

## DISTURBANCES IN THE PERCEPTUAL FIELD

This chapter began at least 10 years ago and has undergone constant development through at least seven versions. In the design of this book I tried to find some way to incorporate its contents into another chapter, such as the previous, but it has its own integrity and value. Thus I include it as a separate chapter. The mystery of the human being is as great as the mystery of the cosmos. We are just beginning the discovery of each. The human is a highly complex organism living in relationship with the external world and thus acquiring a history, developing an internal world which becomes as real in its impact on personality as the external world, possessing a spirit or soul providing unique identity and resources,<sup>79</sup> and living out all of these dimensions through the medium of a highly complex biological system which we call “body.”<sup>80</sup>

### **So, what’s normal?**

We mistakenly feel that there is some “normal” way for this all to be, as if there were a standard human pattern from which we all were cut or according to which we all developed. But the differences in our genetic inheritance, the differences in our personal and family histories, the differences in the ways in which we are hormonally enabled and neurologically wired, to name a few, all make each of us different. As one who teaches, I have had to recognize the different styles of learning and the neurological differences which make it easy to learn some things and difficult to learn others.

The biological system through which we live and express ourselves to the world enables, gifts, and limits our lives. Its genetically inherited constitution and its modification by environment, experience, disease or injury, affects the way we function. Its functionality affects how we regard ourselves. If we do not have an arm, we are seldom held responsible for not having an arm, though we do experience the pain of limits and being different from others. If we have difficulty in general coordination which makes athletic accomplishment in a sports-minded society difficult, we usually feel failed and “shamed.” While guilt has to do with having done “something” that someone thinks we should not have, shame has to do with who we are (or are not), our person and dignity. Greater on the ladder of shame is anything that can be labeled “mental illness,” even though we are discovering that difficulties in mental function are related to brain function and chemistry. Absolutely essential to the person who must experience dysfunction is the restoration of her/his dignity and value, the recognition of the biological dependency of the personality and mind, and a strong attack against the fiction of normalcy.

### **Perceptual Field – the inner awareness of inner and outer world**

This article on “Disturbances in the Perceptual Field” seeks to describe a foundational disturbance within the human neurobiological system which may have various causes. It is akin to the contemporary concern for dyslexia and attention deficit (hypertensive) disorder and is one way of approaching what persons

---

<sup>79</sup> There are various terms, such as soul and spirit (even mind), which have been used to describe aspects of human existence that seem to transcend the purely biological and psychological. This transcendent aspect, often identified with self-awareness and the ability of the person to go beyond biological limits, points to a spiritual dimension of human existence which may transcend and help one to deal with the limits and possibilities of the body. Just to believe in the transcendent within oneself provides a powerful dynamic.

<sup>80</sup> There is great interest today in the biological basis of behavior and disorders. John Ratey MD, who has worked a great deal in the area of ADD, has edited a book on *Neuropsychiatry of Personality Disorders*, Blackwell Science, 1995. Barratt, Kent and Stanford in one of the chapters call for a more holistic approach arguing that biological variables should be part of the definition and measurement of personality structure. A popular presentation of this appeared in *Newsweek*, January 26, 1998, pp. 50ff, titled “Is Everybody Crazy?” (author Sharon Begley) which examines the relationship of brain damage, genetics, and behavior. Daniel Amen makes a significant contribution in indicating that the various types of ADD are rooted in brain function identified by SPECT (single photon emission computed tomography) scans. See Daniel G. Amen, *Healing ADD: The Breakthrough Program That Allows You to See and Heal the 6 Types of ADD*, NY: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 2001.

suffering from such disabilities describe.<sup>81</sup> Though much has been written on the relationship of ADD, dyslexia, bipolar disorder, depression, schizophrenia to dysfunction of the brain, rather than identifying problem areas within the brain and their relationship to specific illness, this article will treat a more comprehensive and very crucial function of the brain which can become disturbed by various neurological "failures".

I use the term "perceptual field" to represent *the person's awareness of all sensory information, including body- and self-awareness, which provides the person with information about the external world, the body, and the internal world, manages and integrates this, and represents it to the person in conscious and unconscious ways.* This perceptual field provides an *awareness structure* for the person's existence, functioning, and self-awareness, and a place where awareness may persist for a time, thus providing short term memory. Any disturbance in the perceptual field will to some extent be disabling: it will disturb perception of sensory information, disorganize the person's awareness of self (self and body image<sup>82</sup>), confuse short term memory (memory which has not yet been turned into durable memory traces in the neurological system), and will make access to long term memory difficult.

#### **Various origins of disturbance of a field dependent on the whole human organism**

Because the perceptual field has to do with the whole human organism in relationship to inner and outer world, disturbances of the perceptual field may originate in failures of or damage to various, or combinations of, elements of the marvelously complicated human system:

1. the hearing system, including the inner ear, which according to Harold Levinson is connected to the cerebral cortex and monitors sensory and motor circuits (see note 14);
2. the visual system, where visual perception is disturbed within the optical or related neurological system producing difficulty receiving and handling visual sensory information, including difficulty focusing or coordinating both eyes to produce an image with a focused area of attention;
3. the sections of the brain which manage sensory input (suggested areas are the thalamus and the reticular activating system) where inability to handle information properly can cause sensory overload or diminution of sensory information;
4. the sections of the brain identified with different types of ADD indicated by the SPECT scans and research of Daniel Amen: especially the prefrontal cortex, the temporal lobes, the basal ganglia, the anterior cingulate gyrus, the deep limbic system;
5. the proprioceptive system (the system which provides feedback or sensory awareness of the movements and positions of the body and limbs);
6. pain derived from various physical conditions, particularly headache (note the sensory disruptions and aura caused by migraine), which would disturb and distract mental processes;

---

<sup>81</sup> See the rich resources on learning disabilities located on the Web site of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, part of the National Institutes of Health [<http://www.ninds.nih.gov>].

<sup>82</sup> The body image is formed by a number of factors. Research indicates that there is initially the natural construction of brain and neurological system. Phantom limbs have been experienced not only by those who lost a limb, but by those who were born without a limb. The image is further constructed through sensation and awareness which comes from activity and the proprioceptive nervous system. When a limb is lost perception of the limb is often retained with various modifications and at times with sensory reorganization of cortical areas used by the limb and those adjacent. For example, touching the lower face may produce sensation in the phantom limb. Thus body image originates and continues in a process which utilizes initial neurological construction but is developmental and dynamic. (See Ronald Melzack, "Phantom Limbs," *Scientific American*, April 1992, pp. 120-126, and V.S. Ramachandran and William Hirstein, "The Perception of Phantom Limbs", *Brain*, Oxford University Press, 1998, 121, 1603-1630.) Self-image and body image are closely connected and necessary to the person's functioning. Contributory to such images is also what one might call "vitality" within the biological system, and thus within the images, which contributes to the strength of the image and its energy. The many factors entering into the adequate formation of the body image give clues as to ways one might deal with its disturbance.

7. inadequate functioning of the neurotransmitter system which affects the brain's ability to pay attention, to function and process information with ease, and often produces depression not merely as an emotional byproduct but rooted in diminishment of neurotransmitters within the brain;
8. the higher cortical system where long range memory is implanted by the establishment of appropriate networks of nerve cells and in which the self-image and self-awareness reside that come from life experience and memory – all of which provide structure for perception;
9. or the attempt to control the human system, whether because of anxiety about the functioning of a system that is actually normal or because the system has various disabilities and disturbances. The perceptual field is a reporter of information from the human system, including the senses, but is not designed to allow interference and control. When one seeks to control the system the reportage in the perceptual field can become disturbed and confused.<sup>83</sup>

While many persons may describe common phenomena having to do with disturbance, the causes may be varied and many. The various possibilities need to be explored while listening carefully to the person's description of experience as clue to its origin.

---

<sup>83</sup> The human system is designed to learn to function by experience and habituation. When properly trained, one has to allow it to do what it knows to do and occasionally reinforce what it knows or retrain it. One cannot receive feedback of what it is going to do ahead of time nor can one intentionally enter and control the process by which one does something. One can only intend something, start the system, and monitor the feedback in the perceptual field. If something is not working right or attaining the goal of the action, then the action can be modified with conscious corrections (which will interfere rather than redirect if the intervention is too extensive), the system can be stopped, or one can allow the process to carry through, learning from the “errors” and later retraining the system. Important is one's closeness to and intimacy with one's system. To be fully present within it is to make significant contribution to its functioning. Difficulty with one's system often results in a kind of withdrawal rather than struggling for the contribution of one's presence.

A particular crucial time in the functioning of the system is before an action or process starts. One intends something, but does not have awareness that the system is available and able. One can demonstrate this by something as simple as placing one's hand on the desk, leaving it stationary for a few moments, and then intending the movement of a finger. When one tries to think about moving the finger (rather than moving it without thinking), one experiences some doubt and anxiety about what will happen when one actually makes the move. The image of the finger unmoved remains vague. It is only possible to be fully aware of the finger in movement, but even here one cannot be aware of the process which enables its movement.

One interesting attempt to gain control of a process is talking to oneself. This private speech is an important part of the development of a child when learning new things and gradually becomes internalized when the task is learned. However, attention deficit children continue the use of private speech much longer than other children, probably because of the difficulty of gaining control over the tasks they were seeking to learn. This may explain why some adults often talk to themselves.

(Laura E. Berk, “Why Children Talk to Themselves,” *Scientific American*, Nov. 1994, NY: Scientific American Inc., p. 82.) There is a type of awareness of readiness for action that one can gain from the bodily awareness produced in exercise, tension, or attention, heightening awareness by stimulating aspects of the perceptual field. But this only *seems* to give one a modest measure of control of processes which really cannot be directly controlled.

The normal provision for habituated and automated action then allows one to turn attention to other matters rather than trying to control all the elements of complicated procedures. When one attempts to control the human system one only interferes, disrupts its process, and confuses the perceptual field by which one may monitor, but not control, the process.

