

The Christian Fellowship of Healing (Scotland) worked from the early 1950's to support and spread the healing ministry within churches and to encourage engagement with the medical profession. To further these aims a centre was run in Edinburgh where people could come for prayer, listening and healing. A loving and supportive prayer community formed, which came to an end in 2011. This document is part of a legacy of resources which we hope will support others in their engagement with the healing ministry. More archived material is available to the public at the National Library of Scotland.

You and your doctor

By Ian Cowie (Chaplain 1976-88)

"Send for the doctor"... that is our natural reaction when we find that our bodies are giving us trouble. It is natural, for the Church has always seen the healing profession as part of its work even although recently the medical profession has become independent of the Church.

We see medical healing as one expression of God's concern for wholeness, and we believe that the best medical attention should be brought to bear on any sick person.

Doctors vary ... they are human after all. Some are Christian, some are not. Some doctors acknowledge that there is a spiritual dimension to healing, some do not. They are nearly all overworked, and one has to allow for this. Many of them have experiences of patients getting involved in weird types of "healing" and so they are naturally cautious about non-medical forms of healing. On the other hand, many of them know that often what is needed is more than a prescription but, with umpteen cases to see during "surgery", they cannot spend the time they would like with individuals.

"What shall I say to my doctor if I am seeking healing through prayer and the sacraments?" Since doctors vary so much it is not easy to give an answer to cover all cases, but one line is: "I am grateful for all that you are doing for me, but I do feel that I need extra support from praying people. It will not interfere with your treatment but, on the contrary, I hope that it will help me to respond better to it."

Doctors are often rightly suspicious of religion which whips up false hopes, interferes with treatment and uses unhealthy "suggestion". It often leads to bitter disappointment.

On the other hand a number of experiments in the USA have indicated that medical treatment plus prayerful and sacramental treatment produces a higher success rate than either medical or spiritual procedures alone (see Francis McNutt's *Healing* and *The Power to Heal*). So now let us look

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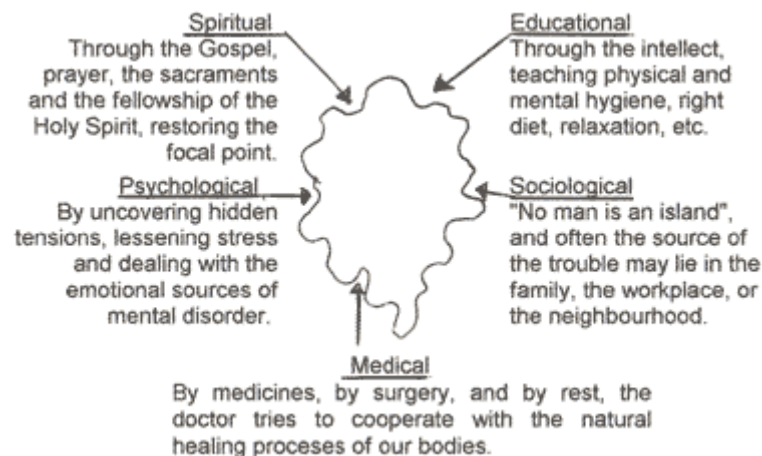
at the overall pattern of healing and try to see where the various elements fit in.

Here is the symbol of wholeness, the circle, with the sign of the love of God at the heart, radiating health throughout the being.



But we are not like that. The typical person is more like this, with no clear centre, full of internal stress lines, vulnerable to the outside world.

Now we come to attempt to put the broken person back into shape, to restore the circle to wholeness. There are five main ways of tackling this:



Medical

By medicines, by surgery, and by rest, the doctor tries to cooperate with the natural healing processes of our bodies.

These, then, are the five main approaches, though obviously there are no clear-cut divisions between them. Many a family doctor has included them all in his or her work. Not every patient needs healing from every angle, and yet often trouble in one sphere points to trouble elsewhere which is hidden. The specialists in each approach tend to work separately, but many of us today attend meetings where the various specialists can meet together and share. "Wholistic" approaches and "Complementary Medicine" are now a familiar part of the scene, even in some medical practices.

Now let us see how this works out.

Let us imagine that "Jane" has had a "coronary" and is in the intensive care unit.

The medical profession keeps her physical body working when, left to itself, it would have died.

Education will be needed when she comes round, to teach her to eat more wisely, avoiding high consumption of rich food and alcohol. She may also be taught to have daily periods of relaxation.

Social adjustment may also be needed. The structure of her family life and her working life may need to be re-assessed. "RELATE", the personnel manager at work, and others like this may all have a part to play in re-establishing her.

The psychotherapist may uncover the fact that she was rather overlooked as a middle child and has an unhealthy need to prove that she is "somebody". Therefore she is too anxious to please and bottles up her aggression and cannot say "No!".

