

Alternative Medicine – Prague 2013

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Abstract

To be able to discern between truth and error in medicine, it is necessary to know what is disease and what is health. According to the Bible, disease is the final result of sin, and health is the normal functioning according to natural laws. Salvation and healing are aspects of the same process of restoration. God is the Creator and maintainer of all life. Health and happiness can only be maintained through obedience to the divine laws, physical and moral. Therefore, every healing method must ideally be in harmony with the biblical worldview and with the natural laws. Truth cannot contradict itself. Many conventional methods of treatment focus only on the symptoms, without correction of wrong habits of lifestyle. They also neglect the emotional and spiritual aspects of the patient. Alternative or complementary healing methods try to amend this lack. However, many alternative methods are based on pantheistic philosophies, putting Jesus, the true physician, aside. Pantheism ascribes the healing power to an intrinsic impersonal energy in nature. Many alternative methods lack scientific basis and work only as placebos. Others use supernatural powers that, according to the Bible, are related to satanic agents. The ideal healing method recognizes God as the source of life and asks for correction of wrong lifestyle habits. True healing includes forgiveness of the sins and reconciliation with God. The healing process can be aided by evidence-based scientific methods and natural agents represented by the NEWSTART* or CELEBRATIONS† acronyms.

Introduction

It happened in the seventies while I was practicing surgery in Germany. Mary (name changed), 29 years old, a good friend of ours and attending the same church, had breast cancer with axillary nodes. Radical mastectomy was indicated at that time. After the intervention radiation and chemotherapy were recommended. Mary and her husband wanted to try other options. So we looked in the medical directory for a renowned cancer specialist and found one in a nearby city. As their friend I accompanied them to the consultation. The doctor had a valid diploma as oncologist hanging on the wall. His recommendations were emphatic: (1) to look for someone with a dowsing rod (*radiesthesia*) to search for disturbing water currents underneath the bedroom and (2) a series of injections of European mistletoe (*Viscum album*). It was clear to us that the Bible condemned the use of "witchstick". So they decided to experiment with vegetarian diet containing lots of raw food. Mary died a year later under great suffering due to generalized metastasis.

According to a survey in the general hospital of St. Gallen, Switzerland, 53% of the cancer patients have tried alternative treatments (herbal teas, mistletoe, therapeutic touch, homeopathy, magnetotherapy, diets and acupuncture). The reasons were, humanly speaking, very plausible: (1) to do everything possible to get healed, (2) to try methods which supposedly have "cured" others, and (3) to avoid toxic side effects.¹

In Germany 60-70% of all inhabitants have tried alternative methods² and a Swiss survey shows that women use alternative methods twice as much as men.³ The number of patients using

* Nutrition, Exercise, Water, Sunshine, Temperance, Air, Rest, Trust in God.

† Choice, Exercise, Liquids, Environment, Belief, Rest, Air, Temperance, Integrity, Optimism, Nutrition, Social support.

homeopathy in France is steadily increasing from 16% in 1982 to 36% in 1994.⁴ The 2007 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) showed that approximately 38 percent of adults in the USA use complementary or alternative medicine.⁵

It is estimated that 70% of the physicians in Germany also use alternative methods besides conventional medicine.⁶ In 1986 one third of all physicians in England used alternative methods and 72% of the physicians sent their patients to non-medical healers. The preferred methods were manipulation (51%), hypnosis (44%), homeopathy (42%), acupuncture (28%), herbs (2%) and faith healing (2%).⁷

Many physicians take a postgraduate specialization in "naturopathy" or "homeopathy" in order to keep their patients who desire a complementary treatment. How can the patient, as a lay person, who fully trusts in the capability of the physician holding a university degree, perhaps even with specialty training, distinguish between valid scientific diagnostic methods and treatments, and pseudoscientific methods? How can a patient distinguish between the deceiving of a beautiful looking electronic device for measuring bioresonance and the validity of a blood multianalyzer sitting side by side in a clean medical practice and operated by professional people?

The situation becomes even more confusing through the fact that more and more health insurance companies recognize alternative methods of healing. Acupuncture is accepted without restrictions by most of the health insurance companies in Switzerland. Then follow homeopathy and other methods. The only still debated question is the amount of cost reimbursement to be given. There are still great variations in this regard but the marketing situation forces the companies to uniformize somehow their conduct.⁸

An increasing number of physicians combine the use of *conventional* methods with alternative methods, which is then called *complementary medicine*.

