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The Convergence of Spirit and Science

“Michelle, a bright, perky, 21 year old woman, arrived in my office complaining of severe bladder pain. She had to urinate frequently and urgently. I did a complete medical workup but could find nothing out of the ordinary by the standards of my profession there was nothing wrong with Michelle. Yet it was clear to me that Michelle’s pain was real, and her physical symptoms were real. After I had finished looking in her bladder with a cystoscope and found everything to be normal, I ventured, ‘Sometimes women with your symptoms have a history of sexual abuse or molestation. Is this possible with you?’ In the corner of her eye, the slightest of tears welled up. It turned out that Michelle had been sexually penetrated by an uncle almost daily from the age of three, till she was ten years old.

“I asked Michelle to think back upon these memories and find a part of her body where they were strongest. She said she could feel them acutely in her lower abdomen and pelvis. I asked her to rate them on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the mildest and 10 being the most intense. Michelle rated her feelings at 10 out of a possible 10.

“I then spent 45 minutes working with Michelle, using some simple yet powerful emotional release techniques. I then asked her to rate her level of discomfort. It was a 1 – complete peace. I urged her to cast around in her body for the remnants of any of the disturbed feelings she had previously felt. She could not find them, no matter how hard she tried. The emotionally charged memories had been so thoroughly released that a physical shift had occurred in her body. Her bladder condition disappeared. In the three years since that office visit, it has never once returned.”

This account was written by Eric Robins, M.D., a urologist working at a Kaiser Permanente hospital in California.¹ It is one of thousands of similar stories of physical healing brought about by non physical means. As well as a vast body of anecdotal evidence, an enormous and growing number of scientific studies now validates the principles of spiritual healing. Twenty years ago, a book entitled *Soul Medicine* would have been a metaphysical treatise. Today, it represents the cutting edge of scientific discovery, as you will see in the pages to come. Sacred healing, for centuries the domain of mystics, priests and charlatans, is today attracting some of the brightest and most innovative scientific researchers on the planet.

The revolution that their research studies is producing is overturning some of the most firmly established principles in the scientific firmament. Take the notion that the characteristics of our fifty trillion celled human bodies are produced by blueprints in our DNA. This idea is so firmly rooted in both popular culture and scientific literature that almost every week we read about this gene being linked to that behavior or that gene being linked to this trait. “Scientists today announced they have found a gene for dyslexia. It’s a gene on chromosome six called DCDC2,” announced National Public Radio on October 28th, 2005. The following day, the *New York Times* carried a long story of the same discovery under the byline “Findings Support That Dyslexia Disorder Is Genetic.” Other US media echoed the story. Arch establishment doctor, Stephen Barrett, M.D. summed up the prevailing view with the words, “some diseases are an inevitable result of genetic make up.”²

In fact, the entire notion that our destiny is written into the code of our DNA is crumbling. In his groundbreaking new bestseller *The Biology of Belief*, Bruce Lipton, Ph.D., points out that human beings have about 25,000 genes. Chimpanzees have a similar number. A lowly marine worm, *Caenorhabditis elegans*, each example of which has just 969 cells – one half trillionth of the number found in a human being – has 24,000 genes. When the human genome project started, researchers were expecting to find at least 120,000 genes. That’s how many they projected it would take to provide the blueprint for an organism as complex as a human being. They found just 23,688 genes – around one fifth the expected number.³

If the information to build a human body, and create as magnificently complex a structure as the human mind and emotional realm, is not found in the genes, where does it come from? What is organizing structures as elaborate as the neural system and behavioral predilections? The answer must lie in a source of information beyond the genes, and science is just beginning to grapple with the awesome implications of these questions.