One of the major issues of persons in relating to the mysterious outer world (much of which cannot be controlled) is the ability to trust life itself even though life may be problematic. This is called “existential trust.” As Maurice Friedman remarks in *Religion and Personality*: “The real course that is asked of us is the courage to respond, the courage to go out to meet the reality given in this moment, whatever its form. .... Trust in God, like existential trust, is not trust in what God will do for you but simply that unconditional trust that enables one, as long as one has strength to do so, to go forth to meet what comes. It is only trust that gives us the real resources to keep going.” (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1992, pp. 9,11.) Our relationship with our mysterious inner world also calls for a trust analogous to this. It is not that our human system can be controlled and will always do just what we ask of it, but that the resultant anxiety, if we do not have a foundational trust in this system, will make us dysfunctional. Thus trust both towards the outer and inner worlds is a necessary precondition of meaningful life and the ability to live life.

*Disturbances in the perceptual field have often been labeled "psychological" as primary attention has been given to their psychological consequences. It is important to take seriously the possibility of organic or physiological causes and to recognize the ways in which difficulties in the perceptual field create various psychological consequences. While psychological disturbance and family history is often judged to be a primary cause, the psychological is frequently secondary to and derivative from the physiological.<sup>84</sup>*

### **Observed disturbances of the Perceptual Field**

Some of the various manifestations of perceptual field disturbance are:

1. Difficulty receiving and organizing sensory information (such as visual or auditory). Visual difficulty is often manifested in reading or learning problems diagnosed as dyslexia or attention deficit disorder.
2. Thought process and memory confusion. Because the perceptual field in which thinking occurs is not clear, structured and organized, and free from confusing information (a form of mental static), it is difficult to stay focused on the thought process and to develop the clear short-term memory which would persist for the handling of information and would allow long term memory to form.
3. Memory access difficulty. Because one does not feel in contact with the "memory store" there is a sense in which the person does not feel confident of the retrieval of needed information and is constantly seeking and losing needed information.
4. Confusion of external objects with internal thought and feeling processes. This comes from the loss of clear delineation between what is inside and what is outside when the perceptual field is inadequately defined or disturbed. Thus a person or situation in the world outside one's mind is perceived as inside the mind, seemingly equivalent to thoughts; and as long as they are located within the mind they stimulate whatever they represent within the mind. This causes a whole process of involuntary thinking which may frighten the person because of its uncontrolled nature and the sometime production of inappropriate thoughts. This also results in the strange feeling that persons outside know what one is thinking because they seemingly are located within the perceptual field. When the perceptual field is clear and appropriately structured, then it is also clear that others are separate from my processes and me.
5. The beginning and ending of the processes of thought, feeling, and even action become confused and unclear. This has two consequences. First, while ordinary thoughts and feelings come and go, without clarity in the perceptual field one cannot sense their beginning and end. Thus such thoughts and feelings seem to persist, to continue to be present, and the person may seek to engage and struggle with them which only creates further persistence. Second, regarding actions, because there is no clear awareness that a process involving mental formulation of an action and its implementation has ended, both the person consciously and the bio-neurological system unconsciously involved in action are unsure that the action has been performed and completed. Even the sensory feedback about the results of an action seem unclear. This may very well result in compulsive repetition of actions in attempting to be sure they have been performed and this is a significant cause of compulsive behavior.
6. Loss of coordination. This is due to the person not being clearly aware of the body and its members, not adequately sensing and imaging both body positions and movement, and

---

<sup>84</sup> For example the expressions of frustration and rage by those with ADD or autism are secondary to the biological conditions and are their consequences.

often trying to consciously participate in a process which should be unconscious and automatic.

There is also a "secondary level" of confusion, one which adds more disturbance to the perceptual field and makes attention to sensory information even more difficult. It would seem that this is the result of natural systems which function as part of the human mechanism, but are also fed by anxiety which incites these mechanisms to function.

1. There would seem to be a need for perceptual field clarity and for clarity of feed-back from body and sensory systems which goes beyond the psychological needs of the person for this. The need for this seems to be built into the neurological system so that the system keeps searching for this or seeking to create it with little ability of the person to control this automatic mechanism. It is like a computer program which is told to do something it can't resolve. The program then goes into an "endless loop."
2. One of the solutions of the human system to disturbance within the perceptual field is to create tension in parts of the body as a substitute for the awareness and organization the perceptual field should supply. It would seem that the organism then seeks to organize itself around the tension. Of course, consequences of this are experienced over time from the prolonged stress which accompanies the tension.
3. Another phenomenon to keep in mind is what seems to be an avoidance, self-protection, sort of mechanism that appears to be part of the human system. This could be identified with the mechanisms preparing for fight-flight that are part of the sympathetic nervous system. When something is unpleasant or dangerous, when something creates anxiety, the system tends to avoid it. When there is confusion within the perceptual field, everything is perceived as dangerous, uncertain, or problematic. However, one must go on living and meeting responsibilities. Thus one tries to do what one's system tries to avoid. This results in a perceptible inner struggle going on in the background of everything that one tries to do and may at times result in being functionally shut down.
4. Concern for concentration and attempts to concentrate for some persons makes things worse. One of the intriguing observations of Daniel Amen in his use of SPECT scans is that in four out of six types of ADD attempts of the person to concentrate lowers brain activity in crucial areas rather than increasing it, something which may be improved by medication. Amen uses the areas in which brain activity diminishes, or in a few cases increases, as a diagnostic tool to identify ADD type.

With such disturbance in the human organism, it becomes clear as to why there are accompanying serious psychological distortions, for the person's self and world are not perceived clearly and according to their reality. This would easily result in various phobias because the organism would perceive itself as in danger and uncertain of what is happening. Besides this there would be the fear of not being able to function as one was expected to function. Each attempt to function verbally, mentally, and physically would be accompanied by some uncertainty and anxiety. There would also be unclear feedback regarding actions that one has already taken, as to whether they were accomplished or successful. This could account for compulsive repetition of some actions or the anxiety that one might not have done something that one intended and likely did. Lastly, as a consequence of this disturbance the person's self image and ego, from which she/he functions and is self-aware, are disorganized. *Summarily, one might say that with disturbance within the perceptual field **all** becomes uncertain and unclear.*

It is thus understandable why a child, faced with these difficulties while at school, acts out or withdraws. Even for an adult the condition itself and the various accompanying functional failures would impact one's self image, reinforced by our society's emphasis on ability to function and accomplish. Often compensatory fantasy develops which attempts to handle the way the condition is experienced. One

should then expect that, whatever can be done to deal with the malfunction of the physiological processes, some therapy may also be necessary to deal with psychological damage.

### **Remedies**

There are various possibilities for remedying the situation which one could explore. However, when one seeks to remedy faulty processes of perception or compensate for them, one consciously enters into a human process that should ordinarily be spontaneous, without need of our attention. Thus some methods of intervention, besides being helpful, will also complicate our processes. It is helpful to seek possibilities for remedy which can be habituated or automated and thus left to the unconscious processes.

*Usually the person who has struggled with these difficulties for a long time has found some things which seem to help.* These should be listened to seriously as to the clues they provide concerning what is wrong and what is helpful. What should help would be anything which would help to clarify the perceptual field. Various possibilities will shortly be discussed.

I would like to precede the discussion of various remedies with a discussion of a basic, simple but very important approach: *construct a new body image if your image is inadequate!* The body image is built in the process of living and use of the body, constructed upon whatever is provided in the bioneurological system. A baby learns to crawl and then to walk, exploring the possibilities, gaining confidence, and eventually turning over the process to learned procedures and gaining a general awareness of the body, its parts and functions. Some athletes build a marvelously functioning body image by their constant experience and practice so that it is there for them when they need it without conscious intervention.

In order to consider what might be needed in the building or modifying of a body image, consider what is there. As you reflect on your awareness of the image of yourself, what is missing? What is vague? Do you feel connected to your body? What needs to be worked on in order to complete your image and enhance its structure as a basis for your functioning? Some persons who may have rejected their bodies, or parts of them, may have very little clear body image.

Since major elements of sensory perception which help in constructing the body image are located in the head, the eyes and ears and the brain as center of thought and perception, it makes sense to begin here with the effort to improve our body image and its effectiveness. What one needs is a sense of the location of eyes and ears and an awareness of the boundaries and structure of the head. This awareness then contributes to the construction and modification of the image.

Since our body image developed from the process of activity and life experience which created awareness and shaped the image, modification of the present state of the image also needs a process which will provide sufficient awareness to effect changes in the image. One approach is meditation on one's body, visualization which needs to be developed as a discipline of awareness which gradually produces permanent memory that can function without continued effort to create it: i.e., it becomes programmed. A good place to begin is the scanning of your head. With eyes closed imagine a scan which will circle your head from your hair to your neck, constantly circling your head at a reasonable pace and perhaps moving downward with slow inhalation of breath and upward with exhalation. Be aware of your physical sensations at the point of the scan and gradually seek to retain the sensations of the various locations until the scan builds an image of awareness. Then allow this awareness to become a part of your self image and settle into your mind so that it remains and persists. Scanning could then be expanded to your whole body. It probably would be good to at least take it to the level of your upper body so that the modified image that you are creating includes this larger structure.

Creating physical sensation is also helpful. For example, if you place your hands over your head at a distance of 2-3 inches you will gradually feel not only the warmth of your hands, but your skin and the shape of your head. You could do this for yourself or someone could do it for you. After a time this is remembered and contributes to your total awareness.

