

Diverse Faiths

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Abstract

Christians believe that currently the healing with faith can take place during the service in the Christian churches. The healers, shamans, witches and other representatives may treat in non-Christian religions. They often resort to divination and magic, cause the state of hypnosis or trance. Some psychics claim that their work has nothing to do with religion. Any miracle cures today are scrutinized both by the higher religious leaders, and physicians, scientists. All religions and beliefs in the question of treatment are united with the desire to heal, as well as with confidence of their followers and ministers of religion in the rightness of actions, selected methods and results. The notions and methods of treatment are to be regarded from the point of view of three ancient and widespread religions, Buddhism, Wicca and Native Americans' shamanism.

Diverse Faiths

Native Americans

Many people of the Western culture have long treated the shamanic practices as delirium of the superstitious savages and gave skeptical reviews on their ability to treat people and other unexplained abilities. Among the reasons for this attitude were the main two:

1. Strong opposition of shamans to numerous Christian missionaries.
2. Cases of death in patients exposed to shamans.

Shamanism is distinguished with the presence of certain characteristics, which is the primary call to action on the part of supernatural forces during the trance or vision, in which a person travels to the place of dwelling of the Force, where they give this person secret

knowledge that changes his status in society and giving him the right to perform the functions of shaman. The revealed supernatural beings became the spirits-patrons of the shaman, and the force transmitted to a person could be used to solve all sorts of problems, as well as protected him from misfortunes. However, once the person received power, he agreed to follow certain rules and comply with strict taboos, the violation of which could have caused his sudden death. Characteristic features of the shamanic healing practices are:

1. The use of musical instruments, like tambourines, rattles, whistle.
2. The chants and prayers, which involve all those present.
3. Audio-visual effects, like light flashes, sparks, the voices of birds and animals, ventriloquism.
4. Unexplainable to the ordinary man 'tour de force': all kinds of magical performances, during which the shaman removes from the patient a variety of items, instantly removes traces of fresh wounds, grows fruiting plants in a short time, etc (Pena & Smith, 2009).

Indians believe that the man is not the master of the universe, but only a part of it. Forces surrounding it can affect the affairs of people, and as long as everything is in harmony, they do not bother them. Therefore, it is vital to the community to contact with supernatural forces, achieved through special techniques, and this has always been the central idea of shamanism. A person can expect to succeed in life and stay healthy only with the help of supernatural forces.

Native Americans resorted to shamans to treat diseases and injuries, for weather forecasting and its impacting, predictions of the future, finding lost people and things, murder

or injury of the enemy at a distance, as well as creating prerequisites for the common good of the tribe (Pena & Smith, 2009). The strength of the shaman could be used by him for antisocial goals when he resorted to witchcraft. In this case, another shaman was invited to treat the effects of witchcraft, who fought with the evil shaman on the supernatural level. The methods of treatment among shamans are prayers, sayings, herbs, and rituals.

Buddhism

According to Buddhism, all living beings in this world are subject to various forms of suffering. No matter what the physical health is, substantially every person is sick, and this is evident by the lack of satisfaction with life and disruption of harmony with one's inner and outer worlds. While the illness may not manifest itself on the physical level, it may be present in a dormant form, and occur when its excitatory causes will reach a critical point. Physical illness that makes the body suffer and weaken, and mental illness or obscurations are closely related. Diseases of the body are the result of mental illness, a sign that a person does something wrong, something is not understood. Harmonious person is not subject to disease. Therefore, the Buddhist practices are aimed to cure in the first place the cause of the disease, which lies in the spiritual realm. The very same healing practice is based on the use of natural methods, bioenergy, acupuncture, herbal medicine, etc.

According to Buddhist tradition, Buddha revealed himself in the form of the Medicine Buddha driven by great compassion and taught Chzhud-shek, i.e. the four medical tantras. They set out the methods of curing for over 400 kinds of physical ailments, explained their sources and gave the symptoms of these diseases. Buddhists believe it is not necessary to use the services of doctors to get help in healing. The person is able to heal himself, provided, of course, there is implicit faith in one's strength and desire to achieve results. Then there is nothing impossible. Reciting the mantra of the Medicine Buddha is considered to be very

effective support. Reading mantra creates a special vibrating spirit, which, acting on the subtle planes, cleans and restores them. As a consequence disease disappears. It is also assumed that mantras purify negative karma, quickly eliminate suffering from diseases and pacifies harmful spirits. They are recited to gain success in different cases and to make dreams come true. The most effective treatment lies in turning for help to the Buddha of Medicine on the corresponding day called Uposatha.

Tibetan medicine used to distinguish four main classes of disease (Birnbaum, 2003):

1) 101 diseases as a result of the acts committed in the past lives and their influence.

If karma resulting from bad deeds in the past lives matures, a person might develop a very strong and dangerous disease that usually leads to death. In Tibet, people with this disease often dedicate their lives to spiritual practice that allows them to gain good karma.

2) 101 diseases of this life.

The causes of these diseases are associated with negative actions in the early period of life. Similar diseases can lead to death if not treated in time. Going for Refuge and spiritual practices, such as remorse for bad deeds and promise not to ever commit them again, in combination with the right treatment, lead to recovery.

3) 101 diseases associated with spirits.

Hungry Ghosts, Nagas and other creatures, which people cannot see, can have a bad influence on them. This may be due to the karmic connection between a person and the spirit of the data resulting from bad deeds in the past life or harming that spirit in this life.

4) 101 surface diseases.

Such diseases can be cured with simple dieting and proper lifestyle.