There is a vast grey zone between the prescription of a healthy diet and Bach flowers, or between classical massage and touch for health, both being considered as "natural" methods. The methods count by hundreds and are constantly increasing in number (see table 1). There is a method for each mind. Some are considered occult and dangerous, and others harmless. It has become quite difficult for a lay person to find the real truth in today's health market. The deeper we get into the jungle of alternative methods, trying to sort out things and to organize them, the more we become entangled. It's like falling into a spider's net.

Before we can evaluate the validity of a healing method, whether conventional or alternative, we need to know what disease is and what would be a rational way to restore health.

What Is Disease?

The logic tells us that in order to treat a disease it is necessary to know its cause, or the mechanism how it developed, that is, the *pathophysiology*. Therefore let's examine some basic questions:

- What is disease? Alteration or malfunctioning of some part of the body. Not working properly according to its physiological laws.
- Where do the physiological laws come from? Who created them? Is there some intelligent mind behind them?

That takes us to 2 basic theories about the origin of man:

1. **Creation.** The biblical world view affirms that in the beginning there was no disease because everything worked perfectly according to the physiological laws (that includes all natural, physical, chemical, biological and moral laws). "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. [...] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he

created him; male and female he created them. [...] God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” (Genesis 1:1, 27, 31)

The belief in God as the creator also implies that the recovery of health requires obeying as good as possible these laws. “And he said, ‘If you will carefully listen to the voice of Jehovah your God, and will do that which is right in His sight, and will give ear to His commandments, and keep all His Laws, I will put none of these diseases upon you, which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am Jehovah who heals you.’” (Exodus 15:26)

In the new earth, when the original state is restored, there will be no more disease, pain or death. “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. [...] And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there will be no more death, nor mourning, nor crying out, nor will there be any more pain; for the first things passed away.” (Revelation 21: 1, 4)

According to the biblical view disease and death are the ultimate result of sin (sin = lawlessness, 1 John 3:4) and the plan of salvation is to restore health and life through Jesus Christ. There is no other gospel. That is why healing and preaching must go together.

2. **Evolution.** According to this ideology the actual beings evolved during millions of years by chance from simple forms. The stronger individuals and better fitted to the environment survived and the weaker ones perished leaving only their fossils. That process implies the existence of death, imperfections, and certainly also malformations and abnormalities due to genetic mutations. This must be a terrible situation!

These two world views (creation and evolution) influence medical concepts and therapeutic approaches in many ways. As there is only one true biblical way of salvation compared to innumerable false religions, in the same manner there is only one biblical system for healing opposite to hundreds of deceitful methods. It is the battle between truth and error, between the biblical religion and *new age*.

Someone may ask, “Is it not possible to repair (restore, treat) the malfunction using natural methods (based upon scientific laws) without having to believe in God?” Yes, this is true and is being practiced in treating many diseases (insulin for treating diabetes; antibiotics to combat infections; surgery for repairing wounds; etc.). However, as we will see later, this is only one part of healing. Jesus said: “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10)

Truth and Error

“In true science there can be nothing contrary to the teaching of the word of God, for both have the same Author. A correct understanding of both will always prove them to be in harmony. Truth, whether in nature or in revelation, is harmonious with itself in all its manifestations.” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, p. 258)

God and Nature

Basically it can be said that every true healing comes from God who created us and can restore us. Healing is an intrinsic part of the plan of salvation.

False methods of healing deny God as the supreme Creator and put the powers of nature in His place. God becomes an impersonal omnipresent energy and nature is often attributed “superior knowledge”. This is the essence of pantheism. Ellen G. White warns about confusing God with nature:

“In dwelling upon the laws of matter and the laws of nature, many lose sight of, if they do not deny, the continual and direct agency of God. They convey the idea that nature acts independently of God, having in and of itself its own limits and its own powers wherewith to work. In their minds there is a marked distinction between the natural and the supernatural. The natural is ascribed to ordinary causes, unconnected with the power of God. Vital power is attributed to matter, and nature is made a deity. It is supposed that matter is placed in certain relations and left to act from fixed laws with which God Himself cannot interfere; that nature is endowed with certain properties and placed subject to laws, and is then left to itself to obey these laws and perform the work originally commanded.

“This is false science; there is nothing in the word of God to sustain it. God does not annul His laws, but He is continually working through them, using them as His instruments. They are not self-working. God is perpetually at work in nature. She is His servant, directed as He pleases. Nature in her work testifies of the intelligent presence and active agency of a being who moves in all His works according to His will. It is not by an original power inherent in nature that year by year the earth yields its bounties and continues its march around the sun. The hand of infinite power is perpetually at work guiding this planet. It is God’s power momentarily exercised that keeps it in position in its rotation.