Now, beyond the construction of the body image there are remedies which have been tried by various persons that could be explored, keeping in mind that what works for one does not necessarily work for another because disturbances in the perceptual field have such a variety of causes:

1. There could be limitation of sensory information which the perceptual field needs to handle (try such a simple matter as closing one eye and thus halving the visual information and eliminating the necessity of the two eyes to coordinate). If this seems to help, when a clearer mind is crucial a patch could be put over one eye or eye glass.<sup>85</sup>
2. It might be helpful to heighten sensory stimuli by various aids (such as a hearing aid, glasses) to provide stronger and clearer information and override disturbance.
3. Awareness can be focused by applying pressure to a point on the head or face. Since the perceptual field is perceived to be within the head, pressure to the head seems to produce greater awareness. Sometimes this pressure can be seen as interfering with confusing sensory information and thus eliminating some of the mental "static". This amounts to one feeling blotting out another. Sometimes it can be seen as providing an organizing center, much as what one unconsciously does in tensing muscles to produce self awareness.
4. Noise, such as a radio, television, or white-noise generator, can be used to help maintain a focus in the perceptual field or to overcome other disturbances. Some persons work best with the radio or TV on.<sup>86</sup> The beat of music may provide an auditory structure while visible squares on the floor could provide a visual structure.<sup>87</sup> Even a computer monitor provides a visual structure besides visual information.
5. What often happens when there is pain or disturbance within the body is that one "withdraws" from it and then becomes conscious that one exists somewhat apart from and over against the body. There is great power in "stepping back into" the body, "being present" in the midst of the distortions and confusions of the perceptual field. When one does this, and stays there, one becomes aware of the "power of the person" (call it ego, will, self, soul or whatever) to restructure the disorganized condition by one's presence. One's presence becomes the organizing structure.
6. When there are difficulties within the perceptual field the person over time usually suffers from the long-term effects of stress in attempts to cope. Besides the general affects upon the body, stress affects the supply of neurotransmitters and this additionally results in mental confusion and depression. Stress may also produce constant headache so that life is observed

---

<sup>85</sup> I find that it is helpful to intentionally coordinate my eyes to provide convergence on visual information, so that the information is not random but focused. The difficulty is consciously maintaining this coordination without stress and fatigue. I am exploring training my eyes to do this. I find it intriguing that though there are a number of things I can do to improve perception, to do just one of them instead of all seems to provide significant results. Each of them provides extensive focus within the perceptual field.

<sup>86</sup> I have always found it helpful to work with the radio on, though I do not really "listen" to it. I have also found it helpful to locate reflective surfaces next to my ears, much as if I would cup my hands near my ears, and by this to focus and augment the sound I hear. Perception immediately becomes clearer.

<sup>87</sup> Much similar to what is described in 2-5 is described in Oliver Sacks *Awakenings* (NY: Dutton Obelisk, E. P. Dutton, 1983) in which he discusses his work with encephalitic patients. In his notes at the end of the book he portrays similar experience with Parkinsonian patients where touch, music, visual markings, etc., enable functioning (see pp. 294-296. In *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (N.Y.: Summit Books, 1985, pp. 42-52), Sacks describes the story of "The Disembodied Lady" who lost all proprioception and thus lost body awareness and image. She learned to develop new self awareness and functioning on purely visual and auditory bases, though remaining "disembodied".

through a fog of pain.<sup>88</sup> To overcome the effects of this takes time. One approach is for the person to practice extended periods of contemplation, a cessation of mental and physical activity productive of deep relaxation, several hours each day for several days, until the neurotransmitters restore themselves and the headache diminishes. When this happens the person becomes aware of greater mental clarity and energy. One should expect this to take three days to a week as a change in available neurotransmitters is a gradual process, akin to the length of time which an antidepressant takes to become effective. As an alternative, or to assist this, the person may, under the supervision of a doctor, use various antidepressants. It can also be true that diminution of neurotransmitters is a biochemical problem of the brain which preceded the impact of stress and thus this restorative effort may need antidepressants to supply the brain's normal resources.<sup>89</sup>

7. There may be a "secondary level" of confusion, the result of natural systems within the person reacting to the disturbance, as discussed above. This is significantly set in motion by *anxiety*. Anything that one can do to handle or lessen anxiety will make a significant contribution. Sometimes all that one can do is to learn to live with anxiety.
8. *It is important to stop moralizing about the way one functions.* Part of moralization is the feeling that one really should have the will power to be able to overcome and control, to be able to focus attention and clear one's mind. Also, the confusion that is part of the thought process when the perceptual field is disturbed can cause one to think what one would not think or has been taught not to think. Acceptance of what it is to be human is an important part of handling the anxiety about how one is, giving oneself permission to function and think in ways less than what others consider as ideal. Sometimes just accepting what it is to be human will allow the human system to work towards improvement and healing.

The use of medications, of course under medical supervision, may be indicated. These are primarily of two types: stimulants, such as Adderal, Concerta, Ritalin, Dexidrine and Cylert, and antidepressants - with other medications and alternative treatments sometimes found helpful.

To find what is helpful is a matter of exploration. Whatever works, works, even if the rationale is not understood. What is absolutely necessary is to understand what one is dealing with and to presume biological difficulties unless one has clear indications within personal history of the psychological and developmental rootage of the problems.<sup>90</sup> *One is not lazy, dumb, incompetent, unintelligent, or neurotic.*

---

<sup>88</sup> It is also important to note that various types of head pain, sinusitis, migraine, and the like, create difficulty with the perceptual field because of their proximity to where we perceive the perceptual field to be and the crucial role of the head in the image. Constant head pain can fog the perceptual field. Pressure to parts of the head may diminish the perception of the head pain. An interesting phenomenon is that "humming" in such a way as to create some vibration within the head results in blotting out some of the head pain and offers some felt structure to the perceptual field. Of course, one can't go around humming all day, though I have met persons who seem to use similar mechanisms such as making sounds during pauses in the speech process which gives them an unbroken sense of the process.

<sup>89</sup> I found that earlier in my life the contemplative technique worked more easily than in recent years, and I would suggest that this has to do with aging and changing body chemistry.

<sup>90</sup> Significant work has been done on dyslexia by Harold N. Levinson. He argues that dyslexia is related to damage of the system of the inner ear and cerebellum. This system is not only related to management of balance and muscular activity and involved in motion sickness. Rather is it a system, connected to the cerebral cortex, which monitors and integrates sensory and motor circuits of the nervous system. Thus when it is not working well, not only is reading affected, but the monitoring of all of one's sensory information. This produces a variety of other problems, not the least of which are phobias related not to psychological issues but to the difficulties of the affected person in perceiving and monitoring the world and in communicating to others. Levinson's listing of symptomatology includes: problems with reading and writing, memory instability, speech disorders, direction and right-left uncertainty, difficulty telling time, impaired concentration, impulse disturbances, difficulties with balance and coordination, fears, mood disturbances, and compulsions. Harold N. Levinson, *A Solution to the Riddle*

*What one experiences is something shared by many, biochemical and functional problems that may be produced by accident, disease, genetics. One needs to regain one's self respect, to compensate for limits the best that one can (and recognize the accomplishment in this), to pursue whatever solutions are possible, and to live life as courageously and meaningfully as possible. In doing this one has to make friends with oneself, with one's body and mind. Body and mind are friend, not enemy. In the best sense one has to make an absolute commitment of love to oneself as one would to a significant other and allow this love to transform the working relationship between self and body and mind.*

Life is so varied in its struggles, but is it not intriguing that many of us may suffer from the same problem, though with various causes, and share a common destiny in which we explore the possibilities of life? One cannot function well without clarity in the perceptual field and the accompanying full awareness of oneself which is often constructed in one's developmental process – if all is well. The process of human development by which this is constructed and becomes effective is not limited to youth. The potential for the remedy of the development and formation of what was missed is always in some sense alive, even with the limits of disturbances and incomplete development. The wonder in each human being affirms that whatever the stage, the story is not done and the horizons of the person far transcend the present – and often even the imagined future. Life has its perilous precipices, but it is from them that we fly:

I heard a voice:

Come to the edge!

And I was afraid.

The voice demanded:

Come to the edge!

But I will fall!

Come to the edge,

the voice gently pled.

And trembling I came.

And a wind thrust me

into space.

And reaching

to grasp the edge

I found - I could fly.

What if he

had loved me too much

to force me from the edge?

---

*Dyslexia*, New York: Springer-Verlag, 1980; *Smart But Feeling Dumb*, New York: Warner Books, 1984. He has also published a more recent book on *Total Concentration*, dealing with the relationship of his findings to Attention Deficit Disorder.

Somewhat similarly Russell A. Barkley has recently published in *Scientific American* a carefully developed treatment of ADD as due to malfunction in the caudate nucleus and the globus pallidus in the prefrontal cortex which control attention,

"Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder," *Scientific American*, September 1998, NY: Scientific American, Inc., pp. 66ff.

Perhaps the most comprehensive discussion of ADD and its treatment is that of Daniel G. Amen in *Healing ADD*, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2001. Amen has two clinics in California which house a large database of brain scans related to behavioral problems and provide a Web site *brainplace.com*. His comprehensive treatment not only identifies 6 types of ADD and the medications relevant for each, but explores interventions including dietary, supplemental, neurofeedback, focused breathing, self-hypnosis, ADD Coaching, etc..

**Some helpful literature**

Edward M. Hallowell and John J. Ratey, *Driven to Distraction, Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder from Childhood through Adulthood*, NY: Pantheon Books, 1994.

Harold N. Levinson, *A Solution to the Riddle Dyslexia*, New York: Springer-Verlag, 1980;

, *Smart But Feeling Dumb*, New York: Warner Books, 1984.

, *Total Concentration: How to Understand Deficit Disorders With Treatment Guidelines for You and Your Doctor*, NY: M. Evans & Co., 1992.

Lynn Weiss, *Attention Deficit Disorder in Adults: Practical Help for Sufferers And Their Spouses*, New and Updated Edition, Dallas: Taylor Publishing Co., 1992.

Daniel G. Amen, *Healing ADD: The Breakthrough Program That Allows You to See and Heal the 6 Types of ADD*, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2001.

For the approach to illness which Oliver Sacks characterizes as "humane", I call attention to two of his books:

Oliver Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, Summit Books, Simon and Schuster, 1985)

, *Awakenings*, NY: E.P Dutton, 1983. This was made into a movie. It is the story of the use of L-Dopa with those affected by the Encephalitis epidemic of 1916-27 (an epidemic which affected nearly five million people world-wide).

## PRAYER FOR HEALING

### **An Interfaith Approach**

Prayer for healing can be approached from within the wisdom of a specific religious tradition, and that is certainly what I will do, though also drawing upon more general insights. However, there is also a need to consider how spiritual healing might be approached from an interfaith perspective or a perspective considering primarily the human resources in healing. Such an organization as the National Federation of Spiritual Healers in Great Britain indicates that "The NFSH is not associated with any religion, -ism, or -ology. It does see the source of healing as divine, but respects the right of every individual to his or her own interpretation of that source. The word 'spiritual' in the title refers to the quality of spirituality implicit in the healing process." Its definition of spiritual healing then is primarily in terms of the channeling or directing of energies:

Spiritual healing is the channeling of healing energies through the healer to the patient. It re-energises and relaxes the patients to enable their own natural resources to deal with illness or injury in the best possible way. By "attunement" – perhaps best described as a combination of empathy and intent – either in the presence of the patient or at a distance – and by directing energy, usually through the hands, the healer seeks to supplement the depleted energy of the recipient, dealing with stress at whatever level it exists and releasing the body's own recuperative abilities to deal with the problem in the most effective way for that individual.

