gakkai; e. g. foreigners and intellectuals. Examples of this policy are a serious work for peace through Soka Gakkai International (SGI), and the concern with questions of dialogue reflected in The Toynbee Ikeda Dialogue, published by Kodansha, Tokyo 1976.

At a conversation in the Seikyo Headquarters on May 9th this year a group of S. G. medical doctors presented the medical treatment of Soka Gakkai. Medical care was deliberately related to the general Buddhist concept of wisdom and compassion, and supported by examples from Buddhist history, f. i. Gautama Siddharta's treatment with herbal medicine by a doctor at that time, Jibaku. Soka Gakkai underlined, however, the mutual relationship between the religionist and the doctor, as Buddha not only was subjected to treatment, but also offered advice about care and treatment of sickness. It is worth noticing that Soka Gakkai has left its traditional exclusive use of the Lotus-scripture behind, making use of all available sutras, f.i. Agon-sutra, to broaden its theological conception of sickness and care. Healing is subsequently thought of in more sophisticated terms, replacing the monotonous appeal to the proper worship, as was the case in the 1950s. Soka Gakkai now wants to utilize wisdom, chie, in the widest sense of this Buddhist term. The patient is f.i. advised to trust the doctor and cooperate, in order to obtain a positive result of the treatment. Sickness should be prevented also through self-discipline and proper nourishment. The healing process thus turns out to become a combination of inner life-forces and outer medicine on the basis of Buddhist wisdom.

But, as implied in point 2) above, this does not mean, however, that karma and the need to correspond with Buddhist law are neglected ideas. Karma is, as in the 50s, interpreted as a religious background and frame of the sickness and the healing



process. According to Offner and van Strahlen, Soka Gakkai presented in the 1950s a typical example of a worship-oriented diagnosis and healing of sickness. "The most vociferous advocate of right worship as a means of bringing healing, is Soka Gakkai", (Offner 1963: 207). The role of Daimoku, to chant the Holy Title, Namu Myoho Renge Kyo, is still considered the only means to break the bad karma which is the ultimate cause of ill health. But to combine the orthodox tradition with the new liberal trends, Daimoku is ascribed a somewhat new role. Daimoku is seen as a cosmic entity, not exclusively found in the proper (Soka Gakkai) worship. Actually, Daimoku is considered to be at work in different forms of healing varying with the circumstances. When healing takes place without the actual utterance of Daimoku, even when prayers are offered in totally different religious traditions, f.i. a Christian prayer or Nembutsu of the true pure land school, the actual force at work is a hidden or unseen Daimoku. Daimoku is now conceived to be at work outside the area of conscious application, in the way Christians figure the work of an unacknowledged Christ outside Christendom.

There is ample precedence in the Buddhist traditions to interpret the presence of Buddha in this universal way. Generally buddha nature is considered to be a common property of humankind. In the Tendai, Shingon and Kegon traditions especially the universal presence of Buddha Vairochana is stressed. Even the Nichiren tradition emphasizes the priority of the universal Buddha. It is non the less worth noticing that inclusive ideas from a general Buddhist background increasingly influence the strongest lay Buddhist movement in Japan.

Soka Gakkai has since 1971 had a Physicians division, which 1989 and 1990 conducted international symposiums for medical doctors. This year a conference summoning about 70 doctors from Germany, Italy, Spain and England a.o. has taken place in France (Trets). A special feature is the participation of nurses, underlining Soka Gakkai's interest in care for the sick. Themes for discussion included questions such as brain-death and organ transplantations. Soka Gakkai, which runs a hospital in Tokyo, now works along general psychosomatic principles in its healing practice.

Shinnyo-en

The religion, founded by Ito Shinjo 1936 presents the relaxed figure of Buddha entering Nirvana as its main symbol, copies of which are distributed to the universities of Helsinki, Copenhagen, Oslo and Uppsala. Causes for sickness are seen in the ego as well as in the work of spirits. Spirits cause sickness in order to appeal for help in their misery, whereas bad habits of the heart also appear as sickness. Shinnyo-en does not conduct any special rituals for healing, the idea being that listening to the teaching and applying it to daily life will have healing effects. As a metaphysical reason for healing, Shinnyo-en applies the view called batsukudaiju (vicarious transfer of suffering), according to which the trouble is transferred to the spiritual world.

The religion conducts special consultations, sesshin, where the annoying spirits are identified. After performing exorcist rituals the sickness is supposed gradually to disappear. Three actions are recommended in order to apply teachings to daily life: mission, positive understanding and service. The sick is also recommended to heighten his spiritual level.

## 8: Conclusion

In the new Japanese religious movements, the practice of healing which is exemplified here, reflects a long history of religious healing. It is not difficult to see the influence of previous shamanic healers in rituals and in the imagined powers of the healers in the new religious movements. There is in other words a strong influence of the traditions surrounding shugendo in the healing procedures of the new religious movements. But, the concrete methods are also discovered in a variety of traditional Buddhist and Shinto practice.

Basic in the new religions is a nature-ethos, a strong belief in growth and creativity given in cosmos. Healing is salvation in the sense that cosmic growth and creativity are applied to a situation of frustration and human alienation. Through this endeavor they display an "eschatological", fresh character, which has to be seen against the background of a contemporary cosmic crisis.

The newness and vigour displayed in healing also undergird



claims of truth and universality. In the pars pro toto thinking, a logic related to processes in nature, of the religious world, successful healings therefore are stepping stones to membership and the acceptance of a faith with universal implications.

Although the thinking and practice concerning healing varies considerably, the spiritual cause of sickness is stressed by all religions. Generally, however, this spirituality can be interpreted in three ways. (1) The sick person is responsible for the sickness due to inadequate moral attitudes and has to repent. This view does not, however, exclude an awareness of a spiritual influence. (2) The person might be subjected to evil spells, which can be countered by means of a recommended religious practice or ritual. One cause of sickness is frequently found in an insufficient ancestor worship. (3) There might never the less be a divine reason for the sickness. The divinity might, as Tenrikyo teaches, utilize the illness of a human body to give a warning or instruction.

The concrete means of healing vary between rituals, purifications, light radiation, personal representation, repentance and other actions. The choice between Western medicine and alternative, natural healing methods, is not absolute. In general new religions fill the gaps and insufficiencies left by hospitals and established medicine. Some of the new religions run their own hospitals which at least partly are based upon traditional medicine. Serious splits on this issue has, however, occurred in Sekai Kyusei Kyo, whereas Soka Gakkai seems to have managed to pass from an exclusive karma oriented method of healing to a liberal attitude even to medical science. Ideologically the transition is made by means of a general Buddhist philosophy, based upon a contemporary interpretation of "wisdom" and "compassion".

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