The new discipline of *epigenetics* looks at the influences on DNA from outside the cell. It is beginning to show that the biochemical environment in which cells exist has a profound effect upon which genes are activated. And the energy environment has an even more rapid effect than the chemical one on gene function. The journal *Science*, in a special 2001 issue of the magazine devoted to this emerging discipline, defined epigenetics as: “the study of heritable changes in gene function that occur without a change in the DNA sequence.”⁴ The old view of genes – one that still dominates science and the media – is that genes determine physical characteristics, disease propensity, and many behaviors. The new view, in the words of Karl Maret, M.D., is that “the genome is plastic and resembles constantly rewritten software code rather than being fixed hardware that you inherit at birth.”⁵

In a quantum universe, space and time are probabilities rather than absolutes. The science of physics was shaken to its core a

century ago by the emergence of quantum physics. When the first discoveries of quantum physics were made, and its implications began to reverberate throughout research and theory, the certainties of the old Newtonian physics were overthrown. Medicine today is in the grip of a similar revolution. Bruce Lipton says, “Conventional medicine works with the iron filings, whereas a deeper form of healing would attempt to influence the magnetic field. Most doctors don’t see the field, so they’re trying to figure out the relationship between the filings without even trying to incorporate the energy field in which they exist.”⁶

In a Newtonian universe, the healing agents—drugs, doctors, surgery, hospitals, healers, shamans—must be present in the same space and time as the patient in order for healing to take place. In a quantum universe, the energy field in which a patient exists can produce healing without any need for a spatial or temporal connection. Phenomena like distant healing—healing across great distances, or even across time—are conceivable. A quantum universe is a set of probabilities, susceptible to influence by many factors, including thought, will and intention. It is a universe in which spontaneous remission of disease is possible, and in which the influence of a healer using non-physical means can be as effective as conventional medical treatment.

“The picture most people call ‘scientific’ is obsolete,” according to quantum physicist Ervin Lazlo. He tells us that science is in the midst of “a shift from matter to energy as the primary reality” and that, “In the emerging concept of the new sciences there is no categorical divide between the physical world, the living world, and the world of mind and consciousness. Matter is vanishing as a fundamental feature of reality, retreating before energy; and continuous fields are replacing discrete particles as the basic elements of an energy bathed universe.”⁷ In later chapters, we will examine in great detail some of the great spiritual healers of our time, and of history, and see what their methods and experience can contribute to our understanding of the energy universe in which healing takes place. We will also look at

the lessons from cell biology, quantum physics, and brain physiology that shed light on the biophysical mechanisms at work in soul healing. Physicist Sir James Jeans said, “the stream of knowledge is heading towards a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine.”⁸

Lipton’s experiments illuminate in great detail the mechanisms by which the membranes of cells change in order to admit or deny entry to certain proteins, which in turn activate genes. The activities of the mind, he shows, affect body functions, and changes in thinking and belief can have a direct effect on our cells. “When someone has a sudden shift of belief,” he states, “it can radically change the epigenetics, which means that the same genetic code will now be interpreted completely differently—this could be the difference between cancer and remission.”⁹ He notes that the existence of these mechanisms shows why conventional medicine, alternative therapies and energy medicine can all be effective in producing healing. Each of them may be affecting the field through their own method of intervention; as the field changes, the patterns of iron filings change right along with it. In the words of researcher James Oschman: “In the past it had been thought that the genes give rise to proteins that then spontaneously assemble into the living structures that carry out living processes, including consciousness. In the emerging quantum model, it is the action of quantum coherence that organizes the parts into living structures, and it is the action of quantum coherence that gives rise to consciousness as a distributed and emergent property of the assembled parts.”¹⁰

Soul medicine makes medical use of that quantum coherence that gives rise to consciousness in order to effect healing. It harnesses the healing power of consciousness, regardless whether that consciousness is expressed through alternative medicine or conventional medicine. Soul medicine does not deny or negate conventional medicine. The last six decades of biomedical and pharmacological research have managed almost completely to overlook the study of such crucial factors in healing as consciousness, electromagnetism, faith and

prayer, and quantum processes. Soul medicine simply restores these factors to the equation.

