

within the human being.

- illnesses are caused by incorrect thinking
- correct vibrations can heal

Some examples for therapies with an esoteric background

Bach Flower Therapy, Precious Stones Therapy, Reiki, Aura Soma, Prana Healing, Bio Resonance Therapy, Cranio Sacral Therapy, Aura Healing, Bio Energetic Healing, Spagyrics, Reflex Zone Therapy, Homeopathy, Schüssler Salts, Anthroposophical Healing Therapies, Rebirthing, Qi-Gong, Tai Chi, Urine Therapy, Spirit Healing, Kinesiology, etc. ...

Christians and alternative medicines

- All medicine is part of a cultural environment. Each medicine stems from a world view background. Within the framework of a therapeutic approach, this background is directly or indirectly explained and passed on to the patient.
- Within the framework of alternative medicines, teachings on healing and on salvation often go hand in hand. This is particularly true in the case, where holistic healing is promised and where man's mental and spiritual dimension is particularly mentioned. Being exposed for a longer term to therapies with an esoteric background, can influence a kind of thinking, which is incompatible with the basic tenets of the Christian faith or even finds itself in opposition to it.
- Apart from questionable therapeutic use, the practice or acceptance of esoteric therapies leads to an accelerated dissemination of esoteric ideas throughout society.

Are there any meaningful alternatives?

- An "alternative" to the scientifically oriented medicine does not exist for those who - in the case of a serious illness - are searching for a trustworthy therapy. But meaningful "complementary medicines", therapeutic additions, are available.
- Meaningful additions can be found in natural medicine, where real natural products are used (water, air, movement, diets).
- From a Christian viewpoint an additional medicine of word and encounter is not only meaningful, but also desirable.
- Christian motivated medicine refrains from exaggerated promises of healing or salvation. It will rather help man to accept the limits he is subject to and to arrive at a meaningful approach to suffering and even death.

Other writings on the subject:

Buckman Robert, Sabbagh Karl, *Magic or Medicine? An Investigation of Healing & Healers*, New York 1995

Coker, Robina, *Alternative Medicine. Helpful or Harmful?* Crowborough 1995

Edzard E., Singh S., *Trick or Treatment? Alternative Medicine on Trial*, London 2008

On the subject of New Age, there is an informative document issued by the Church:

"Jesus Christ, the bearer of the waters of life". Considerations on New Age from a Christian viewpoint. Rome 2003. This document can be downloaded via the following internet address: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20030203_new-age_en.html

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Catchword

Alternative Medicines

Alternative, or better, unconventional therapies are becoming more and more popular. This development has been encouraged by an ever increasing mistrust of chemically based medicines, linked to

a technically oriented science as such, as well as by an ever more present "soulless" medicinal approach, that relies mostly on modern



machines. But not everything offered within the alternative medicine sector is to be trusted and the methods

used are often permeated by questionable ideologies and worldviews. Often it is not so much a question of healing, but rather a spreading of esoteric salvation concepts, even though these are mostly well hidden. Thus Christians, who want to hold on to their faith, often find themselves being pulled in different directions.

What do we need to consider, when we turn to unconventional healing methods, how can we differentiate between trustworthy and dubious offers and how can we recognise religious messages within or behind the therapies on offer?

Alternative therapies can be comfortable, relaxing and could raise new hope. Sometimes this is helpful. But the ideologies which are often transported by those methods, could be problematic.

Chaff and wheat – how to differentiate?

Above all we can describe the area of alternative healing practices as a romping place for all manner of charlatans. Next to some few, which really make sense, there also are the many therapies, which are based upon an esoteric world view and often are spread and believed in with an almost literal religious fervour. What do we need to consider, in order not to fall for dubious or questionable ideologies?

The Consumer Protection Organisation advises prudence:

- when therapies cannot be submitted to a serious test of their efficacy, when they only offer sample cases, where they are said to have worked
- when unclear definitions are used more to obscure than to explain things, i.e. concepts like vibrations, life energy, energetic balance, bodily purification, detoxification, energy flow, energy block, vibrating illnesses, ethereal, ... and others, can with a certain degree of certainty be called pointers to an untrustworthy esoteric therapy
- when one product or practice promises to heal a multitude of different sufferings, which have little or no connection with each other
- when a generalised healing method or product is offered, which claims to heal each and every sickness
- when dubious methods of diagnosis are being used, which fall back on occult powers or magical ideas and concepts, i.e. methods like the following are not suited to diagnosing illnesses: iris diagnosis, kinesiological musc-

le tests, pendelling and dowsing rod, kirlian photography, aura diagnosis, bio tensor, etc. ... The danger here lies in the possibility of not recognising real illnesses correctly or early enough, or vice versa, or, that illnesses are being diagnosed which in reality do not exist.

Those who heal are in the right. Is that true?

- For each therapy there can be found people who will testify and claim: “It helped me”. But such experiences do not suffice as a proper verification for the effectiveness of a therapeutic approach as such.
- Man is a social being and as such he or she reacts to affirmation, words or acts, which cause hope. Whatever gives hope to a sick person, can lead to positive effects. Medicine calls this the “placebo effect”. Placebo (Latin) means: “I will please others”. The placebo effect plays a role in each and every therapy and also specifically influences effective therapies. The placebo effect influences every human being, also the sceptics.
- Methods which do not show a therapeutic success - over and above the effectiveness of the placebo effect – are deemed “unspecific pseudo therapies”. An apparent success after such therapies cannot be used as real proof for the effectiveness of the therapeutic concept.
- One of the particularities of

The word “placebo” originally comes from the bible “Placebo Domino in Regione Vivorum” (I will please the Lord in the land of the living) is the translation from the Latin of the 9th verse of Psalm 16. The placebo effect can be noted in adults, children, infants and even animals. Even those claiming to be sceptics react to affirmation and messages of hope.

the many unspecified “pseudo therapies” are the “therapeutic stories” on powers and events, which are said to cause and affect sickness and health. Such stories can also be disseminators of ideologies.

- Over the course of the last years many therapies were able to establish themselves in our country, which (openly and indirectly) build upon religious ideas and different views or concepts of the world, mostly originating within the esoteric world.

Typical for the esoteric world view is the idea, that

- everything is penetrated and supported by a cosmic energy (Chi, Qi, Reiki, Prana, Vis Vitalis...).
- health and sickness depend on harmonious or blocked energy flows (meridians, chakras, energy points...).
- man’s spirit, soul and body can be harmonised through the influence of diverse “energies”, like meditation, ritual movement, breathing, etc.,
- medicines become more effective after a specific preparation of their ethereal areas, since they can be energised, potentised or dynamised, in order to affect the “life force”



Qi – Speaking of energies, energy flows, vibrations and ethereal energies is typical for the esoteric alternative medicine. The concepts Qi, Chi, Ki, Prana or Via Vitalis all describe a “universal life force”.