Patients receiving healing tend to experience sensations of being re-energised or relaxed, "pins and needles", heat or coolness, and pain coming to the surface and dispersing, indicating that the energies are indeed "going to work". Healing can be given for any illness, stress or injury as a therapy which is completely natural, has no side effects and is complementary to any other therapy. It can be helpful to a wide range of physical and psychological conditions, sometimes to a remarkable degree: indeed the medically diagnosed nature of the illness appears to be irrelevant to the outcome, and case histories range from the trivial to the terminal in which healing seems to have made an important, perhaps even overriding, contribution to recovery. Aside from its value in relieving pain and restoring function, healing is also notable for initiating improvements in patients' attitudes and clarity of thought, and in their quality of life.

When it is asked "Is it necessary to have "Faith"? The reply is:

No. Nothing special is asked of the patient except perhaps an openness to anything that happens, and a degree of trust in the healer. An awareness of the need for change and the motivation to do so can also be helpful.<sup>91</sup>

### **The Christian Perspective**

From the Christian perspective, the spiritual life and relationship with the spiritual world is very simple. *It is part of human existence and relationship with it is a gift of the divine.* What we need to work at is our awareness of it, openness to it, and participation in its dynamics. Prayer for healing could be seen as very complicated with a need somehow to do the right thing to manipulate the spiritual world and its powers for our benefit. But that denies that it comes to us as *gift* and that it belongs to God and is not ours to manipulate (though this does not deny that there are human energies which could be manipulated for well-being).

We do need to develop skills and wisdom in relationship to it and ability to discern between it and all of the other complex realities of life. But that comes with time. When we start to become aware of our own spiritual dimensions and that of the world in which we live, we are like children. But that is the place to start. Jesus stated that to children belongs the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 19:14).

---

<sup>91</sup> These quotations are taken from an earlier form of the NFSH homepage on the World Wide Web.

There are things that we need to do in prayer for our own sakes and there are things that we need to do to be of service to what we seek to see accomplished in prayer. Concerning our own needs, *clarification* is important. Thus in prayer we may carry on a dialogue with God, or with ourselves in the presence of God, in order to clarify our thought and to discover that for which God really wants us to pray. Then there is the need for *expression* of all that is on our heart. Here the goal is not so much clarification, but feeling our pain and sorrow, expressing our anger and frustration, agonizing over hope and the future. God provides us a safe place to do this, accepting it as part of our process, without judging or rejecting us. This does have the very important purpose of clearing out possible barriers to God's use of us and our prayers, but God provides this also because God has respect for our pain and struggle. For a good model of this see such Psalms as Psalm 55 or Jesus' own struggle with his fate in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Now what about the things that we need to do *to be of service to what we (or God) seek to accomplish* in prayer? Our prayer is to God that God will do something for someone, heal someone's illness, change someone's life, help someone to make a decision, or enter someone's life in a special way for the sake of their well-being. The action then is God's and our role is to serve God's action. We need to focus our attention on God, open ourselves to God and the spiritual world, and open ourselves to the person(s) for whom we pray. Then we become mediators or channels of God's action towards the person(s) in need. If visualization helps, you can visualize God's love and power entering you and moving through you towards the person in need, whom you also may visualize. One method I sometimes use is to hold the person in my mind, allowing the love and power of God to move through me towards him or her. Then I allow God to direct my attention to where the need or illness is in the life of the person and am open to God directing love and power through me to that location. By this approach I am not so much seeking to make certain things happen as to be used and led. As wisdom and experience grow and as God instructs, you will gradually find the ways and approaches which are best for you.

You may wish to try an alternation of more *active* and then *passive* prayer. The prayer just suggested is somewhat of the passive type, coming prayerfully to God and following the leading of God and the experience. Active prayer would be praying very specifically that certain conditions of the person be changed, focusing your attention on these conditions and visualizing their change. I believe that it is helpful to vary the approach at times unless one has specific leading to do certain things. It is presupposed that God will participate in our praying to help us to do what will be effective or is related to what God wishes. Paul says in Rom. 8:26, "the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words."

I have gradually come to take angels seriously, as messengers and servants of God. Whenever I have no idea of what to pray for and realize that the situation of the person prayed for is complicated and needs extended care and a series of solutions, I ask God to send an angel to carry out over an extended time whatever is needed. Such an angel would then have responsibility of interacting with and assisting the person as the complexities of his or her situation are worked out. An angel is also a helpful image for God's continuing presence and activity.

Prayer for healing should also, if possible, become the concern of several persons or a community so that the spiritual resources of a community are joined. Also, a congregation should have some prayer group which prays regularly for the sick and for the life of the congregation -- a point of intentional openness to the spiritual. And the needs of the congregation should be brought to the regular worship of the congregation. See chapter on "Providing a Community of Support and Love."

### **An Example**

About a month after the brain trauma suffered by a daughter of some friends in a car accident, I wrote what follows as a way to share with her family the approach I was using and the understanding it presupposed. I will call the person "Joan." This is being written not quite two years after the accident and Joan has retained her memory and identity, has developed good coordination of her right side and a more

limited coordination of her left side, is still having difficulty with swallowing and speech but is communicating well through a small computer like instrument into which she types her messages and which speaks for her. She is still going to rehab but is now back in high school. Besides all the stress, anxiety and added responsibility assumed by her family, this has also been a profound spiritual journey for them all.

What I share here is my perspective on Joan, her condition from the trauma of the accident, and ways to try to be helpful. This comes from my understanding that there is a significant spiritual dimension to life which should be considered in helping Joan to recover and that there is part of Joan (her soul) which is aware and able to cooperate. There is significant evidence for this, but, of course, not conclusive evidence. To venture upon the spiritual is thus also an act of faith. But it is a reasonable venture and a proper wager upon the nature and possibilities of life. It is also a venture from which only good can come, even if we do not understand it all right. For myself, that I may have a way of seeking to be helpful, I commit myself to this. It is clearly in harmony with our Christian faith. I share this with you so that you might know how I have been seeking to relate to Joan's condition.

What is the present condition of Joan viewed from a medical perspective? [Of course, I know that my ability to describe this is limited.] Joan now can open her eyes, but responses are not yet clear. In cases of brain trauma it is normal to have return to functioning and awareness take some time. The neural network has to be returned to normal functioning and the memory traces need to be reactivated. Muscular tone, flexibility, and coordination need to be redeveloped. It would seem to be expected that this would be a gradual rather than a sudden process. Important would be stimulation of the brain by familiar stimuli which would activate the neural patterns which exist. Thus return to functioning and awareness would seem to be very much involved with physiological and neurological processes.

But a major question affecting the approach to rehabilitation is whether Joan not only exists through her body but exists also apart from her body. Is Joan still there, not just as a complex of neurological interconnections which could be reactivated, but is Joan fully there though she cannot communicate? There is a vast literature on near-death experience which recounts how when persons nearly die they often have an experience of separation from the body, retaining consciousness and awareness, being able to observe attempts to resuscitate, and sometimes traveling a distance towards a spiritual light. There is also some evidence of out-of-body experience in the mystical traditions. Paul speaks of such in II Cor. 12: 1-5. If credence is given this, then we need to understand each human as having something which transcends biological limitation and death.

While alive biologically it does seem usual to see what we know as the person disappear in the illness and disability which affects biological functioning, even though in the near-death experiences the survival of the person in illness and death is indicated. It might be thought that while the body is alive and functioning the self-awareness of the person is very much submerged in and affected by the condition of the body.

It will probably be true that Joan will have no memory of the accident or of the stay in the hospital, particularly because no long term or lasting memory has been formed of these experiences. Thus it can seem to us as if the Joan we knew is and was not there with any awareness during the long period of her hospitalization. And particularly, it might be thought that while in coma Joan is not there in a way in which she can cooperate in her own recovery. But is that really so?

Christian faith over the centuries has often presupposed a soul, though it had become less fashionable to speak of the soul when the human came to be seen primarily in a biological perspective. Near-death experience, unless you presuppose that this is built into the

biological/neurological system as a deceptive way of easing the person into death, means that one survives death. What is this but what Christians have called soul. The stories told by those who nearly died indicate retention of both memory and identity, which would mean that the soul was shaped in unique ways during the life-history and development of the person to retain personal identity once the body is lost. Thus while memory traces are rooted in brain structure, they also are retained in the soul. This would mean that although Joan may have been affected in various ways by the condition of her body, Joan may in some way be present within or along-side her body and thus be able to enter cooperatively into her own recovery. While we can know the way the condition of her body and brain affects her ability physically to communicate, we cannot really determine by physical appearances how this has affected her awareness. Thus it would seem appropriate to assume awareness and to relate to her and encourage her to assume responsibility and participate in her recovery.

I would think that this should include:

1. Maintaining contact with Joan spiritually though she is not able to provide much response through her body. If Joan and we are spiritual beings as well as biological, we can engage in conversation and discussion with her. This could be clouded by her physical condition and influenced by our own subjectivities, but so is every attempt to communicate. Constant mental (or spiritual) dialogue with her should be helpful and her responses which we hear within our minds or intuit should be listened to for the possibility of messages from her. One of the values of this contact would be providing Joan with a means of support and a sense of relationship with others who care. Another value is that it could provide her with information about coping with her condition and encouragement to resume her role in the body which will now need extensive rehabilitation. A third value is that it provides her with an intentional medium for communicating with us. Successful rehabilitation may depend as much upon her participation from within as upon what assistance others are able to provide from without.
2. Presence with her and mental (or spiritual) dialogue with her assists the process of overcoming the isolation that Joan would feel in her condition without the constant spiritual contact with those whom she loves and who love her. Physical presence with her alongside her body in the hospital room is of tremendous help to her. Spiritual presence with her, whether she is inside or outside her body, is also.
3. Then one must ask, if we are spiritual beings is there power and healing in the spiritual. This would mean both the power and assistance which God could bring to the situation and the power which we could bring to the situation. In regards to God's power and presence, can we open ourselves to God to allow God to use us on behalf of Joan? Are there suggestions and directions which God might give us as to what to do to enable what God wishes to do? I have tried to do two things. First, I try to allow the love and presence of God to move through me to Joan. Second, I open myself to God and then I scan Joan in my imagination, seeking to be a channel for God's working on Joan's various injuries. For example in scanning her brain I seemed to see points of injury and God then seemed to deal with these points of injury. In my imaging over a period of time these points of injury seemed to have been dealt with and no longer appeared. I know that God does not necessarily need me or us for this, but in another sense it is our human function to be mediators for the life of God.