One study examined 442 patients at the Baptist Family Practice clinic in Morrow, Georgia. It used several different in depth tests to determine how healthy they were overall, how much pain they were in, and how strong their intrinsic spirituality was. The results of the various tests were then compared, to determine whether or not there was a correlation between spirituality and wellness. The researchers found that the patients with the strongest intrinsic spirituality had the least pain, and were healthiest overall.¹¹

A group of researchers from St. Luke's Medical Center in Chicago looked at the link between church attendance and physical health. It found that those with a regular spiritual practice were more likely to be healthy and had a lower mortality rate.¹² Another similar study at the University of Texas Medical School led by Thomas Oxman examined the effects of spiritual or religious practice and social support on people undergoing heart surgery. Their findings revealed that patients who possessed a large and deep social network, or were devoted to their religious or spiritual practice, exhibited just *one seventh* the mortality rate of those who did not.¹³ Another recent study found that patients prayed for had "six month death and re hospitalization rates about 30 percent lower than did control patients."¹⁴ Results as astonishing as these are far from being the exception. They are the norm. Larry Dossey, M.D., author of *Prayer is Good Medicine*¹⁵ and other similar books, points out that there are upwards of 1,200 studies that explore the interface between health, longevity, and religious and spiritual practices, with more in progress.¹⁶

A fascinating series of experiments on the effect of consciousness on the structure of the DNA molecule has been performed by the Institute of Heartmath in Boulder Creek, California, led by Rollin McCraty, Ph.D. The researchers there took DNA samples drawn from human placental tissue, and measured changes in the protein's structure when exposed to the *intentions* of individuals. They used spectrography to measure the degree of twist in the double helix of the DNA molecules in the samples. This characteristic can be

determined by measuring the degree of absorption of ultraviolet light exhibited by the DNA molecule.

Experimental samples of DNA were then exposed to human intentions. Groups of individuals were asked to hold the intention that the helixes of the DNA in the samples would twist tighter. In other experiments, they were asked to intend that the spirals became looser. The samples were then tested to see if there was a measurable change, in the desired direction, looser or tighter.

Untrained volunteers were unable to have any effect on the degree of twist in the DNA molecules. The samples measured the same before and after they were exposed. Even trained individuals from the Institute staff were unable to have any effect using will and intention alone.

However, those same people then entered a calm, meditative, state that the Heartmath researchers call "heart coherence," because the heartbeat is unusually regular in this state. When they held an intention while in a state of heart coherence, the structure of the DNA samples did indeed change. When samples subject to the thoughts of volunteers who held the intention of the DNA twist becoming tighter were later examined, the molecules were found to have a tighter twist. In some samples, the degree of twist had increased by an astonishing 25 percent, a huge effect. When subjects entered the appropriate mental and emotional state, then held the intention of the DNA unwinding, the twist was found to have loosened. The researchers then repeated the experiment at a distance, to control for any possible influence from the electromagnetic fields of the volunteers' hearts, brains and other organs. Even at a distance of fifty miles, the effect was replicated.

One highly trained volunteer, able to achieve an extremely stable state of heart coherence, was found to be particularly effective at changing the twist in DNA molecules. In one experiment, three separate vials of placental DNA were prepared, A, B and C. He was asked to tighten the degree of twist in A and C, but not in vial B. When the ultraviolet characteristics of the DNA in all three samples

were later examined, the result was exactly as he had intended, with an increased twist in vials A and C, but no change to the molecules in vial B. This suggests that, far from producing a generalized effect, intention is highly specific.

McCraty and his team of researchers conclude that: “the data presented here support the concept that cell level processes can be influenced by human intention, mediated via energetic interactions.” They also suspect that these positive mental and emotional states might be implicated in many other aspects of energy medicine, in spontaneous remissions, and in the placebo effect, as well as in the documented value of faith and prayer in improving health and longevity.¹⁷ They demonstrate that by focusing directly on soul healing, we may produce positive changes in our physical condition.

