

RESPONSE TO

“Guidelines for Evaluating Reiki as an Alternative Therapy” by the Committee on Doctrine, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Recently, I received in my email a document, “Guidelines for Evaluating Reiki as an Alternative Therapy” written by the Committee on Doctrine, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. This document prompted me to respond to its contents from a position of an academic researcher working in the field of religious studies and a university professor teaching classes in Asian Religious Traditions at the University of the Pacific in Northern California.

The first problem which needs to be addressed is that the authors of the document approach Reiki as a form of religious activity.¹ From the academic study’s perspective, Reiki is not a religion, nor does its practice possess characteristics which would allow us to qualify it as a religious activity. If Reiki was proven to constitute a religious activity, or a religion, researchers and teachers in the field of Religious Studies would find themselves under obligation to research it as one of the religious phenomena; teach about Reiki in the academic courses; and include a chapter on Reiki in the standard textbook written on the subject of global and regional religions.

As I have found myself to be rather perplexed by the identification of Reiki with religion, I immediately contacted several of my colleagues in the field inviting them to state their positions on the Reiki. All replies, without an exception, stated that Reiki is not a religion, but a relaxation and healing technique, similar to therapeutic touch and meditation.

The second point the “Guidelines” makes which seems equally troubling to me is the insistence that the scientific data detailing therapeutic qualities of the Reiki is absent.² I

¹ “Guidelines,” p. 3.

² Op. cit., p. 6.

conducted my own research of reliable scientific data on medical use of the Reiki. Results are contrary to what has been stated by the “Guidelines.”. Medical benefits of Reiki, in fact, are been evaluated and confirmed through both research and practice in dozens of medical facilities across the United States, including Wilcox Memorial Hospital (Lihue, HI); Center for Mind and Body Medicine (Dallas, TX); Portsmouth Regional Hospital (Portsmouth, NH); Center for Integrative Medicine (Washington, D.C.); Samuels Center for Comprehensive Care (New York, NY); Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center (New York, NY); Mercy Hospital (Portland, ME); and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (New York, NY).

According to sources published by these institutions, proven medical benefits resulting from application of Reiki include but are not limited to reduced anxiety and lower use of pain medications; decreased number of gerontological complaints; and increased patient satisfaction for surgical patients. At the present stage of research, Reiki is believed to be capable of rebalancing human bio-field, thus strengthening body’s ability to heal and increase systemic resistance to stress. Reiki is explicitly proven to reduce stress and stimulate self-healing by relaxation and resetting the autonomic nervous system. It also enhances the function of the immune system and increases endorphin production.³

The third point of my response to the “Guidelines” comes from the principles of Christianity which this document stands to represent. In I Corinthians 14:1 Paul says that healing is one of the spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit to the Christians. Also, Jesus, as quoted in John 14:12 says, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I go to the Father.” Obviously, hands-on healing has

³ Pamela Miles and Gala True, Ph.D., “Reiki -- Review of a Biofield Therapy...” *Alternative Therapies*, Vol. 9, N. 2:76.

been a part of the Christian tradition since its very inception. The question that begs itself is –
Why, all of a sudden, is it no longer welcomed?

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