In regards to our power, we can share with Joan images of recovery and wellness which will help to change her present perception of her situation. We can help to provide the will to recovery. I am also impressed by the spiritual potential of all the mementos from friends, family and schoolmates which presently surround her. Joan is by no means alone and Joan as soul is aware of all this.

## MEDITATIONS

### **The Power of Imaging**

Eschatology, the view of the end of this world and the vision of the next, provided Christians with powerful images. One only has to read such a passage as Revelation 21:1-22:5 with its description of the heavenly and future Jerusalem and the garden with the river of the water of life to feel the power of such an image. Such images in Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic not only represented the future but the reality which they believed now existed in heaven and so were not just acts of the imagination. However, not only the expectations of the future shaped the realities of the life of the believer, but the story of the life of Jesus of which some components were arranged in the order of the experience of the believer as well as the order of Jesus' life and ministry.<sup>92</sup> Then there were the sacraments which created their own imagery, the Lord's Supper bringing to remembrance the stories of the past and the hope of the future. When such images are taken seriously and received within the mind and psyche they become part of the reality out of which one operates. These images can become true for us if we appropriate them whether or not they are actually true in historical reality. By accepting their truth they become powerful. For many of the Christians who used these images their future truth was cast in powerful myths borrowed from the religious imagery of their time, but was also related to the experience of the church in the historical Jesus and the ongoing experience of God in the Spirit. Thus the images of the future embodied truth, for the realities which they expressed had been experienced in the past and present. However, the form by which the future was imaged was mythological and at times somewhat foreign to the reality the images were asked to represent (e.g. Jesus rejection of power, role as servant, and love for the enemies are not at home in these Apocalyptic images). These images worked, but some aspects of them also misled, and we must consider the implications of our images as to what they seek to call into reality. Thus some biblical images need some editing.

A good description of the use of imaging can be found in Bernie Siegel's *Love, Medicine and Miracles* and in the work of the Simontons, using meditation with cancer patients.<sup>93</sup> This indicates the ability to bring to life within the imagination our *potentialities, beyond our present reality*, the ability to envision our body using its god-given mechanisms to heal itself, the ability to envision ourselves grasped within the loving arms of God and human community, the ability to feel trust towards a world which has not always proven it can be trusted, and the ability to envision the living power of our own souls -- all releasing forces which would enable wholeness and healing.

### **A Visualization/Meditation Transforming Your Present Situation**

The following presents a possible design which seeks to create new realities for well-being.

Preparation:

One needs first to come to some understanding of how present attitudes and perceptions (perhaps derived from one's childhood, one's personal history, the experience of illness and medical treatment, one's

---

<sup>92</sup> . This seems especially true of Mark and John. In John it is very clear that some of the stories are in an order appropriate to theology and meaning, for they are not in chronological or geographical sequence. A striking example is the placement of the Cleansing of the Temple into John 2.

<sup>93</sup>. Bernie S. Siegel, M.D., *Love, Medicine and Miracles: Lessons Learned About Self-Healing from a Surgeon's Experience with Exceptional Patients*, NY: Harper and Row, 1986.

O. Carl Simonton, Stephanie Matthews-Simonton, and James Creighton, *Getting Well Again*, NY: Bantam, 1980.

I would also call attention to such books as:

Kenneth R. Pelletier, *Mind as Healer, Mind as Slayer*, NY: Delacorte Press, New York, 1977.

Herbert Benson, *The Relaxation Response*, NY: William Morrow, 1975; *The Mind-Body Effect*, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1979; (with William Proctor) *Beyond the Relaxation Response: How To Harness the Healing Power of Your Personal Beliefs*, NY: Times Books, 1984; (with Marg Stark) *Timeless Healing: The Power and Biology of Belief*, Scribner, 1996.

present context) affect the course of one's illness. This preparatory exercise is designed to make this explicit.

A. Either write about or draw a picture (whichever comes more naturally) describing yourself at this stage in life, your illness or issues and their effect upon you, and the general mood of this time in your life. If you are doing this pictorially, use the background of the picture of yourself as a place to symbolize or color in your mood. Either write about the attitudes of others towards your situation, or include this in the picture through the inclusion of a few of these persons (stick figures are OK).

B. Write about or draw the medicines and treatments you are receiving and how you picture or feel about them.

C. Write a description of your illness and what you understand its ordinary course to be, either as described by your doctor or from your own research.

D. Now write a brief description of the consequences of the above, something like: "If my life follows the course of the above description, the following will happen to me:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

\_\_\_\_\_."

[From this you should gain a rather clear understanding of the directions in which your feelings, preconceptions and environment are pushing your illness. Sometimes to express this clearly is quite a shock. This should make clear the extent to which you need to have faith in realities outside of and beyond your situation]

#### Entering Your Meditation:

You want to start by sitting in a comfortable position that you can maintain for some time. Close your eyes. Then allow your body to relax, turning your attention to parts of it that seem to be tense, intentionally tensing them and then relaxing them so that you can gain a feeling of what it is like to be relaxed. Next, in your mind lay aside your anxieties and problems, symbolizing them as an object or writing them on an imaginary sheet of paper which can temporarily be put aside. You can pick this up later, if you wish. Then allow your mind to become quiet. You can't stop your thoughts by focusing attention on them. This increases their vitality. You can only allow your thoughts to slow down or focus your attention on some meaningful symbol inside your mind, for the mind focused on one thing cannot pay attention to others.

The purpose of this is to give freedom from distraction so that you can be more clearly attentive to what you are going to image. It is also to allow the images to move into your deep mind, your unconscious, which seems to have connections with physiological processes.

#### The Visualization:

Now allow or assist the following images to take shape in your mind:

1. Yourself as surrounded by the love of God (light is a helpful image for the presence and love of God) or you may want to envision God as being near;
2. The power of your own soul as within your body but still distinct from it (inner light is a helpful image), supplying you with energy;
3. Yourself as God sees you and as you have come to learn you *must* see yourself (not as you have customarily seen yourself);
4. A sense of trust towards your world because God is there;
5. Any persons who have been especially supportive and helpful. Include the medical

professionals who care for you if your experience with them is positive;

5. Your body increasing the effectiveness of its immunological system and using it to deal with disease;

6. Medicines or treatments working for your benefit and healing.

Since you will need to remember the above items once you have entered into your meditation, you will want to look over the above list before you start and then just include the elements you remember when visualizing your images. What you forget today but want to include you can include the next time. In doing the imaging try to develop images which you can use repeatedly, which by their repetition may immediately take shape when you close your eyes. It is helpful to build all of the above into one comprehensive image rather than several. If there are several, work out some way so that they are in sequence. You want to develop this so that you can eventually automate the images: when you start the process all of the images will come without your creating them. Once this is automated, you can at any time easily allow the images to form, with your eyes open and without going through a relaxation process, allowing them to reinforce what you are seeking to create. Some persons have difficulty with visualization. If you do, practice with the exercise until you can begin to form images or work with whatever is possible for you. Some persons can sense or intuit images even though they can't see them. Some persons can think thoughts better than see images.

Afterwards:

Keep a notebook in which you describe the details of the image(s), your experience with them, changes which take place in them, and your physical and emotional self at the time. Jot down also any interesting experiences during the day which seem to relate to your imaging. What happens with your imaging and your moods may indicate changes which are coming about through your images, and you want to note this.

The practice of this exercise should at first be twice a day for a half to three-quarters of an hour each time. Schedule a time free from distraction. When this becomes adequately habitual, you may be able to get by with one period of meditation and a number of times during the day when you allow your images to automatically go through their process in your mind, even when you are active. This automation and repetition will reinforce their strength. When it is fully automated, it and its benefits may be experienced in a very short period of time wherever you happen to be.

The design of the visualization is quite intentional, including in a comprehensive image the components which are contributory to your well-being. In the steps of the visualization you image your life supported by the love and energy of God which empowers the energy of your own soul, both of which affect and change your self-image. All of this, especially with the love of God underlying life, changes your perspective on the world, for God is there whatever the circumstances. Thus those who have learned anxiety and stress-reactions in response to presupposed or previously experienced dangers of life will have opportunity to diminish these reactions. All of this enables the functioning of bodily systems and makes more positive the possibilities of medications and treatments.

*Remember never to determine your imaging by what you perceive to be the reality of your situation. You are not imaging how you feel now, what your condition is now, but what you are in God's love and what your condition might become if all the forces that God has provided were able to work towards your health. In other words, you are imaging your potential. This potential is real, whether it can ultimately be realized or not. It is the truth about you and the ultimate healing is to realize this truth. Do not diminish its power by questioning it or denying its reality.*

### **A Visualization Taking You Out of Your Present Situation**

The previous visualization provides you with resources for transforming the reality of the situation in which you live. All of the dynamics of new possibility come to you where you are, with the illness with which you deal being part of that reality. Another approach is to image yourself in a situation out of your

present circumstances, going where your disease or illness will not exist. You might wish to try both approaches and see which works best for you. The same preparatory exercise could be done which was part of the previous exercise. Then read over the following passage from Rev. 21-22 and familiarize yourself with its images. I have edited the passage to keep all of the images positive. Then sit quietly, relax, allow your mind to quiet, and suggest to you mind the images which you remember from the passage and allow them to take shape in your imagination. Once this has happened allow God to take you from your present situation and place you within these great images of the future. With this approach you are completely removed from your present context to experience the power of what will be at the end of time and now is in heaven. Explore this new context for your life. Discover how it feels. Allow the images to develop and change as they will. Experience yourself completely separate from any difficulty and illness, in the presence of God, in the city and garden in heaven and at the end of time. After a while come back to your present reality, but bring with you all of your experience of this other reality which will now be a part of you in your present. You may also wish to automate these images so that in a few moments you can go there whenever you wish.