“The God of heaven is constantly at work. It is by His power that vegetation is caused to flourish, that every leaf appears and every flower blooms. Every drop of rain or flake of snow, every spire of grass, every leaf and flower and shrub, testifies of God. These little things so common around us teach the lesson that nothing is beneath the notice of the infinite God, nothing is too small for His attention.

“The mechanism of the human body cannot be fully understood; it presents mysteries that baffle the most intelligent. It is not as the result of a mechanism, which, once set in motion, continues its work, that the pulse beats and breath follows breath. In God we live and move and have our being. Every breath, every throb of the heart, is a continual evidence of the power of an ever-present God.

“The Lord is constantly employed in upholding and using as His servants the things that He has made. Said Christ: ‘My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.’ John 5:17.

“Men of the greatest intellect cannot understand the mysteries of Jehovah as revealed in nature. Divine inspiration asks many questions which the most profound scholar cannot answer. These questions were not asked that we might answer them, but to call our attention to the deep mysteries of God and to teach us that our wisdom is limited; that in the surroundings of our daily life there are many things beyond the comprehension of finite minds; that the judgment and purposes of God are past finding out. His wisdom is unsearchable.

“Skeptics refuse to believe in God because with their finite minds they cannot comprehend the infinite power by which He reveals Himself to men. But God is to be acknowledged more from what He does not reveal of Himself than from that which is open to our limited comprehension. Both in divine revelation and in nature, God has given to men mysteries to command their faith. This must be so. We may be ever searching, ever inquiring, ever learning, and yet there is an infinity beyond.

“The mighty power that works through all nature and sustains all things is not, as some men of

science represent, merely an all-pervading principle, an actuating energy. God is a spirit; yet He is a personal being, for man was made in His image.” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, p. 259-261)

A Variety of Methods

There is a variety of approaches in medicine. It is not possible to separate them according to black and white. There is dross mixed with gold.

Alternative Medicine is difficult to define because the field is very broad and constantly changing. Basically it includes practices and products that are not generally considered part of conventional medicine. When they are used together with conventional medicine they are referred to as *complementary medicine*.⁹

“*Erfahrungsheilkunde*” - literally “science of healing by experience”. This is a well-settled term in Germany which groups together all those methods of which the healing mechanism is not known, but “it works”. There are many well-established institutes and societies representing each one of the various philosophies. They offer seminars, courses, books and publish their own journals. Popular health journals are filled with articles about all sort of imaginable therapies and cures.

Natural Medicine (Naturopathy) – is by definition the medical doctrine that uses natural methods of healing, mainly physical therapy and diet¹⁰. In many cases it is enough to correct wrong habits of eating, working, resting or thinking, in order to restore health. But when the damage is already more advanced, then, besides of correcting wrong habits of living (which always should be done - and often is neglected!), the aid of surgery or medications may be needed. Natural medicine is not a “substitute” for surgery or needed medications. It is not an “alternative” for so saying. Not everything can be healed by correcting wrong habits alone.

Natural medicine is often considered to be in opposition to conventional medicine which is considered “unnatural”. The confusion begins already at the very base. A consumer service in Germany clearly warns that “not all which is called ‘natural’ is natural in reality, and not all which is ‘natural’ is harmless”.¹¹ Natural medicine can be divided into two main groups:¹²

- *Classic Natural Methods* - hydrotherapy, climatherapy, heliotherapy, thermotherapy, exercise therapy, respiratory therapy, massage, electrotherapy, nutritional therapy. These are in reality part of conventional medicine and have full scientific background.
- *Unconventional Natural Methods* - acupuncture and its variations, bioelectric diagnosis, reflexology, fresh cell therapy, oxygen and ozone therapy, homeopathy, iridology, radiesthesia, etc.

Some believe that “natural” is synonymous to *good, correct, harmless, not using “chemicals” or drugs*. By contrast, they consider that conventional medicine, because it uses “chemical” medications, must be *harmful, incorrect, unnatural* and *bad*. Both beliefs are too generalized and may be true, or partially true in some instances, but also false in others. Another and more serious problem is the mixture of truth and error within some healing methods.

We, as Adventists have the tendency to believe blindly in any treatment that calls itself *natural* because Ellen G. White emphasizes the use of natural remedies. “Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power – these are the true remedies. Every person should have a knowledge of nature’s remedial agencies and how to apply them. It is essential both to understand the principles involved in the treatment of the sick and to have a practical training that will enable one rightly to use this knowledge.” (Ministry of Healing, p. 127)

Notice two things that Ellen White mentions in that paragraph. First, she calls the “true” remedies by name. Not everything offered as “natural” on the healing market is recommended here. Secondly, she emphasizes that “It is essential to understand the principles involved in the treatment.” True remedies work according to understandable physiological mechanisms.