From the Christian point of view, a disease is given to a person to review his/her poor lifestyle choices and unnatural hierarchy of values in life. If sick, it means the person lives wrong, estranged from God and should be close to him again, i.e. he/she needs his soul to be healed. There is a concept of the original sin, which makes suffer every person, and the concept of 'remoteness from God', but the man does not pay for the sins of his/her past lives with illnesses (as in the Buddhist concept of karma), because Catholics and Orthodoxy rejected the chain of rebirth. On the other hand, the Christian belief in the evil, in the 'dirty' spirits, demons, devils and other creatures that tempt and lead a person to the physical and mental suffering are common with Buddhist teachings about 101 diseases caused by spirits.

Christians believe that the disease has inherent principle of healing, primarily spiritual, moral, and then physical healing. Again, here is an analogy with Buddhism and other religions (Wicca and Native American), who see the causes of disease in the retreat of the soul from the true spiritual path, which is expressed in bad deeds, thoughts and desires. And what matters here is the graceful assistance of the competent religious representative, with Christians it is the church in the form of its sacraments, like repentance, communion, extreme unction, prayer, fasting, moral perfection through abstention from sins, changing one's way of life, doing good deeds, etc.

On the other hand, Christians regard differently the process of healing 'through an intermediary'. Modern Christians have a positive perception of the official institution of church (often, except for some branches of Protestantism), but dislike and reproach healers (i.e. non-official ministers of religion), who treat with herbs, incantations and prayers. This is the main difference from Wiccans, Buddhists and Native Americans, who believe any

believer may be a healer to the person in need. Spiritual and salvific healing, from the Christian point of view, provides the following important points:

1) creating a special atmosphere of love, attention, understanding, and respect around the patient;

2) caring, attentive care;

3) assisting in the realization of the sinful way of life;

4) fixing one's lifestyle through active repentance;

5) patient's prayer and prayers for the sick by his relatives, the priest, the doctor and other medical personnel;

6) treatment on the background atmosphere of love, active repentance and other Christian sacraments. It is also important for Christians that the doctor and the priest helped the patient to accept his illness and suffering with humility and the knowledge that illness and suffering are the consequence of his/her sins. Christian ministers of cult are rather aimed at saving the soul for eternal life, rather healing the body.

Wicca

The heart of the ethics of Wicca makes the principle of 'do what you want, if it does not harm anyone'. However, all kinds of magic are common in their usage of the natural energy that is radiated by the body, cult objects (made only from natural materials), stones, plants, natural phenomena, invisible entities, etc. With the energy of one's body and mind a person is able to wake up, cause and drive the other energies that will help achieve a certain goal. Wicca uses the energy of Nature. It is the energy of air, water, fire and earth. All

applications are made in the name of the Lord. For example, when a magician uses water to remove the evil eye or damage, he/she says in the plot, 'In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Mother Water, clean, fast, running and so on'. This is believed to be the magic of nature. Wicca reserves a very special place for the magic of plants. This implies grass, trees, flowers, and roots. It is quite simple with their rituals compared to, say, voodoo or Kabbalah (Cliffton, 2006). However, it is very effective, since it allows practicing to people who do not have deep knowledge of the complex rituals. Magic of plants used in Wicca is very versatile. Plants are used to make various amulets, talismans, ointments, tinctures, teas, spices, etc. Treatment methods of Wicca help, for example, to get rid of psoriasis, hemorrhoids, heart disease, insomnia, and many other diseases. Wicca practitioners ensure they can teach a person to help him/herself and in housekeeping, family affairs, and in everyday life (Cliffton, 2006). Since Wicca arose from Christianity and is believed to be closer to it compared with Buddhism and Native American shamanism, one may contrast some basic practices and notions existing in these two religions.

Prayer

Christian asks for help or guidance from God / Christ through prayer.

Ritual

Wiccans also pray, however rituals and spells / charms can be considered equivalent to Christian prayer. Wiccans are asking their god and goddess of protection, assistance, and what they need personally through the magical work, if not with a simple prayer.

Divine Power

Christians put their needs and desires to God through prayers, with a confidence that God will answer it. Wiccans connect to the Divine Energy, existing everywhere, to result in the desired outcome, calling the Goddess and God to support them and give them power.

Healing

Christians believe in natural healing and modern medicine. Many people believe in the 'laying on of hands', as the conductor of God's power to heal. Wiccans believe in natural healing and modern medicine. Wiccans also connect to the Divine Power to heal.

Conclusions

Comparing the systems of treatment and healing among the representatives of Wicca, Native Americans, and Buddhists in contrast with those of the Christian denomination followers, one traces similar methods of treatment, like prayers, charms and spells, sayings to call the unnatural force and direct it into the needed course, making and worshiping idols to make them 'assist' in healing, wearing mascots, etc. Unlike these three religions, Christians are less tolerable to other denominations, religions, groups of believers and their healing methods. With Buddhists, Wiccans and Native Americans a doctor is the synonym of the healer, the practitioner, and these religion followers come to their minister of religion with the concrete purpose to get better. Christian churches and their ministers do not overtake the treating role in general and speak more of the spiritual healing, rather than of the mental and physical healing process.

The similarity, however, is found in the explanation of the reasons for various diseases and afflictions. Christians blame the inherited (original) sin for the humane imperfectness and susceptibility to illnesses, diseases, aging and death. Buddhists also believe the diseases are 'inherited' with the human soul, either from its previous lives or

previous actions in the present life. Wiccans, Buddhists and Native Americans regard human ailments as the result of wrong actions, thoughts and choices. All four religions talk of the evil powers and spirits (entities or matter) that may cling or possess the human soul and cause illnesses or other ailments in the body. Each religion sees the spirit or soul of the patient as the primary target to impact, to 'purify' in order to cure.

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