The implications of such research are stunning. They show that by changing our consciousness, we can change the very blueprints around which our physical bodies are constructed. We can first seek healing close to the source, by intervening in our own thinking, rather than trying to deal much later on down the line with the ill effects of our thoughts on our bodies. While it is unlikely that we will ever be able to bypass physical means like drugs and surgery for the healing of every disease in every person, these new insights show clearly that soul medicine is the very first intervention point we should look to for physical or emotional healing. It’s free. It’s not under the control of an HMO, doctor, hospital, or spouse. It usually feels good to great. It places awesome power over our own healing within us. It returns the responsibility for our well being to our own doorsteps, rather than displacing that responsibility onto some outside agent of healing. And research is screaming at us with the urgent message that consciousness can harness the powerful healing forces of a quantum universe, forces far more potent than pills in a bottle.

In past generations, spiritual healing was perceived as a mystical, otherworldly event. To many people, and some scientists, it still is. It’s like old maps of the New World. The shape of the coastline in one of the first maps of America, produced by Spanish cartographer Diego

Gutiérrez in 1562, and now reposing in the Library of Congress, is so close to reality that if you put it side by side with a modern atlas, all the key features are recognizable. But when it came to interior detail, the cartographers could provide only clues and guesses. This is where our understanding of spiritual healing lies today. While experiments like the ones described above tell us clearly that consciousness affects DNA, we are still a long way from being able to say that *this* thought held simultaneously with *that* feeling produces *this* effect. We know the general outlines, but not the details. “If at first the idea is not absurd,” observed Albert Einstein, “then there is no hope for it.”

Former neurosurgeon Norm Shealy, M.D., Ph.D., one of the two coauthors of this book, met Olga Worrall, one of the most famous healers of the twentieth century, in the early 1970s. At that time, she conducted healing services every Thursday morning at the Mount Washington United Methodist Church in Baltimore, Maryland. There were about three hundred people at each service. She stated that the healing service “just exhilarates me. I feel seven feet tall. I’m just a channel for the healing power, but the power comes from spiritual sources, not from me.” She had some *fifteen thousand* letters in her possession from grateful recipients of healing. Norm was able to obtain medical records for ten patients. These showed “miraculous” healing that defies medical experience.

Another master healer Norm evaluated was a “Persian” he refused to use the word Iran named Ostad Hadi Parvarandeh. Ostad graduated from the American University in Tehran and eventually became a diplomatic counsel to France. Over the next few decades, he served in a number of countries, including Greece, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, before retiring in 1976. Soon his home became a clinic. At times, so many people gathered outside the house requesting his attention that police had to assist with traffic control. As a result of treating so many people, he became well acquainted with medical terminology. He also began to document his cases in an effort to pass his knowledge on to others.

Norm set out to find out if any of the accounts of healing were

genuine, verifiable medical cures. He asked patients for permission to contact their doctors, and eventually obtained the medical records of 100 patients. Here are some of those accounts, written by medical professionals, for which Norm has medical documentation:

An M.D. ophthalmologist writes in January 1996, “Mr. Suarez been my patient since 1986 and was under my supervision. His vision gradually was lost due to macular degeneration in both eyes so that he was not able to drive. At present his vision is improved after visiting Mr. Parvarandeh, and he is able to drive because of improving vision in both eyes.”

A psychologist and director of a major pain clinic wrote to Ostad, in March 1996: “I have been quite amazed by the progress shown by several of my patients who have seen you.”

A New York M.D. wrote to Ostad, in March 1996, “I was profoundly impressed with your capability to provide significant and documented need I say almost miraculous benefit to a large variety of often very difficult cases in the face of prior unsuccessful attempts by the best Western medicine has to offer.”

A Philadelphia scientist wrote to him in March 1996 as follows: “We were amazed at your extraordinary capacity to diagnose rapidly and treat patients with subtle energy and the power of intention in our presence, some of whom have lasting pain relief or other improved conditions as a direct result of your treatment. Everyone I spoke with following your visit here is greatly impressed with your abilities.”

A board certified M.D. family physician wrote in 1996, “I have witnessed the healing of illnesses that go far beyond the capacity of conventional Western medicine.”

