

According to Merkle, many experts say that although such “energy” techniques are known by different names, they have the same root: “The root is in Kundalini yoga and the raising of the ‘serpent power’ up the spine, opening the chakras and giving people magical occult powers. She says New Age “energy techniques” and “healing modalities,” as they are called, are forms of this magic. The problem with Reiki and healing touch is that it is based on beliefs peculiar to various forms of Hinduism and Buddhism which “posit the existence of a life energy (ki and kundalini) and interpret that energy as spiritual,” which is not a Christian belief. Christians believe that man is a union of body and soul, and that the soul is an essential form of the body—not an energy force. “From a spiritual perspective, we believe the soul is the life-principle of the body, not something else,” wrote the editors at Catholic Answers. “Consequently, there is no spiritual ‘life energy’ animating the body. Any energy used as part of the body’s operations—such as the electricity in our nervous system—is material in nature, not spiritual....Since this (belief) is contrary to Christian theology, it is inappropriate for Christians to participate in activities based on this belief.”

Jesuit Father Mitch Pacwa, an internationally known biblical scholar and popular television (EWTN) and radio host, raises another question about practitioners of those and other healing fads that are being practiced, in some cases, on a church’s property. “Are these people practicing medicine without a license?” he asks. “And if so, who is going to be liable if there’s a malpractice suit?”

Although many practitioners sincerely believe they are helping people, there is no scientific study associated with any of these methods, Father Pacwa says. Even more troubling is the fact that their practitioners disguise them as a form of the Christian laying-on of hands, according to Father Pacwa. The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes the laying on of hands as a “sign” (CCC, No. 699) not a means of channeling “energy.” “Reiki is an attempt to make a ‘technique’ out of praying for the sick,” Father Pacwa said. “Praying for the sick has to be understood as an aspect of God’s grace operative in our lives. It’s not a ‘technique.’ That’s where it becomes ‘magical,’ and Christianity is not about using magic.” \*(excerpted from [www.catholictherapists.com](http://www.catholictherapists.com))

**NOTE:** In March 2009, the U.S. Catholic Bishops formally asked all Catholic hospitals, medical centers and church leaders to not practice Reiki, as it is un-Christian, has no scientific support and instead “operates in the realm of superstition” ([www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)).

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# REIKI

\*Everyone wants to be healed. Anyone who has ever attended a healing Mass can attest to the crowds that flock to the altar of the Lord to receive His healing touch. Unfortunately, there are plenty of imitations available in the so-called “New Age” movement. One of the most popular is Reiki, with a variety of close cousins such as “healing touch,” “therapeutic touch” and “hands of light.” Those alternative therapies are among practices that Catholics are cautioned about in a Vatican document, “Jesus Christ: The Bearer of the Water of Life—A Christian reflection on the ‘New Age,’” issued in 2003 by the Pontifical Council for Culture and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. In their warning, the councils note that in such New Age therapies, “the source of healing is said to be within ourselves, something we reach when we are in touch with our inner energy or cosmic energy.”

According to Moira Noonan, a former Reiki Master and author of a memoir, “Ransomed from Darkness,” that is, indeed, what Reiki teaches. “Reiki is a method of healing through the transmission and activation of a person’s spiritual energy,” she writes. “This therapy looks somewhat like the Christian laying-on of hands, but this is deceptive. The symbolism of Reiki is deeply influenced by Buddhist traditions and invisible spirit guides. These spirit guides are specifically invoked by name to confer their healing powers.”

There is discrepancy in what is said to be the true history of Reiki. For instance, organizations that are involved in selling the concept to the largely Christian West either downplay or deny its association with Buddhism. However, disinterested parties, such as academic centers for religious studies, seem to agree on certain key facts about Reiki: **First**, it was said to be rediscovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by a medical doctor named Mikao Usui. **Second**, Usui rediscovered Reiki during a 21-day retreat devoted to studying Buddhist Tantric texts. Tantric Buddhism involves the use of spells, incantations, complicated rituals and magical powers to achieve

enlightenment. **Third**, Reiki energy supposedly entered Usui during his retreat. From that time on, Usui had healing power, and he initiated others into the secrets of that power through what he called “attunements.” In that procedure, “attunement energies” are channeled into students through Reiki masters, who are guided by the Rei or god-consciousness, and by other Reiki “guides” and other spiritual entities that help the process along.

Healing practices that are based on using energy - channeling to heal have morphed into a variety of techniques known as “healing touch” or “therapeutic touch.” A former new-Ager Moira Noonan attended Barbara Brennan’s institute: “As Brennan herself admits, her ideas are drawn from direct communication with a spirit guide named Heyoan,” Noonan writes in her memoir. “Brennan’s channelings from this entity are regularly published word-for-word by her institute, and offered to the world as expressions of divine wisdom. “This is what I mean when I talk about the role of demons in the practice of Reiki,” Noonan writes. Another former New Age practitioner, Clare Merkle, had similar experiences with energy healers, which caused her to return to the Catholic faith. Merkle is an accomplished author and speaker who has appeared on the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) and various national radio programs. She now devotes her life to warning people about the dangers of the New Age. One so-called energy healing technique is being promoted by a company called Healing Touch International (HTI). HTI was founded in 1993 by two nurses who wanted to bring the influence of New Age “energy channeling” techniques to hospitals, schools and parishes. They teach ways to ‘integrate Healing Touch into church/parish healing ministry.’” But, beneath its Christian veneer, the principles underlying “Healing Touch” are not compatible with Catholicism. If you go to their Web site and look at their recommended resources and books, it’s a mile long of occult texts. They work in teams at hospitals, and come around to your bed and ask, ‘Would you like us to pray over you?’ Of course sick people are going to say yes. Then they start doing their ‘energy’ work.