Rev. 21:1-7, 21:22-22:5        Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment. He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my child. And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, and its gates shall never be shut by day -- and there shall be no night there; they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.

Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

### EXERCISES DEALING WITH SUFFERING

Two exercises are included dealing with suffering. The medical profession will help the patient to handle pain. But how does one deal with the feelings which accompany suffering and the way suffering affects one's view of self and life? How does one keep from focusing on suffering to the exclusion of all else? It is also true that if one can discover ways to live with suffering, the need for pain medications is lessened. Two exercises are suggested.

#### **Exercise Using Leonard Bernstein's *Kaddish* Symphony**

Besides needing ways to deal with healing we need ways to process our experience of suffering. Suffering cannot be solved intellectually and then done with. Understanding helps and may change one's perspective on suffering. However, the very duration of suffering means that any resolution of it must include a living

*with* it. Much of the suffering that one lives with is "stored suffering," the imprint of past experiences that could not be lived through emotionally. Though repressed it becomes part of our unconscious dynamics and projects its pain onto the present. And then there is the suffering of our present. To live *with* suffering can be merely toleration or coping. It certainly should include challenge. I would like to suggest a change of preposition from *with* to *in*. To live *in* suffering means to fully explore what it means both as enemy and friend, and to walk through the valleys, shadows, and sun-lit peaks of its landscape. It is to live into what we have experienced or presently experience as much as is possible and tolerable, withdrawing when we must, suppressing when it is necessary, occasionally escaping into creative separation from our suffering, balancing it with joy when possible, maintaining our vision, but always returning. Suffering is partially "fated" to us by powers not in our control, but in some measure it is part of what it means to be human. All must be born and all must die, two most painful "passages," and there is both suffering and joy in between. What is must ultimately be chosen and lived.

To live through suffering often necessitates the use or creation of an imaginative landscape, resonant with one's own experience, which may become vehicle for its expression. There are many ways to do this. One can use meditative techniques which employ images and symbols. One may use words or music into which the issues of one's situation may flow. The symbols which are used, to be fully engaging, should be adequately sensitive to the spiritual and transcendent dimensions of life.

There are many musical pieces, popular or classical, which become vehicles for human experience. One of the finest I have discovered is Leonard Bernstein's Third Symphony, called the *Kaddish*, from an ancient Jewish prayer.<sup>94</sup> It contains a long English narration in the form of a dialogue of the soul with God. This symphony meant a great deal to me during my first wife's long illness, and I share it with you as an approach to human suffering and spirituality -- particularly affective spirituality. Both the text and the music are intensely emotional and stir the feelings of one's own experience. Hopefully, it will be helpful. Bernstein wrote the Symphony viewing humankind as standing at the brink of annihilation (nuclear), the human soul desiring to say its last *Kaddish*, but also determined to live.

In the experience of the Symphony I suggest an approach similar to that used in the devotional reading of great texts:

1. **Know something about yourself.** Recognize and be open about your feelings, struggle and concerns -- and joys. Bring them to the Symphony with an intention to respond personally and hear a personal message.
2. **Know something about the text,** here the Symphony. Read over the introductory materials.
3. **Change the functional level of your knowledge of yourself and the text.** You cannot, and should not, try to eliminate from your consciousness what you know. Your acquired knowledge of yourself and the text will both facilitate and limit what you hear. What needs to be done is to change the functional level of your knowledge. This is very much as Simone Weil describes "attention" in her essay "On the Right Use of School Studies With A View to the Love of God:"

Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object; it means holding in our minds, within reach of this thought, but on a lower level and not in contact with it, the diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make use of. Our thought should be in relation to all particular and already formulated thoughts, as a man on a mountain who, as he looks forward, sees also below him, without actually

---

<sup>94</sup>. There are several recordings of the Symphony No. 3, *Kaddish*. The one I use is that of Columbia, CBS, Masterworks, MG 32793, and is preferable to others I have heard. This pressing included the Jeremiah and the Age of Anxiety Symphonies. If a recording is not available, just read the text of the Narration.

looking at them, a great many forests and plains. Above all our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object that is to penetrate it ....

4. **Be attentive and willing to wait** for the answers that may come. Do not merely create answers. Be willing to hear something new.

5. **Trust your intuitive level of functioning.**

6. **Develop the habit of living with a text.** This means that you will need to give the Symphony some time to unfold its meaning for you. You may need to listen numerous times. If the Symphony will become an adequate vehicle for your experience, you will probably experience its drawing you in the first hearing. Allow the Symphony to work its way with you as long as it will. When it is done, you will know it.

7. Use your encounter with the text as a **means of worshipping and loving God and experiencing life, being open to God's and life's encounter with you** . In this you would be moving from what might be called "meditation" upon the text to "contemplation" of God and life. The ultimate purpose of a religious text is to meet God, while the ultimate purpose of many texts is to meet life. You may encounter what transcends you, what cannot be completely explained, but can only be lived and related to.

The Symphony was completed in 1963, the third of three Symphonies dealing with the anguish of human existence (the first was the Jeremiah Symphony and the second was The Age of Anxiety). In this symphony Bernstein takes up an ancient Jewish prayer, the *Kaddish*. In the synagogue service it originally followed the sermon and prayer and was also, with variations, introduced at other places in the liturgy. It calls upon God to bless and magnify God's name. It came to be the prayer chanted for the dead at the graveside, expressing faith and belief in God's sovereignty over life. In one form the opening sentence is:

Magnified and hallowed be his great Name in the world which he created according to his will;  
and may he make his kingship sovereign in your life time and in your days.

The form used in the Symphony is:

Magnified and sanctified be the great Name. Amen.

There are traces of its use in the Gospels. The opening of the Lord's Prayer is very similar:

Hallowed be Thy Name,  
Thy kingdom come.

The *Kaddish* likely also appears in John 12:27ff where Jesus faces his suffering as in the garden of Gethsemane in the other Gospels.

"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father save me from this hour.' No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. *Father, glorify thy name.*" Then a voice came from heaven, *"I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."*

Thus in the *Kaddish* one is dealing with a prayer with a great tradition both in Judaism and Christianity. Bernstein's *Kaddish* is uttered in the face of the agony of humankind and the chaos of the contemporary world. As one listens to the narrator it becomes clear that this is a *Kaddish* said at what could be the funeral of humankind. It comes to a conclusion in an affirmation of both God and humanity.

The narrator, who struggles with God and the meaning of life, is identified as "the Rose of Sharon" (Song of Solomon 2:1), the lover of God,

that part of man you made to suggest his immortality. .... The part that refuses death, that insists on you, divines your voice, guesses your grace. .... The Lily that man has picked and thrown away.

She is exiled by contemporary "man" who then is free to "play with his new found (nuclear) fire" and so is in danger of obliterating both self and God. God is called to account for promises and covenant.

Your covenant! .... Tin God! Your bargain is tin! It crumbles in my hand. And where is faith now, your or mine?

Then the narrator realizes that God too must have sorrow over the nature of creation. She says:

Forgive me, Father. I was mad with fever. Chaos is catching, and I succumbed. .... In fever I forgot you too are vulnerable. If my faith is shaky, what must yours be? .... Dear God, how you must suffer...

She goes on to comfort God, to sing the *Kaddish* as a lullaby, to take God to a dream world where there are "stars that do not disappoint and disgust and disgrace your love," a perfect world with "every immortal cliché in place." But there in perfection "there is nothing to dream, nowhere to go, nothing to know." And so she calls God back to the "star of regret ... where dreaming is real and pain is possible .... And in pain you will recognize your image, at last." In the dream return to the world of "man" she portrays her accomplishments and asks God to believe in her. And then they both awake to the chill of reality. "The dawn has come." But they are both still alive. The conclusion speaks of a new relationship between humanity and God, won out of the struggle:

Father, we've won another day. We can still be immortal, you and I, bound by my rainbow. You can no longer afford my death, for if I die, you die with me. But as long as I sing, I shall live; and as long as I live I shall continue to create you, Father, and you me. That is our pact, and to honor it is our honor. It's not quite what we bargained for, so long ago, at the time of that other first rainbow. But then I was only your helpless infant, arms hard around you, dead without you. We have both grown older, you and I. And I am not sad. Don't you be either. Unfrown your brow. Look tenderly again at me, at us, at all these growing children of God here in this sacred house. And we shall look tenderly back to you, O my Father, Lord and Lover, Beloved Majesty, my Image, Myself. We are one after all, you and I. Together we suffer, together exist, and forever will recreate each other.

The conclusion is not what some would consider "correct theology." But does it have to be? It is a journey and struggle of the human soul that embraces faith and unfaith, much as the Psalms. It brings before God the full panoply of human experience. It does not move towards a rational solution, but an experience in which God and the human soul interact and wrestle as did Jacob (Gen. 32:22ff). Wherever that takes place is transformed into a holy place.

Narration Text for "Kaddish" Symphony

O my Father. Ancient, hallowed, lonely, disappointed Father. Rejected Ruler of the universe. Handsome, jealous, Lord and Lover. Angry, wrinkled old majesty. I want to pray.

I want to say Kaddish; my own Kaddish.

Listen, Almighty, with all your might. There just may be no one to say it after me.

Do I have your attention, majestic Father? Is my end a minute away, an hour? Is there even time to ask the question? It could be here, while we are singing, that we are to be halted once for all, cut off in the act of praising you. While I have breath, however briefly, I will sing this final Kaddish for you, for me, for all those I love in this sacred house.

I want to pray and time is short. Time to begin our gallant Yiggadol:

Magnified and sanctified be the great Name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Did you hear that, Father. May abundant peace descend on us. Amen. Great God, surely you who make peace on high, who manipulate clumsy galaxies, you who juggle a space full of suns, bend light, spin moons, surely you can handily supply a touch of order here below on this one day's speck.

And let us say again, Amen.

With Amen on my lips I approach your presence, Father; and not with fear, but a certain respect for fury. I have little time, as you well know. Do you recognize my voice? Must I reintroduce myself? I am the Lily of Sharon, the Rose of the Valley's Daughter of Zion. I am that part of man you made to suggest his immortality. You surely remember, Father. The part that refuses death, that insists on you, divines your voice, guesses your grace. And always you have heard my voice. Always you have saluted me, with a rainbow, a raven, a plague, something. But now I see nothing. This time you show me nothing at all.