A doctor of Oriental Medicine wrote in July 1996 that his son had had serious problems with Crohn’s disease for five years, with frequent diarrhea; he had lost 40 lbs. Initially Ostad treated the son over the phone for five minutes. Immediately the diarrhea ceased and the pain was less severe. After the second and final treatment, “symptoms dramatically decreased. He began tolerating normal foods,

and over the next four months totally stopped taking all medications and gained thirty eight pounds.”

A doctor of Oriental Medicine and acupuncture wrote that he had observed Ostad “greatly improve and cure the ailments of different patients such as cancer, incurable viruses, seizures and even blindness, and the Master has not only cured his patients, but has also rejuvenated the life back into their spirits.” He said that even manic depression and schizophrenia have been no challenge for Ostad Parvarandeh.

A New Jersey physician wrote, “I witnessed the effect of his healing power on several patients.” He then goes on to describe eight of them:

1. The first patient was a fifty eight year old doctor who underwent spinal fusion surgery in 1987 and developed paralysis of the right lower limb due to complication of surgery, later confirmed by MRI examinations. The surgeons were not interested in further surgery. After his first therapeutic session with Ostad, a very fine movement was noted in his right toes. After forty sessions of therapy, the patient, who had been paralyzed, could walk with a walker and crutches, and is currently practicing medicine in his office. I’m not aware of any nonsurgical intervention or therapy that could ameliorate such organic spinal cord injuries in such a short period of time.

2. A thirty two year old woman, the wife of a doctor, developed amenorrhea and galactorrhea, which persisted four years after giving birth to her second child. The patient was treated by Mr. Parvarandeh for three sessions. Her symptoms disappeared and her menstrual cycles were normal. In the first session the patient was seen in person by Mr. Parvarandeh, and the next two sessions were done over the phone.

3. A thirty five year old woman, the wife of a doctor, developed a severe frontal throbbing headache. In spite of all physical examinations and laboratory and paraclinical tests such as MRI and

CT scans, no definite cause was identified. Ophthalmologic exams were normal. It was diagnosed as a nervous headache, and she used painkillers. Mr. Parvarandeh diagnosed the headache as being due to minimal liver dysfunction. It is noteworthy that all liver function tests were within normal range. After a few sessions of therapy in which Mr. Parvarandeh was concentrating on her liver, the headache disappeared. This is a new idea not known by medical doctors that liver dysfunction, even in the presence of normal function tests, could exist and lead to headache; it is believed there is no known medication for such treatment.

4. After transfer of energy to the liver of several patients with hypercholesterolemia and hypertriglyceridemia by Mr. Parvarandeh, the blood levels of triglycerides and cholesterol dropped significantly. There was no medication that could do the same.

5. A sixty seven year old surgeon who has liver cirrhosis developed thrombocytopenia. After receiving the healing energy of Mr. Parvarandeh, platelets increased from 20,000 to 50,000 and the size of the spleen decreased.

6. I have also witnessed the decrease of chest pain in patients with proven angina pectoris and myocardial infarction.

7. A patient with frozen shoulder, after fracture of the head of the humerus, regained full function of the shoulder joint after a few sessions of therapy with by Mr. Parvarandeh.

8. A five year old girl was diagnosed with alveolar soft part sarcoma of the right leg in 1986. The tumor showed histological evidence of muscular and vascular invasion. Pathological diagnosis was confirmed at a center in England and in the United States. The patient was referred to a center in England where she received a course of chemotherapy, and she was discharged with a diagnosis of metastatic sarcoma to the lung with no further therapy. She has since then been under treatment by healing power of Mr. Parvarandeh and is still alive and doing well 10 years after the initial diagnosis. This case is one of the very rare long term survivals of metastatic sarcoma,

and may be the only case of long term survival in metastatic sarcoma of the lung.

