



International Christian Dance Fellowship

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## *The Meaning of Wholeness: Understanding in Body*

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BY Evelyn Defina

THIS PAPER EXPOSES SOME OF MY THOUGHT PROCESSES AND INSPIRATIONS as part of an ongoing journey towards an understanding of holistic healing. The creation of man and woman in God's image (Gen.1: 27) is used as the instigation for the creation of ideas and techniques within a dance movement therapy framework.

These are then used to facilitate a deeper understanding of the process of holistic healing. The word *holistic* is defined here as embracing all parts of the human being and facilitating communication, interaction and integration. The parts are defined as mind or cognitive processes; heart or emotional states; body or physicality; and spirit. As defined by the American Dance Therapy Association (1999), dance movement therapy is a therapeutic process seeking to further the cognitive, social and physical integration of the individual. It is a holistic approach recognising the complexity of body/mind interaction and which deals with the fragmentation of emotional, cognitive and physical origin through a body movement approach (Duggan, 2001).

Through a facilitated integrative process, God is invited to be present in each of these human dimensions and to reveal Himself in a new and refreshing way. In Genesis man and woman live as full physical beings - mind, heart and body - holy in the eyes of God. They also live purely and wholeheartedly - their total existence for and with God. Such an existence could be established as the ultimate goal of holistic healing (GENESIS 1:26-31; GENESIS 2:21-25).

My journey has been one of parallel paths - my quest towards a unique theory and framework for dance movement therapy has been reflected in me personally. Spinelli and Marshall (2001) state that therapists act as representatives of a particular model or theory, and that therapists embody the beliefs and assumptions of that theory. Evidence clearly suggests that no particular model or theory is superior to another leaving many unanswered questions regarding therapeutic outcome arrival.

It is my view that these unanswered questions are directly related to God and His original purpose for humans, and omitted from secular models for therapy. The journey I have undertaken, and am in fact still pursuing, has brought professional development through the personal embodiment of God's thoughts and ways as He has chosen to reveal.

Part of the explorative journey was presenting a series of workshops conducted at the International Christian Arts Conference in 2000. These workshops were based on research and contemplation - part of my own development as a professional dance therapist, dance educator and as a Christian. I was, and still am interested in God's view of holistic healing. As the Bible is the only approved source of reference for God's thinking, my point of reference needs to be the above-mentioned scripture:

*So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created '»' Him; male and female He created them. (GENESIS 1:27)*

The beginning of human existence up to the fall of man (GENESIS 3) represents a time of perfect existence, where man was able to live in physical communion with God (GENESIS 1:27,28; 2:15). Taking this context as God's original will for man - to live in perfect communion with Him - the following question became the drive towards my individual understanding of holistic healing:

If we have been made in God's image and likeness ..and this being a state of wholeness: Mind Body Emotion Spirit, how does the therapeutic process in dance therapy assist in the integration of Mind Body Emotion Spirit, towards God's image and likeness?

This question in mind prompted other questions:

What does God's Word say about the definition of wholeness, and reaching wholeness through a healing process?

Can we derive a theory and practising model for healing from God's Word?

If so, does the model incorporate mind, body, emotions and spirit, simultaneously and interactively, or does one trigger a response from another in a linear format? Or perhaps there is another way not yet contemplated?

There is obviously a wealth of research and knowledge in the fields of psychology and medicine and through other forms of therapy possibly informing the above questions. Both psychology and medicine are representative fields in science, where all writings are based on empirical research producing evidence, causal links or significant correlations. Many psychological theories have been hypothesised, discussed, and some proven, all of which aim to broaden and deepen our understanding of the human being and, more specifically, human nature. Medical science is also based on sound writings and research towards the physical improvement of the human being. Both fields of science strive to gain knowledge towards the betterment and perfection of the human being. Neither brings God into the equation, seeking to explain the human in human terms and by sound human traditions in research.

Placing God into the scientific equation gives Christian researchers the freedom to explore beyond the human boundaries and acknowledge that God as our Creator has the full answer, the full equation of our creation, and therefore the full knowledge of our path towards healing. In ISAIAH 55:8, God's Word states:

Hoekema (1986) debates the different theories presented over time regarding man's image. He debates theories which attempt to bring a deeper understanding of the human being. One theory is based on trichotomy (human being segmented into body, soul, spirit) and another based on dichotomy (human being segmented into body and soul). Hoekema presents a detailed argument based on an analysis of these words used in the Bible in a number of contexts and from the original Greek and Hebrew. He argues convincingly that the words are often interchangeable, and never presented as separate from each other. He states that the Bible emphasises the wholeness of the person. He comments:

"We may summarise our discussion of the biblical words used to describe the various aspects of man as follows: man must be understood as a unitary being. He has a physical side and a mental or spiritual side, but we must not separate these two. The human person must be understood as an embodied soul or a "besouled" body. He or she must be seen in his or her totality, not as a composite of different "parts". This is the clear teaching of both Old and New Testaments" (p.216).