Ellen White continues saying that “It is our duty to study the laws that govern our being, and conform to them. Ignorance in these things is sin. ... To become acquainted with the wonderful human organism, – the bones, muscles, stomach, liver, bowels, heart, and pores of the skin, – and to understand the dependence of one organ upon another for the healthful action of all, is a study in which most mothers take no interest.” (Healthful Living, p. 13)

Now you will be surprised to read the following list of healing methods propagated as “natural” by the Swiss Union of Natural Healing:¹³

NATURAL HEALING METHODS (Swiss Union for Natural Healing)		
Acupuncture	Feldenkrais	Mora therapy
Alexander technique	Foot reflexology	Moxa
Aromatherapy	Gerda Boyesen method	Music therapy
Astrology	Herbs	Numerology
Autogenic training	Homeopathy	Nutrition counseling
Autosuggestion	Hydrotherapy	Polarity
Bach flowers	Hypnosis	Psychozon massage
Baunscheidt	Iridology	Pulse diagnosis
Biorhythm	Kinesiology	Radiesthesia
Bleeding	Kirlian photography	Rebirthing
Breathing techniques	Kneipp therapy	Reiki
Chirolgy	Leech	Reincarnation therapy
Clairvoyance	Life counseling	Rolfing
Colonics	Lymphatic drainage	Shiatsu
Colortherapy	Magnetopathy	Tai Chi
Compresses	Magnetotherapy	Tarot
Crystal therapy	Massage (classic)	Touch for health
Face interpretation	Massage (intuitive)	Vitalogy
Faith healing	Meditation	Yoga
Fasting	Metamorphosis	and many more

Table 1

Looking through this list you may find some scientifically acceptable methods like breathing techniques, fasting, use of herbs, hydrotherapy, Kneipp therapy, classic massage and nutrition counseling, but most of the rest are questionable and in disagreement with the biblical ideology.

Some methods may not be clearly mystical or pantheistic, nor have a physiologically valid explanation. They may not harm nor cure. We need to use sound judgement in the selection of healing methods.

Criteria for Identification

There are hundreds of alternative methods on the market, continuously appearing new ones or modifications of the existing. Each world region and culture has its own preferences. It is therefore impossible to make a complete and infallible list of non-acceptable methods. One way would be to analyze the origin of the method. However, some Christian practitioners say that they only use the method separated from its philosophy. This may not really be possible because usually the philosophy explains the supposed mechanism of action. For example, if you believe that a certain disease is caused by bacteria, you may want to combat these bacteria using antiseptics or antibiotics. If you believe that some disease is caused by the bad will of spirits, you may wish to calm the anger of the spirits with some pertinent method. If you believe that a certain disease is caused by cosmic energies not flowing correctly through the body, you may wish to correct this situation using methods that supposedly can restore the pathways of energy flow. But, if you believe that disease is caused by a wrong lifestyle, you will strive to correct the wrong habits and implement a healthy lifestyle.

Here are some questions that can be of help:

1. Does the effect base on known laws of physiology?
2. Does the philosophy behind agree with the Biblical world view?

The Energy Concept

Another basic concept that appears as a common denominator of many alternative healing methods is the concept of a superior power or some form of an (intelligent) *energy*. In fact, for the Swiss Union of Natural Healing, “to control health means to control the flow of energy.” “Thoughts, feelings and actions influence the energy flow.” Also the “*chakras*” (Hinduism) are considered to be centers of energy transformation, which are in relation with the hormonal organs.¹⁴ Here you have a good example of how oriental pantheistic philosophies mingle with western medical concepts. With some experience you will recognize the pantheistic background.

There are numerous methods that claim to manipulate some kind of unknown energy. It could be the supposed energy flow between *yin* and *yang*, or energies flowing through imaginary *meridians*, or crystals that impart energy to sick organs, injections into old scars to unblock the energy flow, or any other means to foster the energy flow from the universe (*macro cosmos*) to the body (*micro cosmos*). The fantasy knows no limits!

The lack of consideration given in the past to emotional factors and spiritual needs of the patients is now being amended by using other healing methods that claim to be holistic and to act upon the *regulating forces* of man. Instead of looking towards Christ as the true healer for body and soul, many healers believe in “natural” or cosmic energies. Do you need examples? Yoga, crystal therapy, Bach flowers, Reiki, etc. They all are supposed to act upon the character and spiritual dimensions of man.