The Gospel will set the love and the power of God at the centre of her life, giving her the power to change. She is able to look afresh at what her life is about, and to look at the people around her through new eyes. She will now have the ability to assimilate what others have told her, and to use the life which the medics have rescued.

If she is sufficiently open and the love of God reaches her heart truly, there may well be a "miracle".

If, on the other hand, she forgets God as soon as she begins to get well, then the old patterns will creep back in and she will be worse off next time.

The life of the children of God, "eternal life", or call it what you will, seeks simplicity and love, just as the old life seeks more and more of everything and is competitive. As the child of God grows she develops an inner stillness, for her body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and at the heart of it is the Holy of Holies where the soul meets with God in silence. This silence is too deep for words, even for the words of hymns and prayers. It is out of this that true health proceeds. Then the work of the doctor, the psychiatrist, and all the other experts can bear fruit.

Therefore thank God for your doctor and for all the medical people concerned with you. Pray for them, they need it, for they are probably under great pressure. Ask God's blessing on all treatment. Don't be one of the people who sees God getting at them through their misfortunes but does not see Him in all that is helping them. Endeavour to make sense of what has happened. See the medical as one of God's approaches to you, even if they themselves do not see it that way. Don't forget to thank them afterwards!

If you are in hospital then remember that it is up to you to ask for spiritual help if you want it. There is probably a chaplain, but it is up to you to say to him that you want prayer. If you have a minister of your own, it is up to you to let them know that you are in hospital and that you want something

more than a chatty visit. Don't rely on the gossip-line to inform your minister any more than you would rely on it to inform your doctor!

Do a check in terms of what we said about the various approaches. Perhaps you need a different diet, or perhaps you need to learn to think more positively. Perhaps a talk in depth with somebody about your family relationships or about your work situation would clear something up. Above all, it would certainly be good to seek a deeper harmony with God and to open your life to Him in a new way.

But remember that your doctor does not have all the answers. You have your part to play in seeking wholeness. It is, perhaps, not enough that you just want your body patched up so that you can go on as before. Perhaps more is called for, and that is where you must do something for yourself.

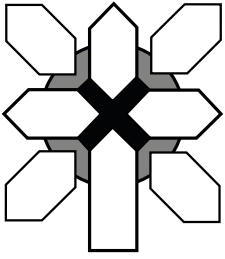
But the mystery of suffering remains. The greatest Christians may have their "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7-10), and we all have to die sometime. Some wonderfully radiant people are badly handicapped physically, and some who are very physically fit are nevertheless "sick at heart". There are no easy answers.

A prayer.

"Heavenly Father, I thank You for the healing work of the medical profession, for generations of dedicated workers, and for those I know myself (name them). May Your blessing be upon my doctor as he/she visits me. May Your blessing be upon all the medicine and treatment I receive. May Your love comfort my friends and family. May we all emerge from this experience with a deeper wholeness, though Jesus Christ our Lord."

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Credo

used by the

Christian Fellowship of Healing (Scotland)

The Christian Fellowship of Healing:

is united in its commitment to the practice of prayer as the foundation of all our ministry.

Prayer is the means through which we believe the Holy Spirit can use us, here and now, to continue the practice of healing incarnated by Jesus.

is an ecumenical group of Christians who openly embraces a range of theological understanding and language to describe 'how' God heals.

We accept that health and healing can and does come through medicine, counselling, complementary therapies and other means. This does not negate the real contribution of prayer, rather it upholds the role of prayer to support individuals to listen to the Holy Spirit within them, guiding them, facilitating health and healing.

is committed to being alongside people who are suffering and experiencing pain, struggle and distress whatever their background.

We acknowledge that suffering faces us all and challenges our understanding and belief. Yet we can, with integrity, offer reassurance of God's loving presence accompanying every human being as seen in Christ who has shown us the capacity of God to be vulnerable even to the point of death. Living in and from this truth of the ever present loving God we respond as authentically as possible from our hearts, and we can offer an understanding of the range of meaning of healing which includes miracles.

is convinced of the importance of the varied aspects of healing displayed by Jesus in the miracle stories.

This includes an intense personal encounter with Jesus; affirmation of the individual as a person of value, physical healing, restoration of meaning and purpose, social inclusion; as well as challenge to those in power; confronting rigid thinking and lack of compassion. We believe all these components are aspects of the transforming love of God and reflect the wholeness Jesus calls us into. We see healing as deeply linked with the Christian tradition of vocation through which the living God calls each of us to discover and fulfil our potential.

is united in our understanding that healing in the New Testament includes wholeness.

This links the transforming love that effects miracles with the transforming love that brings the disciples through their fear and resistances into their ministry of apostleship. Our experience is that the practice of prayer in small groups, with a commitment to sharing and listening, enables those of us offering healing prayer to grow in ourselves and in our capacity to experience and share God's love. This includes the reality that some people have a gift of healing and a greater capacity than average to bring about healing.
