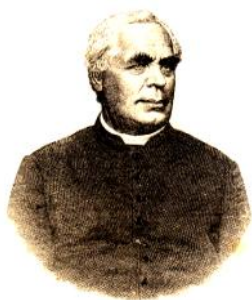




Healing for the Whole Being

"Often I could help the sick
only after first bringing order
into their souls."



Sebastian Kneipp, 1870
(Priest and Hydrotherapist)



Healing for the Whole Being

“That’s it!”

Approximately fifteen years ago I led a course on breathing. At first I showed the participants some practical exercises that help support the breathing function. Apart from this, I also tried to make it clear to them that breathing, like so many other bodily functions, is not just a physical matter. A person’s state of mind plays an important part as well. If I am relaxed, I breathe deeply, abdominally, and calmly. Abdominal breathing occurs naturally when a person sleeps. But if I am tense, I breathe with my chest, and my breaths become shallow and quicker.

But we have more than just a mind. There is another area which lies hidden deep within us, and that is the spiritual area. It was not easy for me to give the participants a clear explanation of this area. I used

Healing for the Whole Being

terms like “my faith,” “my personal religion,” or, “spiritual thinking” to explain what I meant. But I found they knew exactly what I was talking about and gave their personal contributions about how they had experienced the spiritual area in their own lives.

One evening, after explaining the theory, I again demonstrated some practical breathing techniques. Afterwards, a woman came to me and related that she suffered from continual pressure behind her breastbone. A medical examination by a specialist had not revealed any disease, and she was advised to attend a breathing course. This was the reason she had come, and now she was hoping for help.

I asked how she was doing mentally. She mentioned various problems in the family, but did not find any of them to be serious. Generally speaking, she thought that everything was fine. So I began to investigate a little further. How relevant was the spiritual area for her personally? Was she able to understand this area as I had presented it?

She answered hesitantly: “Not really, except ... when our child was baptized ...” The words came

Healing for the Whole Being

out in broken syllables. “My husband is Catholic, and I am Prot ...” She could not speak any further, clasped her hands around her neck, and struggled for breath. It was dramatic. She fell to the floor and crawled to the window. Was it a heart attack? An acute case of asthma? I quickly prayed for God’s protection for the woman and opened the window. I still thank God today that she became calm again and was able to regain her breath.

“That’s it!” she said, deeply affected and relieved, with tears in her eyes. That was what had been causing the pressure underneath her breastbone. The feeling of suffocation did not come from any physical or mental cause. Her spiritual sensibility had been injured, and this had finally affected her mental and physical condition.



Healing for the Whole Being

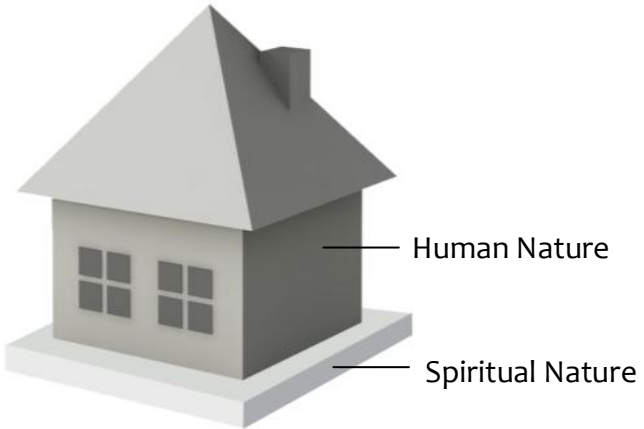
A fundamental distinction

In several places, the Bible differentiates between two natures in us: the spiritual and the human nature. The spiritual nature is not so easy to describe because we cannot see it or grasp it. The Bible describes it using various illustrations, for example, an old or a new heart, and an old or a new garment (see *Ezekiel 36:26; Luke 5:36*). Our conscience plays an important part in this spiritual nature. It is formed by our education and knowledge, and is closely connected with our way of thinking and feeling.

Our human nature consists of our body, our reason, our will, and our feelings. We are usually much more familiar with these things. Though we cannot see or touch our mind—our thoughts, imaginations, and feelings—we still know that it is real.

And when dealing with the physical, emotional, or mental things, we have doctors, psychiatrists, teachers, and many medicines, all of which can exert an influence on us. But where is the remedy that will bring the soul into harmony with its Creator?

Healing for the Whole Being



The word “soul” is often used to mean various things, both in daily language and in religious terminology. In order to keep it simple, we will refer to it as the “spiritual nature.” This part of our being is just as real as the others, even though we cannot see or touch it.

Healing for the Whole Being

Does everyone have a spiritual nature?

In a course I was giving on how to cope with stress, I was speaking to the participants about the connection between the body and mind and our spiritual nature. One young woman immediately responded: “I don’t know of any such thing!” She simply couldn’t make sense of the spiritual level at all. It was only after further questioning that it came back to her. She had been involved in an accident with a moped that had nearly cost her life, and at that moment she had prayed. She hadn’t known why, because she had never prayed before, nor had she ever had any relationship with God. But in this case she prayed. Why?

It is written of Jesus: “That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.” *John 1:9*. And so this woman also had a spiritual level, although she herself had never been aware of it. God has put a desire into each person: a desire for the protection and care of a father, a desire for what is true and just, and a desire for selfless love. In the extreme emergency this young woman experienced, that desire expressed itself—in prayer.



How can we become spiritually healthy?

The word of God speaks of just this kind of healing. Our Creator wants us to be healthy in more than only body and mind. He wants us to be well in these areas as well of course, but His main concern is the health of our spiritual nature. The Bible calls this “salvation.”