Christians should know that “The mighty power that works through all nature and sustains all things is not, as some men of science claim, merely an all-pervading principle, an actuating energy. God is a spirit; yet He is a personal being, for man was made in His image. As a personal being, God has revealed Himself in His Son.” (Education, p. 131-132)

“Today there are coming into educational institutions and into the churches everywhere spiritualistic teachings that undermine faith in God and in His word. The theory that God is an essence pervading all nature is received by many who profess to believe the Scriptures; but, however beautifully clothed, this theory is a most dangerous deception....

“If God is an essence pervading all nature, then He dwells in all men; and in order to attain holiness, man has only to develop the power within him.

“These theories, followed to their logical conclusion, sweep away the whole Christian economy. They do away with the necessity for the atonement and make man his own savior.” (Ministry of Healing, p. 428, 429)

“The apostles of nearly all forms of spiritism claim to have the power to cure the diseased. They attribute their power to electricity, magnetism, the so-called ‘sympathetic remedies’, or to latent forces within the mind of man. And there are not a few, even in this Christian age, who go to these healers, instead of trusting in the power of the living God and the skill of well-qualified Christian physicians.” (Evangelism, p. 606)

“These Satanic agents claim to cure disease. They attribute their power to electricity, magnetism, or the so-called ‘sympathetic remedies’, while in truth they are but channels for Satan's electric currents.” (Evangelism, p. 609)

It must be mentioned that technology also entered into the mystical healing world. There are all sorts of computerized devices that claim to detect, interpret, and repair wrong currents or cellular oscillations. Some methods even claim to be able to predict the risk for developing diseases or cancer in the future. May I ask, “Who is *not* at risk with our modern lifestyle?”



Some methods are visibly mystical. Others look like being scientific and use some pseudo-scientific vocabulary. Words like “vital”, “energetic”, “dynamic”, “bio”, “regulation”, and similar are usual. Since the importance of the immune system became part of common knowledge, it is frequent to read that a certain method or a medication “aids” or “strengthens” the immune system. And who can disprove it?

We should also be cautious with the following situations:

1. Therapies which claim to manipulate “unknown energy”.
2. Alternative therapists, who seem to utilize psychic knowledge and/or power.
3. Practitioner who has a therapy with which no one else is familiar.
4. Omnipotent cures.
5. Explanations that don't make sense.
6. Casuistics based on all success-testimonials.
7. Therapies which rely heavily on altered states of consciousness.
8. Therapists who claim to be on pure Christian ground but use strange “ceremonies”.

The Christian physician considers disease as the ultimate result of sin (Romans 5:12 and 6:23), not as an imbalance of cosmic energy, and directs his patients to Christ as the only true savior and healer. Then he asks for obedience to God's laws: physical laws (healthy lifestyle), and moral laws (10 commandments). The Christian physician also believes in the existence of *supernatural powers* – Christ versus Satan – and prays for divine help in this invisible battle between good and evil. “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world's rulers, of the darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” (Ephesians 6:12).

“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.” (James 5:14, 15)

What Means Holistic Medicine?

Holistic is a term used to suggest that a practitioner treats the “whole person”, with due attention to emotional factors as well as to the person's lifestyle.¹⁵ Europeans affirm that “holistic” treatments (most of the unconventional methods claim to be holistic) act upon the “regulating forces”. How to prove this? The German consumer service links “holistic” to the New Age philosophy aiming at the harmony between man and cosmos (nature). It tries to unite contrasts and promotes a “new conscience” of reality taking all human knowledge to a higher system.¹⁶

We prefer the term “*wholistic*” that refers to the concept of “whole”, which means *entire*, *complete*, and *healthy*. “When Jesus saw him [the invalid] lying, and knowing that he had spent much time, He said to him, ‘Do you desire to be made whole?’” (John 5:6, Modern King James). Or, “Do you want to be healed?” (Revised Standard Version)

The Bible supports fully the concept of wholeness, but it differs from the New Age. The apostle Paul says: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

In the practical application, however, there are great differences in the methods about how to achieve this wholeness, according to the healer's personal world view.

In articles or lectures about *holistic* medicine it is consistently emphasized that the conventional medicine (which is taught at the medical schools) is almost exclusively concerned with the physical aspect of the human being, whereas the *alternative* medicine (sometimes mistakenly called “natural”) takes care of the *whole* person, that means body, mind and soul. These two statements should be examined carefully.