The sciences of medicine and psychology have demonstrated the insatiable drive in the human being towards knowledge and perfection. Assuming that this drive is part of our God-given nature, then we can safely assume that God intended the human being to question, analyse, discuss and draw conclusions. Furthermore, we can assume that as the human being was created in God's image, God intends this quest for knowledge to demonstrate the goodness of God, the goodness of creation, and contribute towards the betterment of humankind, and not its destruction. However, the implication of the scripture quoted below is that God's agenda for human beings was compromised:

*GENESIS 3:5.- "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

*GENESIS 3:22.- And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil..."*



Looking at God's picture of the perfect relationship with man in GENESIS 2, it appears that the most fruitful process for gaining knowledge is to BE with God. The best way to understand God is to BE with God.

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This understanding is also reflected in the actions of Mary at Jesus' feet (LUKE 10: 38-42):

*As Jesus and His disciples were on their way, He came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to Him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what He said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to Him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

In response to this scripture, I would like to share a part of my journey in being with God. This journey has allowed a process to emerge in words, pictures and improvisations encouraging the integration of mind, heart, body and spirit:

To be with you  
To rest in you  
This is the call of God  
Like Mary at His feet  
Listening  
Waiting  
To be in His Presence  
Gaze in the eyes of Jesus ,  
Nothing else matters  
What else can matter?  
Let Jesus lead the way  
Each moment every day  
Let Jesus lead the way  
Let Jesus take your hand today.  
© *Written with music, 1996*

I experienced an encounter with Jesus - sitting on the floor on my knees, eyes closed and posture straight - I became aware of peace. In this peace I became aware that I was sitting at the feet of Jesus who was sitting on a chair facing me. I saw Him and was aware of His face and eyes, and of His whole body - without seeing any great detail. I was unable to move or take my eyes off Him - particularly His eyes. After some time in this posture I became aware of another presence - it emerged as another person. This person was moving up and down with an edge to their movement - seemingly tense and busy. This became an intrusion and distracted me from Jesus.

I BROKE EYE CONTACT  
To see who it was -  
It was me.

The picture of Mary and Martha became real to me at that moment. Only I distract myself from Jesus. To see and experience this moment brought a sadness of how I compromise my relationship with Jesus.

I forced my eyes back on Jesus and after some time Jesus stretched out His hand. I took it and as I did He stood up and swept me away into a "Fred and Ginger" dance. Quite exhilarated I realised that Jesus led with strength.

While waiting at His feet, there were moments when I wanted to move, or do something - each time, Jesus said - "not yet". When He stretched out His hand, He said - "now is the time". (Journal log, 1996)

In GENESIS 1 and 2 it is made clear that God and Jesus wanted the companionship of man in Eden - made in His image and likeness, created to be, to enjoy, to rest and play, to reflect and to grow in knowledge and good achievements.

Likewise Mary wanted Jesus' companionship and Jesus stated that Mary had chosen the better way. The sisters, Mary and Martha offer in this passage the extremities of the same pole. Both love Jesus and place Him as their true God, yet their expression of this love is very different:

Seeking to do for God

OR

Seeking to be with God

Seeking knowledge about God

and knowledge will emerge.

Martha was keen to serve and learn about God in a peripheral manner. Mary chose to gain knowledge by just being in Jesus' presence. One is striving, the other is gleaning. One is pressed, the other is assured.

Our whole being manifests and embodies our mindset for how we approach daily life, goals for life, and our range of relationships. Our mindset will determine how we approach a given day, a given situation and a given relationship.

This passage suggests that a mindset established in a personal relationship with Jesus and an "eyes for Jesus" focused mindset will change the way we see our life. Martha saw the jobs at hand and asked Jesus for assistance; Mary knew about the jobs at hand but chose to focus on what was important for her at that moment through the eyes of Jesus. Looking through a Jesus frame allows a holistic view of life with a sense of assurance and peace. Looking through a self frame brings a fragmented view of life contaminated with anxiety.

The following word frames emerged in this analysis focusing on the whole human being:

MATTHEW 6:22: *The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light,*

## Wholeness

### *Mind*

Peace  
Centred "''"  
Calm  
Jesus absorbed  
Clarity

### *Body*

Not tired  
Energy  
Good posture  
Open  
Mobile  
Creative

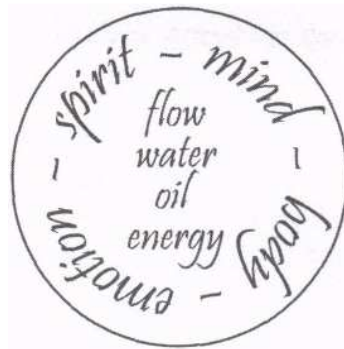
### *Emotion*

Peace Content  
Satisfied  
Giving and Receiving  
Flow of life  
No blockages

Jesus Listening to Jesus  
Close to Jesus  
Awareness  
Freedom in the Holy Spirit

JOHN 4:13-14: *Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*

The following is a word improvisation which can be used in a guided dance/movement process. From a therapeutic perspective, Christ-centred therapy seeks to heighten a person's sense of self-worth and esteem through the witness of Jesus as the perfect image bearer. A person becoming more secure in their own sense of identity and able to establish healthier boundaries and relational processes gives witness to the process of personal integration. Choosing an approach to life which focuses on being instead of an approach focused on doing, or in creative terms - process rather than product - allows a person to grow through self-awareness, learning, applying and reflecting in the reflection of the Christ mirror -and not the dance studio mirror. Taking this perspective, what follows below reflects this process:



***Connecting***

Image                      Likeness  
To Be                        Reflect

***Being***

Eye contact eyes of Mirror  
Face to face              Reflect  
Side by side              Flow  
                                    Complement  
                                    Content

***Resting***

Rest  
Conserve energy  
Refresh  
Rejuvenate  
Drink

***Reflecting***

Mirror                      When whole, the reflection is whole  
                                    When shattered, the reflection is fragmented

***Disconnected***

Shatter                      Bound  
                                    Dry  
                                    No energy  
                                    Broken  
                                    Dead ends, other directions  
                                    Puzzled

Shattered

Pathology/Symptomatology

Drought

Broken

Many directions (no direction)

Edges, rigid

### ***Mind***

Cluttered

Negative self talk

Brooding

Self absorbed

Conflict

Battle

### ***Body***

Muscle spasms/tightness/restrictions

Immobility

Dysfunctional posture

Tiredness Body

habits/motifs

### ***Emotions***

Depression

Anxiety

::, Unhappiness

Discontent

Dissatisfied

Unmotivated

Angry

### ***Spirit***

Unaware

Blind

No direction

Fed elsewhere besides Jesus

Listening to self

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## Psalmic Meditations For Healing

Schroeder (2000) states that as we struggle with our bodies, we must all focus on our centre - Jesus Christ. Through Jesus we have an incarnational faith - a faith that affirms our bodies and confirms God's intentional design. Schroeder states, "We are our bodies, and if God can honour the body enough to be revealed through flesh, we need to take the body seriously." (p. 12);

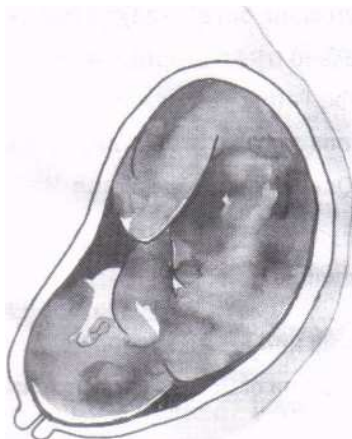
To close, the following psalms focus on bringing a person closer towards wholeness through the integration of mind, body, emotion and spirit. I encourage you to read and meditate on these in each of these dimensions and allow Jesus to be present as your witness to your personal process.

Psalm 22	Deep need
Psalm 23	Stillness, Refreshing, Coolness
Psalm 27	Dwelling in the Lord
Psalm 31	Time
Psalm 51	Repentance
Psalm 63	Praise
Psalm 69	Total Helplessness
Psalm 139	Identity in God

And in conclusion, I will quote Celeste Schroeder (1995):

"God shows womb-love, a love that is embedded in the body, earthly and divine, the love of a mother and the love of a father. Womb-love is a love that no force can break or alter; likened to the natural bond of a child in the womb, it is a strong love rooted in the body, soul, heart and mind. It is mercy and compassion linked to the most intimate of experiences: hearing a child within the womb... The incarnation of Jesus Christ is the culmination of bodily love, revealed in Yahweh of the Old Testament. Jesus continues to love with the nurturing images of the birthmother/ birthfather." p. 11-12 Inspire Journal Vol 1

Wholeness in ourselves through, with and in God can be represented with the following :



Total surrender	Totality represented in the womb
Total vulnerability	Waters - living spirit of God Cord -
Total dependence	Bonded to God; lifeline to God Totality
Total receiving	represented out of the womb Breath of
Total surrender to mother/father	life from God
Total vulnerability to mother/father	
Total dependence on mother/father	Responsibility given by God
Total receiving from mother/father	Strength and gifts from God All
	our needs met by God Total
	giving from God

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## Author's Notes



**EVELYN DEFINA BA(Hons) Psy, DipCA (Dance), MA(Perf Stud)**

As a dancer and choreographer Evelyn has an extensive background, including having been the director of a Christian dance company for seven years, performing and conducting dance ministry across the country. She is the Head of the Dance Department of Wesley Institute, and currently a co-director and member of a collaborative arts company. As a psychologist and dance movement therapist, Evelyn has worked both in health organisations and in private practice for 20 years. Combining her knowledge in both psychology and dance, she has designed the only Christian Dance Therapy course in the world at Wesley Institute, which now has another campus in Canada.

## About the Artist



LORETTA WALDRON has had a love for art since her early teens. She predominately works in watercolour, but also enjoys pastels, pen & ink and acrylic. Her desire is to try and capture a glimpse of the beauty and the heart of the Father through her art. She has had a number of commissions and her works are held in private collections throughout Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

Loretta also has a passion for music and has spent a number of years studying singing, which she also teaches part-time. She has a heart for worship and her vision and desire is to see these two loves blended together into a tool for the Kingdom of God. Loretta currently resides in Roma, Queensland.