

Is Healing a Paranormal Occurrence?

"Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure." (1 Timothy 5:22).

After worshipping God in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, Jesus as well as Peter, Andrew, James, and John went to Peter's home. When they arrived, Peter's wife's mother was bedridden with a fever, providing Christ an opportunity to perform another act of mercy (Matthew 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39). This healing occurred on the same Sabbath that He exorcised the unclean spirit, revealing His authority over evil. It also set in motion the claims of the high priests that he was a blasphemer because such Sabbath activities are not sanctioned in the Torah.

These two commentaries set the stage for our discussion today. Is healing a paranormal occurrence? Today, just as it was two thousand years ago there were critical claims of physical healing, but the possibility of such occurrences raises several questions. Even in the 21st century some fundamentalists will tell you that such miracles come from exorcizing the spirit and not the body.

Unlike other dissertations, I have to cut to the chase on this topic. It is my belief as a researcher that "physical healing" is not just possible, but almost assuredly a constant occurrence today. I am also convinced that the key to all physical healing is based on faith, be it your faith in religion, your doctor or the individual healer. I have witnessed dozens of healings that were real and long lasting and the one thing they all shared in common was the belief that the person doing the healing would succeed, be they Christian, Jew, Muslim, New Ager or Pagan.

There is however some prerequisites that are believed necessary that the facts belie. For one, the healer does not have to be present for a healing to take place. This was true in the time of Jesus, as noted in the healing of the Centurion's servant, when Jesus was far removed and only his words of prayer sent away the soldier to find him healed. Again, a matter of faith, not proximity, the "laying of hands" is not the key, belief that the healing will work is apparently enough. Some might say this is purely the power of mind over matter and that is the real meat of this lesson. Prefacing this with a blanket statement that I have personally witnessed successful healings under medical control falls under the heading of, "seeing is believing," but like everything else we study, it is not the phenomenon that is in question but rather, what the actual phenomenon is to begin with.

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Sometimes the most telling accounts of a phenomenon are not found in the mainstream. Yes, you could rely on the Torah or New Testament to find ample examples of healing, but some of the most important cases are found outside that theology. An example might be the Quakers, certainly not mainstream, yet with a long history of healing as part of their community. It should be noted that it is the Quakers who make a point of saying that “healing” is not “curing” in the broad context of their definition, yet they believe that healing is a natural part of their belief system. Quakerism was born in England and grew in America and therefore is a good example of what one might call “home grown” healing, yet there are similarities between the Quaker beliefs in healing and Reiki, which developed half a world away.

Reiki is a Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation that also promotes healing. It is administered by "laying on hands" and is based on the idea that an unseen "life force energy" flows through us and is what causes us to be alive. If one's "life force energy" is low, then we are more likely to get sick or feel stress, and if it is high, we are more capable of being happy and healthy. Note, Reiki and similar healing arts rely of the laying of hands in their core beliefs, which I have already stated does not seem to be necessary to attain healing. Nevertheless, Reiki has been shown to work, but so too have the claims of the followers of Christian Science, but not in the numbers reported in Reiki.

The Church of Christ, Scientist was founded in 1879 in Boston, Massachusetts, by Mary Baker Eddy, author of the book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, which offered a unique interpretation of Christian faith. Christian Science teaches that the reality of God denies the reality of sin, sickness, death, and the material world. Accounts of miraculous healing are common within the church, and adherents often refuse modern medical treatments, which has over the years led to it being ostracized from other mainstream Christian religions.

We could go on and on about the healing practices of religions around the world, from miracles claimed every year at Fatima or Lourdes to those who take part in pilgrimages to far off locations that are related to such miracles; the point however is that none of them works for everyone, but all work for some, so what is the key element?

I once knew a very bright man who likened healing to fire walkers. Theoretically, it should be impossible for someone to walk over glowing coals without doing at least some damage to his or her feet, but I have been to a workshop that prepares you for the experience and it can be done safely... I'm living proof!

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Unfortunately, fire walking is neither paranormal nor miraculous. When two bodies of different temperatures meet, the hotter body will cool off, and the cooler body will heat up, until they are separated or until they meet at a temperature in between. What that temperature is, and how quickly it is reached, depends on the thermodynamic properties of the two bodies. The important properties are temperature, density, specific heat capacity, and thermal conductivity.

The square root of the product of thermal conductivity, density, and specific heat capacity is called thermal effusivity, and tells how much heat energy the body absorbs or releases in a certain amount of time per unit area when its surface is at a certain temperature. Since the heat taken in by the cooler body must be the same as the heat given by the hotter one, the surface temperature must lie closer to the temperature of the body with the greater thermal effusivity. The bodies in question here are human feet (which mainly consist of water) and burning coals. Because the coals are below normal flashpoint, there is no danger of burning... sorry! If the coals were hot enough to burn, your pants would self ignite long before you felt the pain from your feet.

Well at least that explains the fire walking at motivational conferences, but like everything else, there is a catch... in some cultures the fire walker stops walking all together, the formula above is no longer appropriate and he or she should ignite... but they don't! It is therefore reasonable to assume that at least under some conditions, it really is mind over matter and so, my friend is probably correct in those cases. While fire walkers, motivational or otherwise are an interesting topic, that is not the same as physical healing and even when we can jump to the conclusion that mind over matter can have a positive effect, that is still not the same thing.

