

# Bringing Seventh-day Adventists

★ TO THE ★

# TEST

Spiritual  
Dangers in  
Health  
Care

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# 1

## *End-Time Methods of Healing*

**I**N a letter dated September 16, 1892, the servant of the Lord, Ellen G. White, penned some counsel from God which has special significance for those living in this last period of time:

“Perilous times are before us. The whole world will be involved in perplexity and distress, disease of every kind will be upon the human family, and such ignorance as now prevails concerning the laws of health would result in great suffering and the loss of many lives that might be saved. . . .

“As religious aggression subverts the liberties of our nation, those who would stand for freedom of conscience will be placed in unfavorable positions. For their own sake, they should, while they have opportunity, become intelligent in regard to disease, its causes, prevention, and cure. And those who do this will find a field of labor anywhere. There will be suffering ones, plenty of them, who will need help, not only among those of our own faith, but largely among those who know not the truth.” *Counsels on Health*, 504, 506.

These words were written in the context of the importance of training nurses and physicians. In reality, though, these instructions from the Lord are directed to every follower of Christ. At baptism, each one of us was set apart to be educated in, and to do, Christ’s medical missionary work:

“The Lord wants every one of us to educate himself for God. At baptism, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost we were set apart to engage in the very work that Christ came to the world to do. What was He?—In the highest sense He was a missionary, and He was a healing missionary.” *Review and*

*Herald*, January 7, 1902.

All true believers are to be involved in meeting the physical needs of those around them:

“The Saviour lived on this earth a life that love for God will constrain every true believer in Christ to live. Following His example, in our medical missionary work we shall reveal to the world that we are His representatives, and that our credentials are from above.” *Ibid.*, June 16, 1904.

The true interpretation of the gospel is to work the way Christ worked:

“The union of Christlike work for the body and Christlike work for the soul is the true interpretation of the gospel.” *My Life Today*, 224.

We are each to combine ministry to the soul with ministry for the body:

“In one hand they are to carry the gospel for the relief of sin-burdened souls, and in the other hand they are to carry remedies for the relief of physical suffering. Thus they will be true medical missionaries for God.” *Medical Ministry*, 328.

### **False Healing as a Test**

In 1904 God led the prophetess to warn His people that in finishing the work that Christ began on earth—the healing ministry—they would encounter false methodology that would severely test them. It was predicted that many will depart from the truth because of disagreements over how best to meet the needs of those who are ill:

“Wonderful scenes, with which Satan will be closely connected, will soon take place. 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*. Many who have had great light will fail to walk in the light, because they have not become one with Christ.” *Selected Messages*, book 2, 53. (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

## Agents of Satan

We are told that Satan's crowning act of deception will be to personate Christ and His healing miracles. See *The Great Controversy*, 624. However, in 1862 God had explained that this deceptive work would be instigated by the evil angels and would thus, undoubtedly, precede Satan's personation of Christ. We are warned that Satan's evil angels will "assume new ground" with the intent to take us off guard:

"If our eyes could be opened to discern the fallen angels at work with those who feel at ease and consider themselves safe, we would not feel so secure. Evil angels are upon our track every moment. We expect a readiness on the part of bad men to act as Satan suggests; but while our minds are unguarded against his invisible agents, they assume new ground and work marvels and miracles in our sight. Are we prepared to resist them by the Word of God, the only weapon we can use successfully?"

"Some will be tempted to receive these wonders as from God. The sick will be healed before us. Miracles will be performed in our sight. Are we prepared for the trial which awaits us when the lying wonders of Satan shall be more fully exhibited? Will not many souls be ensnared and taken?" *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 302.

Satan and his evil angels will work through human agents who will claim to miraculously cure disease. Their claims will appear as true miracles, but they will work by first causing the disease through satanic power and then removing it by the same power:

"Men under the influence of evil spirits will work miracles. They will make people sick by casting their spell upon them, and will then remove the spell, leading others to say that those who were sick have been miraculously healed." *Selected Messages*, book 2, 53.

Not all "healing" agents of Satan will present their work as miraculous or supernatural. Many false cures will be presented with scientific-sounding explanations. Many false methods of healing will be presented with claims that they are based upon the laws of the Creator, when, in reality,

## 2

# “Miracles” Masquerading as Science

**T**HERE are a number of health care methodologies that have been practiced for quite some time that have, at least in part, not been shown to be based upon, nor to work in harmony with, natural law. Although they are frequently presented in a scientific-like setting, and those utilizing them give scientific-sounding explanations for how the remedies work, still a number of these methodologies have not been shown to be explainable by the basic sciences of anatomy, physiology, physics, chemistry, biochemistry, pathology, and so forth. Thus, these remedies are very possibly operating on the basis of mind-cure (“innate” powers of the mind), which is a form of self-hypnosis, or they operate on the basis of regular hypnosis and/or Satan’s electric currents. Apparently not operating on the basis of natural laws, the results of these and other similar methodologies qualify as “miracles”—the working of supernatural powers.