Is it true that the conventional medicine is concerned only with the physical needs of the human being? In many cases, yes. Is it therefore wrong? Should a bandage, a necessary medication or a dental treatment be rejected only because the spiritual aspect is not included?

The fact, that many patients who come to the general medical consultation suffer from problems which have their cause in the mind or are the consequence of a wrong lifestyle, is becoming progressively clear to regular practitioners. Increasing efforts are being made to respond to these needs by referring the patient to a psychotherapist, if needed, or utilizing the services of a chaplain or pastoral care. Fortunately, there is a growing number of physicians who spent more time for considering mental, social and lifestyle aspects in the patient's history. This must be commended. Unfortunately, according to the actual cost of medical care, it is not expected that the additional time spent in such efforts may be remunerated by the medical insurance companies.

Let us examine now the side of the *alternative* methods of healing. Can the ingestion of a homeopathic pill or of an herbal tea, the implantation of acupuncture needles or a reflexology massage be considered as “holistic” without further questions? Where is the spiritual aspect of these treatments? If the practitioner takes time to discuss lifestyle aspects with his patients, this can be commended. But, if the diagnosis of the physical and/or spiritual ailments of the patient is made by analyzing a drop of saliva, using a pendulum, a black box, an electronic detector or by pressure on the sole of the foot, one can only question: Where lies the *wholeness* of these methods?

Dr. Hecht, specialist in classical homeopathy, describes the therapeutic mechanism of the homeopathic medicine in the following way: “Homeopathy is a therapy of the *whole* person. Each person is treated individually in his *wholeness*. By shaking and rubbing (dynamizing), which is the usual way to prepare the homeopathic medication, *forces are liberated* which do not exist in a substance which is only ‘diluted’. The chemical-material substance acts upon the chemical-material part of the human being, his body. *The non-chemical, non-material part acts*

upon the non-material part of the human being, which is his soul, the forces that guide the body, the so-called force of life.”¹⁷

It must be acknowledged that for a non-medical person it is not always easy to distinguish truth from error, especially when the methods are practiced by physicians with valid diplomas. And the number of such is increasing! Even more bewildering is the fact that some health insurance companies recognize mystical treatments as part of their repertoire. Although not all information in the Internet is reliable, there are some recommendable sites that may be of help: Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine www.pcrm.org and also www.wikipedia.org.

But it Works! - How Can Mystical Cures Be Explained?

Many people think that the success, real or apparent, is a proof of the validity of a treatment or method of healing, and consider that the person who practices it is “right”, or has the “truth”. This is a dangerous reasoning. And even beyond, some conclude that all other methods of healing must be, by exclusion, wrong. This reasoning is also dangerous.

Here are some explanations for the success of any treatment, be it conventional or alternative:

1. It is generally accepted that 80% or more of all consultations are related to problems which are originated in wrong habits of life and thinking. At this initial stage, their problems are so-called *functional*. The organic examination and the lab tests can't find anything wrong. This does not mean that the patient is “inventing” symptoms or a disease. No, his problems are real.

Such kinds of troubles usually get better with *any treatment*, be it rest, fasting, garlic capsules, hydrotherapy, medicinal teas, vitamins, massages, etc., or even *without treatment*, just by giving it time.

2. Alternative treatments are often combined with fasting, rest, healthy diet, hydrotherapy and positive thinking, which by themselves strengthen the immune system and therefore promote healing of any disease, even of some malignant tumors.
3. The *placebo effect* is a powerful factor which acts through the thoughts, and could by itself be responsible, or at least be associated, with many cases of cure.
4. *Wrong or false diagnosis*. Specially quacks (because of ignorance), or unscrupulous professionals (for justifying a long treatment, or high fees, or to boost themselves), have a tendency to exaggerate the severity of an illness or to diagnose an illness falsely as being “cancer”. After their treatment the patient is obviously “cured”.
5. *False success*. Mass media often report healings produced by faith healers, which cannot stand the criteria for objective healing. The patient frequently experiences a *subjective* feeling of improvement, which does not last long.
6. Besides of divine miracles there are also not deniable *supernatural healings* produced by practitioners of mystical methods. These healings do not justify the method because God gave clear instructions not to use them (Deuteronomy 18:9-12; 1. Samuel 28:6, 7).

Compare with Matthew 7:21-23 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”

Miraculous Healings

As a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the “latter rain” there will be miraculous healings. Ellen White describes this in the following words: “Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works, with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13.” (The Great Controversy, p. 612)

“God's Word declares that Satan will work miracles. He will make people sick, and then will suddenly remove from them his satanic power. They will then be regarded as healed. These works of apparent healing will bring Seventh-day Adventists to the test.” (Last Day Events, p. 166)

How can it be distinguished if the healing comes from God or from Satan? A careful examination of the method, circumstances, and teachings of the healer will reveal if it is in harmony with biblical principles or not.