Father, understand what is happening. I am exiled by man, no longer cherished while he runs free, free to play with his new-found fire, avid for death, voluptuous, total and ultimate death. Lord God of Hosts, I call you to account, and don't shrug me off as if I were playing defiant daughter, your impudent rebel who could do with a slap. You know who I am: the Lily that man has picked and thrown away. And you let this happen, Lord of Hosts. You with your manna, your pillar of fire. You asked for faith. Where is your own? Why have you taken away your rainbow, that pretty bow you tied around your finger to remind you never to forget your promise? Shall I quote you your own weighty words? "For lo, I do set my bow in the clouds and I will look upon it that I may remember my everlasting covenant." Your covenant! Your bargain with man! Tin God! Your bargain is tin! It crumbles in my hand. And where is faith now, yours or mine?

Forgive me, Father. I was mad with fever. Chaos is catching, and I succumbed. Have I hurt you, Father? Forgive me. In fever I forgot you too are vulnerable. If my faith is shaky, what must yours be? But yours was the first fatal mistake, creating man in your own image, fallible. Dear God, how you must suffer: so far away, ruefully eyeing your two-footed handiwork, frail, foolish, mortal. My sorrowful Father, if I could comfort you, hold you against me, rock you and rock you into sleep. Shall I sing to you? Shall I tell you stories of other stars: stars that you love, that deserve your love; stars that do not disappoint and disgust and disgrace your love? O, I hope that exist for your sake, Father. My heart's pity boils in my throat. I can barely speak:

Be comforted, be magnified, sanctified.

Sleep, my Father. Rest your anger. Dream softly. Let me invent your dream, dream it for you as gently as I can. And perhaps by dreaming I can help you find your image again, and love him again. I'll take you to your favorite star, the world most worthy of your creation. We'll make it a sort of holiday. And, hand in hand, like eager children, we'll watch in wonder, wide-eyed, the workings of perfectedness.

So this is the kingdom of Heaven, Father. Just as you planned it. Every immortal cliché in place. Lambs frisk, wheat ripples, sunbeams dance. Something is wrong. The light flat, the air still. Do you know what is wrong? There is nothing to dream, nowhere to go, nothing to know. And these creatures of your kingdom, these smiling painless people, are they created in your image also? You are serenity, but rage as well. I know. I have borne it. You are hope, but also regret. I know. You have regretted me. But not these, these perfect ones. They are beyond regret or hope. They don't exist, Father, not even in the light years of our dream. Come back with me to the star of regret: come back, Father, where dreaming is real and pain is possible, so possible you will have to believe it. And in pain you will recognize your image, at last. Now I will show you a dream to remember. Real life marvels, genuine wonders, dazzling miracles. Look! A burning bush! Look! A fiery wheel, a ram, a rock! Shall I smite it? There. It gushes, it gushes. And I did it. I am running this dream. Now will you believe? You can't escape yet. I have you, Father, locked in my dream and you must remain 'til the final scene. Now, look up! High. What do you see? A rainbow which I have created for you. My promise in permanent sunfast colors. Look at it, Father! Believe! Believe! Look at my rainbow and say after me:

Magnified and sanctified be the great name of man.

The colors of my rainbow are blinding, Father, and they hurt your eyes. I know. But don't close them now! Don't turn away! Look! Do you see how simple and peaceful it all becomes, once you believe. Believe! Believe!

Don't waken yet, however great your pain. I will help you suffer it.

O God, believe. Believe in me and you shall see the kingdom of Heaven. Just as you planned. Lambs will frisk. Wheat will ripple. Believe! Believe!

Sunbeams will dance, seraphim hover. See how my rainbow lights the scene! Cherubim call from corner to corner, chanting your praises.

The rainbow is fading. The dream is over. We must wake up now, and the dawn is chilly.

The dawn is chilly. But the dawn has come. Father, we've won another day. We have dreamed our Kaddish and wakened alive. Good morning, Father. We can still be immortal, you and I, bound by my rainbow. You can no longer afford my death, for if I die, you die with me. But as long as I sing, I shall live; and as long as I live I shall continue to create you, Father, and you me. That is our pact, and to honor it is our honor. It's not quite what we bargained for, so long ago, at the time of that other first rainbow. But then I was only your helpless infant, arms hard around you, dead without you. We have both grown older, you and I. And I am not sad. Don't you be either. Unfurrow your brow. Look tenderly again at me, at us, at all these growing children of God here in this sacred house. And we shall look tenderly back to you, O my Father, Lord and Lover, Beloved Majesty, my Image, Myself. We are one after all, you and I. Together we suffer, together exist, and forever will recreate each other.

### **Accepting the Cup of Life and Suffering**

This exercise came to mind after reading Henri Nouwen's recent book *Can You Drink the Cup*.<sup>95</sup> Jesus took the cup (Mk. 14:23) to prepare his disciples for the meaning of his death and as a ritual they could repeat and thereby remember. What is in the cup represents his life, his blood. In his conversation with James and John about their desire for privilege he asks them whether they were willing to drink the cup which he drinks (Mk. 10:35-45). The ritual described here will not exactly follow Nouwen, but was suggested by him.

When there is illness and suffering one needs a way of coming to terms with this and accepting life along with whatever cannot be changed, including one's life history and the limitations and suffering of the present. This in no way means acquiescence in suffering and illness, for what can be challenged should be challenged and what can be changed should be changed. But in the meanwhile what does one do? What does one do when suffering continues and perhaps leads ultimately to death? And there is no way of avoiding that the process of history and the fragility of the body impose conditions.

I would like to give the cup the symbolism of something which God (or Christ) gives us in which to carry our life. That God gives this to us is symbolic of how God accepts our life, with its gifts, joys, accomplishments and with its failures and sorrows. It is also symbolic that the ultimate shape of our life needs to come from God. When God gives something in which to place our lives then we can come to terms with who we are, what we have experienced, and what is going on with us now.

There will need to be a small pitcher to contain the liquid (wine, grape juice) symbolizing the life of the person. Since the person will drink the contents of the cup, the liquid used should be an amount which could easily be drunk. The person also should be the one to pour the liquid from the pitcher into the cup, signifying willingness to offer one's life to God and for God to hold it and give it shape. If it is difficult for the person to do this, it might be done by the one leading the experience with the person's help or agreement.

This exercise then might follow this sequence:

1. Place the cup and pitcher before the person. Comment by the one leading the experience: *God has created us, God is with us, God is within us. We are God's children. God always loves us, gave his Son for us. God gives us this cup to say there is nothing from life which we cannot place within it. To place life within it is to discover that God accepts us totally. When God has received our life, there is nothing that we cannot accept. When we are ill and suffer, God receives our illness and suffering to transform it. We know that our Lord accepted the cup of his suffering and offered it to his disciples.*
2. Have the person pour the wine in the cup, pouring in as much as he or she is willing to share with God. Comment: *Now you have the opportunity to place all of your life into the cup that God has provided. Pour in as much as you are willing. Then take a few moments to reflect on your life: the good, the difficult, the*

---

<sup>95</sup> . Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Can You Drink The Cup*, Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 1996.

*successes, the failures, your self-understanding, your illness and suffering. You have offered as much as you are able, perhaps all that you are. All that you are will be received by God. God will participate in shaping its future. Your life is now God's life, as well as your own. (Time for reflection. This should probably be done in silence and the privacy of the person respected, but it would also be good to offer the person the opportunity to talk over concerns with the one leading if there are matters he or she feels cannot be placed in the cup.)*

3. Drinking the cup. Comment: *When you are through with reflection on your life, receive your life by drinking it. Your life has been received by God, has been blessed by God, has been held and shaped by God. Your suffering has been within God's hands. Now it is time to receive your life back It is not only yours, but the life of God has been joined to yours, and the life you live you live no longer only by your own strength.*

Concluding affirmation. This could be said by the one leading the experience and repeated by the person, if able. If the person cannot repeat it, a mental or inner repetition should be allowed.

*My God, I thank you for receiving --- (my life, my joys, my sufferings, my illness, my failure, my fears --- whatever is appropriate in context). My life now belongs to you. Your life now beats in my heart. The future is yours. I am at peace. Amen.*

## THE LORD'S PRAYER AS A WAY OF CENTERING IN GOD LUKE 10:38-11:4

### **The Ultimate Healing Is Openness to the Spiritual: The Mary - Martha Story**

It would seem to be clear that we are not fully equipped for life unless we go through certain biological, psychological, moral, and intellectual development. The analysis of faith development in our time also assumes that there is a developmental process involving awareness and appropriation of the meaning dimensions of life, moving from familial and conventional forms of faith to more individual and lived-out forms of faith. As there are those who call us forth into personal and intellectual development, most of the world's religions assume that the human being needs to be called into awareness and development of the spiritual, even though religion may be part of a cultural or familial heritage. A central part of Jesus' ministry was his confrontation of persons with the reality of God in terms of the kingdom (God's desire to bring persons under the sphere of God's influence) and the Spirit (the actual participation of God in life). In the Nazareth Synagogue, shortly after his baptism and temptation, Jesus announced his mission and pointed out its transformational implications

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (4:18-19)

Following this the evangelist located a number of healing miracles and exorcisms to illustrate what Jesus was saying. Exorcisms portrayed Jesus' dealing with human needs on the level of conflicting spiritual powers.

Jesus' calling of persons into God's kingdom, to live by God's Spirit, was in a very real sense calling them into the fullness of human existence without which they would be incomplete and ill equipped to deal with the dynamics of life.

Healing is so much more than dealing with specific illnesses or diseases. At its most basic, to be healed is to become a whole person who is what a human should be, having as a part of one's life all of the resources for life – especially the spiritual. Jesus, especially in Luke, constantly makes use of the spiritual resources of life which enable him to deal with issues encountered at various stages in his ministry.<sup>96</sup> Interestingly enough, Luke has located at a central place in his Gospel several passages which can operate powerfully for us to call us to the foundational healing which is the recognition of and openness to the centrality of God in life. At the end of Luke 10 we are presented with a powerful image. Jesus visits the home of Mary and Martha and they provide him with hospitality. But there are many ways for providing hospitality, Martha engages in busy preparation and Mary engages in *attentiveness* and we are left especially with the memorable image of Mary at the feet of Jesus, the position of the disciple, the one thing necessary. But really what both Martha and Mary were doing was necessary. Mary could not have done what she did without Martha doing what she did. But the point that Jesus made was that when Martha was *only* concerned about doing things for Jesus she neglected what was most important: being *attentive* to him. *Attentiveness* to Jesus was not something Jesus needed, Rather it was something that Mary and Martha needed.

