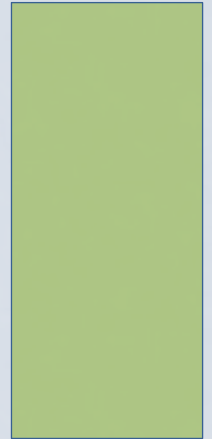




ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE AND CHRISTIANITY

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DEFINITIONS (CPSO/NCCAM)

- **Conventional Medicine:** type of treatment, diagnostic analysis and conceptualization of disease or ailment that is the primary focus of the curricula of university faculties of medicine; aka traditional medicine or science-based medicine
- **Complementary/Alternative Medicine (CAM):** a group of diverse medical practices and products not generally considered part of conventional medicine; aka non-traditional, non-conventional.

TYPES OF CAM (NCCIH)

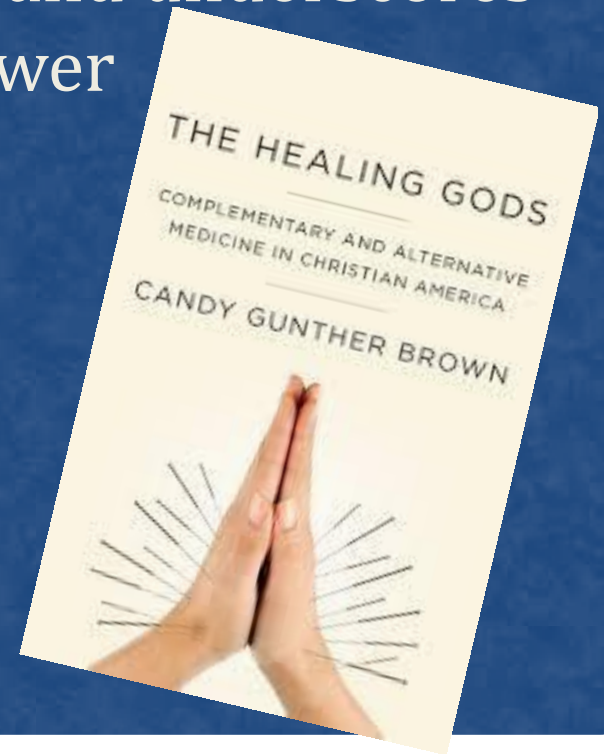
- natural products (e.g., herbs, vitamins, probiotics)
- mind-body practices (e.g., yoga, chiropractic manipulation, therapeutic touch, acupuncture, relaxation techniques, tai chi, prayer)

EVIDENCE

- Cochrane Review
- Problems with CAM research
- Limits of EBM

SPIRITUAL ROOTS?

- metaphysical religion: any religion that deemphasizes personal conceptions of the divine, stresses the correspondence between supernatural and natural realms, and underscores the manipulability of spiritual power
- New-age spirituality
- Non-creedal religions



SPIRITUAL ROOTS?

- “Although interpreted as nonreligious, chiropractic is premised on a vitalistic, harmonial philosophy and fulfills many of the same functions as religion. More than a medical service, chiropractic helps explain life’s struggles, cope with present stressors, and anticipate the future with hope.”

SPIRITUAL ROOTS?

- yoga may include positions, gestures and chants that symbolize Hindu beliefs about achieving oneness with God or universal consciousness
- acupuncture and forms of healing massage and herbalism are based on Taoist ideas about vital forces or spiritual energy
- Reiki symbols and mantras represent Buddhist concepts of universal life energy

REASONS FOR POPULARITY

- Limitations of conventional medicine
 - Disillusionment, ambivalence
 - iatrogenic factors
 - Economic factors
- Consumer/entitlement culture
 - Quick fix
 - Choices not always well informed

REASONS FOR POPULARITY

- Marketing/mainstreaming
 - consumer demand
 - Appeal of natural, holistic approaches
 - better than biomedicine alone
- Spiritual hunger

HEALING GODS

- “Evangelicals who disdain religious combinations as idolatrous worship of other gods domesticate healing practices rooted in and productive of metaphysical religion by linguistically reclassifying these practices from the category of illegitimate “New Age” spirituality to that of scientifically legitimate, effective therapeutics.”

CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

- Education
 - Science-Christianity integration
 - All truth is God's truth?
- Theological misconceptions
 - “Because Christian clergy have often devalued the body...,blamed the sick for their afflictions, or discouraged prayer for miraculous healing, people have sometimes viewed Christianity as irrelevant to daily health needs and looked elsewhere for help.”
- Spiritual hunger

RIGHT HEMISPHERIC NEGLECT

- right hemispheric processes of emotion and intuition are primary but have long been neglected in the Western world
- our fragmented, mechanistic, indeed empty world has arisen from the unchecked action of a dysfunctional left hemisphere
- Scientific findings (primarily left hemispheric) are taken for granted, leading to a neglect of right hemisphere perspective on the world.

IAIN MCGILCHRIST

'A landmark new book ... it tells a story you need to hear, of where we live now'
— Bryan Appleyard, *Sunday Times*



The MASTER and his EMISSARY

The Divided Brain and the
Making of the Western World

CONTEMPORARY EVANGELISM

- Problem of “head/heart” divide
- Desire for more theological/spiritual integration
- Recovery of contemplative practices, spiritual disciplines
- Charismatic movement

- *“Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.”*
(1 Thess 5:21-22)
- *“The Spirit of truth...will guide you into all the truth.”*
(Jn 16:13)