We know from stories like this that something is happening. We can't clearly articulate how and why it happens yet. As our experimental data on spiritual healing increases, we are discovering that its effects are vast. The dozens of scientific experiments on the effect of consciousness upon physical healing show, time after time, that spiritual practice and belief have a marked positive influence on longevity and health. They have been found to:

- improve the survival rate of patients after operations,¹⁸
- ameliorate pain,¹⁹
- raise levels of pleasure inducing hormones in the brain,²⁰
- improve mental acuity,²¹
- reduce depression,^{22, 23}
- boost immune system function,^{24, 25}
- reduce the time it takes wounds to heal,²⁶
- reduce the frequency and length of hospital stays,^{27, 28}
- increase marital happiness in men,²⁹
- reduce alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking,^{30, 31}
- reduce the incidence of cancer and heart disease,³²
- improve the health of older adults,^{33, 34} and
- add years to the average life span.^{35, 36}

What phenomenon is at work here? Science can confidently correlate a vibrant spiritual life with all kinds of healing effects. Science can study individuals like Olga Worrall, Ostad Parvarandeh and the many others you will be meeting in the pages of this book. Science can identify and measure magnetic, electrical, and other subtle energy fields which are being affected by sacred healing. Science can catalog the many vehicles by which sacred healing takes place, from visits to shrines like Lourdes, to prayer, to acupuncture, to massage. What science has a great deal more trouble with is

putting them all into a unifying big picture, and explaining where the epigenetic control comes from that produces these miraculous cures. That's where the concept of soul healing comes in.

What will the trajectory of our developing knowledge of soul medicine look like?

Imagine a circle of Neolithic men huddled around a fire pit. In the center, there is a pile of kindling and logs, ready to burn. One man, dressed in skins and feathers, with a bone necklace and skin pouches hung around his neck, has special knowledge: the fire starter. With a primitive bow, he rapidly rotates a hard stick against a piece of soft wood. Both are carefully positioned against a ball of dry moss. After much rubbing, the hardwood shaft produces a tiny spark. The fire starter wraps the moss around the spark and starts blowing gently through his fingers.

At first, nothing happens. Then a puff of smoke comes from the center of the moss. Then heavy gray smoke starts pouring through the fire starters fingers. A tongue of flame shoots upward, and the fire starter thrusts the burning moss into the center of the kindling. All the men gathered around him gasp, then cheer, as the flames leap upward in the dark night, striving for the stars.

To early humans, the process seemed like magic. Only a few initiates possessed the esoteric knowledge of how to start a fire. It might have seemed like a gift from the gods, a supreme shamanic mystery, an occult ability to summon a spark of the sun to warm the night.

Today, we know the physics of every step of the process. Anyone can be taught to be a fire starter. Today we have maps of the interior, as well as of the coastline.

Our knowledge of soul medicine is still at the stage that mapmaker Diego Gutiérrez was in 1562. We know the rough shape of what the effects look like. We have the effects produced by healers like Olga Worrall and Ostad Parvarandeh to guide us, as well as thousands of accounts of spontaneous remission from patients.

We have instruments capable of measuring the human energy field to tolerances impossible a century ago. But we are still far from understanding the mechanisms that produce these effects. Further research over the course of the next few decades will allow us to map the interior as well, and reduce what seems like an esoteric mystery to a well charted series of procedures. Science, which for so long dismissed the entire realm of soul medicine as superstition or anecdote, is now the engine pushing our understanding of its principles to new levels of precision.

We are entering a new era of healing. Soul medicine, like fire making, is no longer a mystery guarded by shamans. It is being investigated, described, cataloged, and understood by science. The gifts of soul medicine are on their way toward becoming a routine part of medical treatment, just as Dr. Robins was able to treat Michele at his Kaiser Permanente hospital practice, and clear up a long standing medical problem using energy medicine. Dr. Robins is an example of the new kind of physician. While he practices as a conventional urologist in a large urban hospital, he is not afraid to step beyond the boundaries of his discipline when looking for cures for his patients.

Yet though they may become routine, these techniques will never lose their wonder. The mystery endures. Last month, at a men's retreat, the group sat in a circle. The men were drawn from all walks of life; there were cooks, computer technicians, corporate CEOs, mechanics, ministers. We still gasped when one of our number stood up tall, held a ball of flaming moss to the heavens, and made a fire.