Is Alternative Medicine Harmful?

Alternative methods with scientific and Biblical base are perfectly valid and recommendable.

Some of the other alternative treatments are not harmful by themselves and if the disease is not dangerous, than no prejudicial outcome should be expected (except unnecessary expenses). The situation is different when a serious disease is not diagnosed correctly in time or when a life-saving treatment is neglected because of a long alternative treatment. Some alternative healers prevent the patient from seeking medical advice.

There are, however, many methods based on clear pantheistic and spiritualistic philosophies that were strictly prohibited by God. By using such methods deliberately the patient puts himself in a dangerous field. Ellen G. White describes this situation vividly in the following words:

“The mother, watching by the sickbed of her child, exclaims, ‘I can do no more! Is there no physician who has power to restore my child!’ She is told of the wonderful cures performed by some clairvoyant or magnetic healer, and she trusts her dear one to his charge, placing it as verily in the hand of Satan as if he were standing by her side. In many instances the future life of the child is controlled by a satanic power, which it seems impossible to break.

“Those who give themselves up to the sorcery of Satan, may boast of great benefit received, but does this prove their course to be wise or safe? What if life should be prolonged? What if temporal gain should be secured? Will it pay in the end to have disregarded the will of God? All such apparent gain will prove at last an irrecoverable loss.” (Evangelism, p. 606-607)

What Is “True Healing”?

“Healing” means ideally to restore the original state of good health, to bring the body (and mind) to function again according to the physiological laws. According to the biblical world view, disease and death are the ultimate result of sin. “Whoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” (1 John 3:4) The concept of sin is not restricted to violation of moral laws, but includes the natural laws as well. “The laws of nature, being the laws of God, are designed for our good. Obedience to them promotes happiness in this life, and aids in the preparation for the life to come.” (Ministry of Healing, p. 146)

Therefore “healing” and “salvation” become synonymous because the object of salvation is the complete restoration of the original state of perfect health in all its dimensions. Jesus said, “I

have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10) True healing therefore also includes the restoration of our social relations, as well as a broken relation to God (= reconciliation).

“Medical missionary work brings to humanity the gospel of release from suffering. It is the pioneer work of the gospel. It is the gospel practiced, the compassion of Christ revealed. Of this work there is great need, and the world is open for it.” (Medical Ministry, p. 239)

It is interesting to observe that practically all religions, Christian as well as non-Christian, include some kind of healing methods in their rituals. Even non-believers believe in some kind of a supernatural source of power or energy. According to this belief, health may be restored by correcting “blockades” of the energy flow within the individual itself, or between the cosmic energy and the individual. Mystical philosophies often ascribe such supernatural powers to their *gods*. We have seen that the concept of an undetermined *energy* is a basic component in many alternative healing methods.

Rational Healing Methods – A concept of a Christian Medical Practice

Mystical methods of healing presuppose mystical origin of the diseases. There are enough theories blaming the unlucky position of stars, bad spells, disturbances in the energy flow through meridians or chakras, or the wrath of gods as causes of disease. The mechanism for origin and for treatment must fit into the same philosophical system. Mystical treatments correspond with mystical causes.

Ellen White describes in concise words a rational approach to treatment: “Disease is an effort of nature to free the system from conditions that result from a violation of the laws of health. In case of sickness, the cause should be ascertained. Unhealthful conditions should be changed, wrong habits corrected. Then nature is to be assisted in her effort to expel impurities and to re-establish right conditions in the system.” (Ministry of Healing, p. 127) Such approach must meet the following criteria:

1. It must be based upon known scientific (= natural) laws.
2. For the Christian, it must be in harmony with biblical principles.
3. It must be ethically acceptable. (For the Christian this principle is included in number 2).

God has given abundant and clear instructions on prevention and treatment of diseases in the Bible and through Ellen G. White. He advised in the establishment of sanitariums and schools of medicine. The principles on which such institutions are based include the following:

- Christ is the true physician. (Ministry of Healing, p. 111)
- Prayer for the sick. (Id., p. 225-233)
- Use of rational methods of diagnosis and treatment. (Id., p. 232)
- Abandon sin and wrong habits of life. (Id., p. 128-131, 227-229)
- Teach a healthy lifestyle. (Id., p. 125, 126)
- Physicians well prepared scientifically. (Medical Ministry, p. 57, 69, 75)
- Medications – minimum possible. (Selected Messages, vol. 2, p. 281-284, 286-291)
- X-Rays are acceptable. (Id., p. 303)
- Blood transfusion is acceptable. (Id., p. 303)
- Surgeons are guided by God. (Medical Ministry, p. 34, 35; Selected Messages, vol. 2, p. 284, 285)

The principles of a healthy lifestyle can be summarized in the following equivalent acronyms (there are also corresponding acronyms in many other languages):

CELEBRATIONS = Choice, Exercise, Liquids, Environment, Belief, Rest, Air, Temperance, Integrity, Optimism, Nutrition, Social Support.