---

<sup>96</sup> . A significant pattern in Jesus' praying is withdrawal for retreat and prayer in crisis and in relationship to significant actions: his baptism (Luke 3:21), the temptation experience (Luke 4:1-13 and parallels), after the press of many needing healing (Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16), before selection of the twelve (Luke 6:12), after the feeding of the 5,000 (Matt. 14:23), before asking his disciples who he is (Luke 9:19), before the transfiguration experience (Luke 9:28-29), in Gethsemane (Mk. 14:31-40 and parallels), Jesus' lament from the cross quoting Ps. 22:1 (Mk. 15:34, Matt. 27:46) and his surrender of his spirit to God in Lk. 23:46. These passages indicate the way prayer both informs and resources Jesus' actions, and that prayer and action are not antithetical.

Teresa of Avila in her classic spiritual work *The Interior Castle* understands that Mary and Martha represent not two types of people, but two parts of the same person, and this is perhaps the best way to understand the story. There are many responsibilities in life through which one may serve Jesus, as Martha was doing, but there is part of oneself that must stay rooted in and be attentive to God. Teresa envisions a room in the center of the soul where God dwells, and part of the soul must be here where God is. But both Mary and Martha have their role to play.

Teresa discovered that, in spite of business and trials, the essential part of her soul never moved from that room where God was (which she describes as in the center of the soul). She then discovered that there was a Martha-Mary division of her soul. In trials her Martha part complained of the Mary part that was "there always enjoying that quietude at its own pleasure while leaving her in the midst of so many trials and occupations that she could not keep it company." (*Interior Castle* 7.1.10) Teresa concluded that attention to God and prayer were for the sake of service and life, not just enjoyment. She says "... let us desire and be occupied in prayer not for the sake of our enjoyment but so as to have this strength to serve." "Mary and Martha must join together in order to show hospitality to the Lord and have Him always present and not host him badly by failing to give Him something to eat. How would Mary, always seated at His feet, provide Him with food if her sister did not help her?" (7.4.12)

The other passage immediately following the Mary-Martha story is the story of the giving of the Lord's Prayer. Jesus responds to his disciples' request to teach them to pray. Here he teaches them about prayer in what seems to be an abbreviated form of the longer prayer that we are used to in our church services. Since this immediately follows the story of Martha and Mary I would understand that both stories make somewhat the same point. At least this is what I will try to argue. The existential anxieties of life should not keep us from the relationship with God from which we find our deepest resources for life. But God is also concerned about the existential anxieties about life, and the Martha concerns are expressed in the last three petitions.

### **Forms of the Lord's Prayer**

We have the Lord's Prayer in two different forms: the longer form in Matt. 6 (which is probably the form in which the Prayer came to be prayed in the early church, three times daily by the end of the first century), and the simpler and shorter form in Luke 11. Whereas in Matthew the Prayer is in a collection of sayings on prayer, in Luke it is given a particular historical context. Jesus' disciples ask him: "Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples." Thus it is a prayer that Jesus taught his disciples so that they would know how to pray and would pray what was important to them, as John the Baptist's disciples had their prayer. Christians then may use it not only as a prayer to be prayed, but as a model for prayer.

The Prayer was originally taught by Jesus and his disciples in the Aramaic language, which was the language they spoke. We have the opening address of the Prayer in Aramaic in two of Paul's letters: Gal. 4:6 and Rom. 8:15.... "*Abba*," Father. The differences between the two forms of the Lord's Prayer are partially due to different translations out of the original Aramaic and also due to "formal" and "poetic" additions to the Matthaean form (the two lines added to Matthew are "thoughts which rhyme" with the previous lines). "Our Father who art in heaven" in Matthew is a polite liturgical way of addressing God, whereas "Father" (in Luke the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic *Abba*) is a *familiar* way of addressing God which makes clear that prayer starts with an assumed relationship with a God who loves us.<sup>97</sup> To address a father in a polite fashion a pronominal suffix was added which indicated "my" or "your" or "our" father. "Our Father who art in heaven" is about as polite as you can get.

---

<sup>97</sup>. The Parable of the Prodigal is about a father who loved his two children without determining his love by their behavior. This is the heart of the Gospel

Note that the Lord's Prayer in Luke is followed by a series of parables, the last of which (vs. 10-13) is about how a father will give good gifts to his children. Where in Matthew's comparable section God will give good things as a good father does (7:11), in Luke "how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" The giving of the Holy Spirit is the giving of God's self which goes far beyond good things.

The doxology "For thine is the kingdom, etc." at the end of the Prayer was not originally in either version of the Prayer, but was an addition to the Matthaean text by about the end of the first century.

Some modern scholars contest the uniqueness of Jesus' prayer by indicating that all of its petitions can be paralleled in the life and faith of Judaism. This is true, but one must then ask what these petitions meant to Jesus and his disciples and how this meaning differed from the thought of his contemporaries. For example, Jesus means something very particular when he calls God "Father" and his prayer for the kingdom is not a prayer that God restore the Davidic kingdom in the sense in which it was often understood in the Judaism of Jesus' day. The Jewish *Kaddish* Prayer which dates back to the time of Jesus is included below with the first two petition because of its similarity.

	<b>Matthew 6:9-13</b>	<b>Luke 11:2-4</b>	
Basis of prayer	Our Father who art in heaven,	Father,	
God	Hallowed be thy name.  Thy kingdom come Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.	Hallowed be thy name.  Thy kingdom come.	[Jewish <i>Kaddish</i> Magnified and hallowed be his great Name in the world which he created according to his will; and may he make his kingship . sovereign in your life time and in your days]
Our Needs	Give us this day our daily bread.  And forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>98</sup>  And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil (the evil One).	Give us each day our daily bread.  And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.  And lead us not into temptation.	

### Meaning of the Lord's Prayer

The address to God as "Father" is often seen as preliminary to the petitions, laying the basis for them in Jesus' understanding of God as *Abba*, Father. One can ask these things because God is Father.<sup>99</sup> However the form of the prayer which exists in Luke 11 follows the Mary-Martha story at the end of chapter 10 with its strong focus on the action of Mary who is attentive to Jesus, sitting at his feet. It was needful for Mary to be there with Jesus. Though Martha was busy in her own way, Mary was also busy, paying attention to the source of her life. Such *attentiveness* to God, or Jesus, is also *active*. Much will happen there that Mary might not be able to describe. But her life was being filled with what she needed, with the One that she needed. If the Lord's Prayer also expresses this, then the focal point of the prayer is in the address to God as Father with all of the petitions contributing to this, rather than the focus being on the petitions and the address to God supportive of them. How? What is prayed for in the prayer is what makes possible attentiveness to God. What is asked for in the last three petitions frees us from all that would distract us from God.

---

98. "Debts" was translated "trespasses" for some time in the tradition of English translation, though there is a different word for "trespass" in Greek. which does not appear in either Matthew's or Luke's version.

99 . People have often asked what one does when the word "father" calls up anxiety and fear. I like to point out that Jesus use of the word *Abba* in Aramaic is really a feminizing of the traditional role of father so that now the father becomes a care-giver. However, that often is not sufficient. I would suggest using the word *Abba* instead of father, understanding what this term meant to Jesus. This will often avoid the bad associations. To use the word "parent" is too impersonal. It is hard to avoid *Abba* "father" because we then lose Jesus' intent in using this word. Note that Paul in Romans and Galatians uses the two words "Abba, father" together, which is another solution.

The words that focus us on God:

*Abba, Father* -- The gentle calling of a name expressing a relationship which God has offered us. *Hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come.* -- These petitions express the role of God in one's life and asks for the coming of the kingdom which is really the coming of God's sovereignty in life, the coming of God in life. It is like Mary sitting at Jesus' feet and attentively expecting. Though we experience this as a "coming" of God, it is really we who come, not God. The name of God stands for all that God is. To hallow God's name means to hold as sacred and holy all that God is and thus allow this to form our lives and world.

These petitions may be regarded as a single petition, as they are in the Kaddish. This is synonymous parallelism, a form of Hebrew poetry, the stating of rhyming thoughts in two lines, each line dealing with the same reality.

The words which free us for God by freeing us from three existential anxieties:

*Give us each day our daily bread* -- a petition that God care for our daily needs so that attention is not on them, but on God. "Give us each day our daily rations."

*and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us* -- Forgiveness is existentially as important as food. Without forgiveness we cannot move beyond the past nor can we turn our attention to God. Refusal to forgive others also distracts us. Both the need for food and the need for forgiveness can prevent attention to God.

*and lead us not into temptation.* -- Temptation should really be translated "trial". This may be a petition for preserving us from our faith being tried and tested, for saving us from troubles which would take away our sense of the spiritual and ability to be open to it. Or if we follow the direction of the Prayer in Matthew 6, with the parallel thought of "*deliver us from evil (or the evil one)*" added, and we reflect on Jesus' own experience of temptation (Mark 1, Matt. 4, Luke 4), this may be a petition for protection from evil.

In this way the Prayer becomes a prayer to enable us to pray. It frees us from what would take our attention so that we might give attention to God and be open to the spiritual dimensions of life. If the prayer operates this way for us it helps to bring about our greatest healing. We are no longer unaware of or alienated from the spiritual, but it becomes a significant dimension of our existence.

Let me restructure the prayer for this purpose by listing first the petitions related to our needs. Hold each of the petitions briefly in your mind, thinking of your particular needs and concerns:

Give us each day our daily bread

And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us

And lead us not into temptation/trial (where our person and faith are tried and where evil may harm)

Then turn your attention to your relationship with God and allow these words to fill up your consciousness and flow into your unconscious. Perhaps repeat them in your mind. Image yourself in God's or Jesus' presence in some way so that you may have an image by which to remember this experience.

Abba, Father

Hallowed be thy name

Thy kingdom come.

The word *Abba* can be used as a chant, repeating it over and over again in the silence of your mind: *abba abba abba*, at the same time thinking of the relationship which God has given you.