While I will grant you that the vast majority of reports of raising the dead involved comatose patients, who were not clinically gone and that the majority of people who claim to be healed are exercising belief systems that allow the body to self-heal itself, we are faced with a vast number of cases where healing takes place far removed from the healer, which seems the key element to consider.

I made mention of Lourdes, the site of many miracle healings, a rocky grotto that is today lined with almost a hundred years supply of crutches that have been deposited there by those who were able to walk away healed. Removing the religious significance, if there is any and there are certainly those in the Catholic Church who raise an eyebrow at the mention of the place and the story that surrounds it, there is no "laying of hands" done here. People come from all over the world, attend a simple service

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that they could attend in any church anywhere and SOME walk away, while others do not. There are doctors in attendance to examine the patients and there are no explanations for most of what happens there. Many visit Lourdes as skeptics and leave believers, while the believers are healed. Files are kept, records are referred to local doctors and apparently, the healed do not relapse. Some call that a miracle.

Not a big fan of Lourdes? OK. Here is a true story: you will have to accept it as true based on that fact that I witnessed it. The case history is simple; a woman in her early seventies is complaining of back pain, which is getting more and more difficult to deal with. Her physician orders tests and then calls in a specialist, who confirms a cancer that is winding itself around the spinal column. A second opinion is requested with the same results and scans only prove the existence of the cancer. Family members are notified at the patient's request while she is bedridden in a metropolitan hospital. Several people are shown the scans, but one member of the family, who was a known empath, asked to talk with the patient with a family member and medic as witnesses. He told the patient simply, "I am going to try and help you... just relax." He asked her to sit up on the side of the bed, laid hands on her back, said nothing for several minutes, then quickly walked to a window and stared out at a nearby tree on the street. He then called in the primary physician and asked that the scans be redone. The next morning the doctor did the test again and it was read by three doctors, including one specialist and the radiologist. The cancer was gone. The patient walked out of the hospital and lived for another 12 years, dying at home, cancer free, while watching a baseball game. Unfortunately, the tree never bloomed that Spring and was later removed.

I could reflect on all of this and simply add, "There are more things in heaven and earth than were ever dreamed of in your philosophy, Horatio," but that would be way too easy.

We are paranormal investigators. As such we study that which is not sufficiently explained by science and healing is obviously one of those topics for consideration. Not overlooking the power of positive thought, the belief systems of each individual and the overpowering inner workings of the contemplative state, it is still difficult to come to a logical conclusion when considering this topic. I am reminded of the first scripture I opened this with, "*Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure*" ([1 Timothy 5:22](#)). But Timothy seems to be predisposed to the concept that healing is intrinsically tied to the forgiveness of sin, which is a bit hard to swallow, given my Jesuit background. It is certainly not that I can't see the correlation, or that I do or do not believe in the existence of good and evil and therefore sin, but rather how one reconciles that when the healing

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involved a child or the elderly. No man is without sin, yet only some are healed. No there has to be something more to make this formula work; faith is not enough.

Returning to the essence of this topic, I asked if healing was in some way paranormal. By definition, Webster defines it this way: **par-a-nor-mal** (*par-ã nôrEmãl*), *adj. of or pertaining to the claimed occurrence of an event or perception without scientific explanation, as psychokinesis, extrasensory perception, or other purportedly supernatural phenomena.* So, is physical healing without scientific explanation? Is it supernatural, of, pertaining to, or being above or beyond what is natural; unexplainable by natural law or phenomena; abnormal...of, pertaining to, characteristic of, or attributed to God or a deity....or, pertaining to, or attributed to ghosts, goblins, or other unearthly beings?

Well, obviously, this is not something that lends itself to empiric proof, it is not reproducible on demand, otherwise everyone who visited Lourdes would walk away healed, which might be true spiritually, but certainly not physically. Is it supernatural? I think we would have to say yes, it is not an everyday occurrence, but is it attributed to God? Well, maybe some lesser deity, given the time and place of the healing, but certainly not one specifically; the generic power perhaps or his/her deputy at best. I tend to think that THE God has better things to do; if he/she wished us to be immortals on Earth, we would be! Is it of what we refer to as a ghostly occurrence? An interesting question!

If a ghost is the spirit of a departed personality, can calling on that spirit specifically to assist in the healing of a family member somehow be connected? In some cultures the call is given to the spirits to heal, as they the conduit of the healing process, in others they are called to act as an intermediary. Did the Saints heal by invoking the higher powers of those who had gone before?

It would seem that to heal, there is a combination of elements needed; faith in the healer, belief in healing, a desire to be healed, as well as a healer who brings to the table faith in what they do. To this mix we then sprinkle a secret ingredient, the difference between mind over matter and miracle. This ingredient seems to appear different names around the world. Some call it the will of God, others a life force energy, still others the power of those who came before or even those who might follow later; whatever you definition, you need all the elements in exact proportion to make the "impossible" very much a possibility. Therefore this is neither of science or religion. And that is well within our field of research!

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