NEWSTART PLUS = Nutrition, Exercise, Water, Sunshine, Temperance, Air, Rest, Trust in God, Priorities, optimistic Life, Uprightness, Social Support.

Conclusion

In God's plan of salvation, religion and medicine are intimately linked together. They are two sides of the same coin. There is no separation. In fact, most if not all religions include components of healing. A great number of people are indifferent to these matters; some others are extreme or fanatic. God calls for reformation:

“The Lord gave me special light in regard to the establishment of a health reform institution, where treatment of the sick could be carried on altogether different lines from those existing in any institution in our world. It must be founded and conducted on Bible principles, and be the Lord's instrumentality, not to cure with drugs, but to use Nature's remedies. Those who have any connection with this institution must be educated in health restoring principles.” (Letter 205, of Ellen White to Dr. J. H. Kellogg, December 19, 1899.)

Our healing system shall not follow any of the existing models in the world. We don't call ourselves allopaths, homeopaths, or naturopaths. The expression “nature's remedies” refers to the true natural agents – nutrition, exercise, water, sunshine, temperance, air, rest, and trust in God – with the exclusion of all mystical agents even if they falsely use the label of being “natural”. The term that most closely describes such method is “*Lifestyle Medicine*”.

We should be aware of the fact that the spiritual needs of humankind can be satisfied neither by scientific medicine nor by *alternative* methods of healing. Only the Holy Bible can answer the crucial questions of life. True healing for body, mind and soul can be found only in Jesus Christ. **“Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”** (Acts 4:12).

What the world needs today are physicians with good scientific training and Christian conviction, who take time for their patients and teach them to follow a healthy lifestyle and to trust in Jesus Christ as their only savior!

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Appendix 1

POSITION STATEMENT OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE HEALTH DEPARTMENT IN REGARD TO QUESTIONABLE ALTERNATIVE HEALTH PRACTICES

(Voted at Silver Spring, April 4, 1996)

Scientific progress offers good perspectives in health care. At the same time there is a growing number of approaches using evolutionary, and spiritualistic philosophies.

For this reason and with the desire to assist and orient the church, the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Health and Temperance Department World Advisory agrees with the following convictions:

1. Human beings were created in the image of God. Man is a whole, indivisible unit, so the suffering of every part will affect all the other areas.
2. The basis of diagnostic and therapeutic systems used in the prevention and treatment of diseases is established on human physiology, Bible, and inspiration.

Adventists promote the teachings of living in holiness, including the use of natural resources that Ellen White calls "true remedies" in maintaining and recovering health.

3. We believe that the Lord has given to man the resources and mental power to increase knowledge in the area of biology, physiology, and the mechanisms of disease causation. For this reason we believe that the development of scientific medicine be incorporated in the medical missionary work as far as it does not contradict the principles of revelation.
4. In reference to healing procedures of uncertain ideologies and multiple origins, known as alternative health practices, we should be very cautious.

In view of the great number and variety of existing alternative health practices, and considering that there are constantly appearing new methods on that market, we

RECOMMEND that the Adventists neither practise, nor use, nor promote any kind of procedures

- the philosophic and ideologic bases of which are in opposition to the principles of Christian revelation, and
- which are not consistent with known scientific laws.

We also

RECOMMEND that continuing study be given to these matters and the church be informed about new criteria and recommendations.

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“Adventist health care and ministries are to promote only those practices based upon the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy, or evidencebased methods of disease prevention, treatment, and health maintenance. ‘Evidence-based’ means there is an accepted body of peer reviewed, statistically significant evidence that raises probability of effectiveness to a scientifically convincing level. Practices without a firm evidence-base and not based on the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy, including though not limited to aromatherapy, cranial sacral therapy, homeopathy, hypnotherapy, iridology, magnets, methods aligning forces of energy, pendulum diagnostics, untested herbal remedies, reflexology, repetitive colonic irrigation, ‘therapeutic touch,’ and urine therapy, should be discouraged.”

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