The sickness, or weakness, of our spiritual nature is revealed in a phenomenon with which each one of us is familiar. But because it is so widespread, the warning is ignored and the condition is considered as normal. We are hardly aware of how sick we really are.

Healing for the Whole Being

Paul describes this phenomenon in the following words:

“For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.... for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.” *Romans 7:15, 18.* And he despairs over his condition in verse 24: “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” *Romans 7:24.*

If we have such a problem we are obviously not well. In fact, we are spiritually sick. We act contrary to our better knowledge—contrary to the voice of conscience. We want to act differently, but cannot. We try again and again, but again and again we fail. Finally, we desperately call for help. We are in dire need of “salvation.”

Every one of us knows this experience to a greater or lesser degree. There are people who suffer so much from an uncontrolled appetite that they eat more food than is healthy for them. And there are others who do or eat unhealthy things, knowing perfectly well that they are injuring themselves. Still others cannot control their temper, even though they know that it is destroying their material and social

Healing for the Whole Being

environment. Some are plagued with jealousy or even hatred, which provokes needless quarrels. And then there is selfishness, a trait that forces each of us to place ourselves higher than the other person. It leads to many unpleasant actions and to characteristics that we are unable to overcome, although we may recognize them as being bad and want to get rid of them. We may be able to control ourselves to some degree, but we are not really free.

If we were spiritually healthy, we could tell a different story from that which Paul describes in *Romans* chapter 7. If we are healthy we know what we are doing. We do what we want to do, and do not do what we hate or don't want to do. We want what is good and can accomplish it too, no matter what effort or sacrifice it costs us.

Healing for the Whole Being

What is this healing (salvation)?



“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”
Ezekiel 36:26, 27.

Those are powerful words when spoken by our Creator. If you experience this change you become a different person! ““He who believes in the Son has everlasting life.”” *John 3:36*. ““He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”” *John 11:25, 26*. With such a life I can do the good that I know is right. I can do what God wants and I’m no longer compelled to act contrary to my conscience. It is God who speaks me free. “He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.” *Psalms 33:9*. This is the new creation I can ask for through faith in

God's Word. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." *Psalm 51:10*.

Such a new creation is the foundation for spiritual health.

What role does our mind play?

Reason, feeling, and will—all of these make up the mind. This is who I am! It is my own unique personality: the way I think, feel, and decide. This is where the commander resides. My body receives all its commands from this center.

If my spiritual nature is healthy, it will have a good influence on my mind. My reasoning powers will be educated by God's word. My feelings will learn not to cause trouble anymore, but to cooperate with my reason instead. My will becomes strong by making self-reliant decisions day after day. A redeemed person is a free person.

The mind also determines the dignity of a person. Since I am the one who decides what kind of a life I lead, how I conduct my daily affairs, and how I relate to God, I have the power of control. God has given every human being a dignity that needs to be

Healing for the Whole Being

preserved. This area, whether in myself or in other people, merits the highest respect.

I have known people who maintained their dignity until the last moment of their lives. They made their decisions under God's guidance and carried them out to the very end. Among them were both aged people as well as those afflicted by serious illness, yet even in pain and weakness they were confident and did not give up their hope.

A healthy mind, in which thought, feeling, and action are unified, preserves our dignity even under the most difficult circumstances. There are many biblical examples of this. Joseph, who was sold as a slave; Daniel, who was condemned to die because of his loyalty to God; Jesus Himself, who was killed for His service to humanity; Peter, Paul, and many others who, despite prison, hardship, deprivation, and cruel treatment, continued to deal calmly and humanely with themselves and with others.

How can dignity be preserved?

When treating or caring for others, the first goal is to protect this mental area and keep it from any kind of impairment.

Especially during serious illness or in the last days of life, people must be enabled to bring their lives into order with God and with their fellows. The deepest feelings come up at such times. In these times of need, God comes close to us and speaks to us through our mind.

It often requires intensive care to spare a person the necessity of taking psychotropic drugs. But the effort is well worth it. People find rest, can make their final decisions, and take leave of their relatives in a way that gives them courage and comfort to go on. If their minds were impaired by medication at this time, it would result in great loss. This is also why Jesus did not accept the pain-numbing drink that was offered Him on the cross. He preserved His dignity.

It is crucial to support the dying person's decision



Healing for the Whole Being



during this phase, even if it is different from what you yourself would decide. Any hypnotic procedure, regardless of whether it is applied individually or in group therapy, whether it is of medical or religious nature, would contradict this principle. It compromises the central point of decision-making and another person—in this case the therapist—interferes with the will. The patient gives their will into the hands of the therapist and can no longer decide for themselves. Their dignity is impaired.

Rest in God

“God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” *1 Corinthians 10:13*. God will preserve our mind so that during times of extremity, we can decide for life or death. He keeps this central area working as far as it is possible for Him to do so. If He must allow a person’s memory to decrease, or even permit dementia, then the person’s decisions have already been made for the most part. As loved ones and caregivers, our task is to maintain whatever dignity remains as much as possible.

Recently one of my patients died. He was an old man and did not speak much during the last days of his life because he was so weak. But the day before he died, he clearly said to his wife: “For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.” *Romans 14:8*.

He had put his life in order and brought it to a close. And with these final words he comforted his wife, children, and friends. That night he passed away peacefully.

Healing for the Whole Being

“I am the Lord who heals you.” Exodus 15:26

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless.” *1 Thessalonians 5:23*. God not only wants to help us physically, He also wants to make us healthy in mind. And more than this, He wants to heal us completely. The foundation for this is spiritual healing—our salvation.

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