### **Biofeedback**

Biofeedback is based on the concept that we can learn to modify or control bodily responses which normally function automatically without even our awareness. These include such functions as the heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension, temperature control of extremities, bowel activity, brain wave activity, and many others. It is presented as a generally harmless way of controlling or curing a wide variety of health problems such as menstrual cramps, spastic bowel syndrome, tension and migraine headaches, blood pressure and circulation problems, epilepsy, and so on. It is claimed to consist of learning to trust one’s own internal control, and is portrayed as helping to fulfill the

desirable goal of taking responsibility for one’s own health.

Electronic monitoring equipment is used to show the patients some of their bodily functions. They are instructed to attempt to regulate their ongoing body activities that they see portrayed on the monitor screen and/or hear over the speakers. Over a period of time, and with coaching from the therapist, some 80 to 90 percent of adults of all ages can learn to modify at least one or more of their normally subconscious, bodily functions. This method is also used with children.

Many feel that biofeedback is generally beneficial, but it is noted that some psychiatric problems can be made worse by it, just as with hypnosis. There are other parallels between biofeedback, hypnosis, transcendental meditation, and yoga. They all are accomplished by relaxation while focusing the mind on repetitive sights, sounds or thoughts.

Buddhist monks and Indian yogas have demonstrated for centuries that a meditative trance can control body functions such as heart rate, pain perception, muscle tension, body temperature and so on. The same is accomplished through biofeedback. With reason, biofeedback is sometimes referred to as electronic Yoga or western Yoga.

Hypnosis also can be used to control involuntary processes not normally subject to conscious control such as pain perception, heart beat, breathing, digestion, and glandular activity.<sup>1</sup>

It is acknowledged that the electronic equipment is merely a teaching aid, and that it becomes unnecessary once the person learns “internal feedback.”<sup>2</sup> The conclusion seems inescapable that biofeedback is a scientifically disguised form of self-hypnosis and/or transcendental meditation based on the devil’s deception that health depends upon utilizing “latent forces within the mind of man.” *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, 701.

## **Homeopathy**

Homeopathy began in the 1800s and is based on the concept that disease should be treated with medications,

veins for want of the vivifying air of heaven. He has done well his part in the work at the office, but still he has needed the electrifying influence of pure air and sunlight out of doors to make his work still more spiritual and enlivening." *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 516–517.

Some feel that these references mean that the breathing of pure air provides beneficial, physical electricity to the body. The invigorating, stimulating effect of increased oxygen and diminished carbon dioxide in the blood of one breathing deeply of pure, outdoor air could be what Sister White meant by "electrifying." There is no reliable evidence that the body needs outside assistance to ionize atoms or molecules, just as there is no clear evidence that the body ever has a shortage of free electrons.

### **Ellen White's Use of Electricity**

It is of interest that Ellen White used direct current electricity in the treatment of certain health problems. Two instances are recorded in which she assisted in the application of DC current from batteries. The first account is recorded in the *Review and Herald*, February 20, 1866. A physician was called in to apply electricity to James White during the early stages of a stroke:

"My husband slept but little, and would not be prevailed upon to rest the next day. He thought his business required his presence at the office. Night found him exhausted. His sleep was broken and unrefreshing, yet we rose in the morning at 5 o'clock to take our usual walk before breakfast. We stepped into Brother Lunt's garden, and while my husband attempted to open an ear of corn I heard a strange noise, and looking up saw his face flushed, and his right arm hanging helpless at his side. His attempt to raise his right arm was ineffectual—the muscles refused to obey the will.

"I helped him into the house, but he could not speak to me until in the house he indistinctly uttered, 'Pray, pray.' We dropped upon our knees and cried to God who had ever been to us a present help in time of trouble. He soon uttered words of praise and gratitude to God, that he could use his arm. His hand was partially restored, but not fully.

We sent for an electric battery, but none of us had experience sufficient to apply electricity in this critical case. A proposition was made to have the owner of the battery called to apply it. The physician came and applied the battery. We were trying to exercise faith in God. We called in a few who had faith, and our earnest petitions ascended to Heaven for help from above. The rich blessing of Heaven came frequently upon us all. Still there seemed to be a drawback to our faith—the physician applying the battery. We prayerfully considered the matter, and when he next came, told him we should no longer need his services. After this we felt no hindrance to our faith.”

In 1903 Ellen White expressed gratefulness for the benefits of the use of a battery in the treatment of sickness. She describes its use in the treatment of lumbago:

“Our electric battery, which has been out of repair, is now in working order; and what relief it brings in sickness! Just as the prunes were ready to pick, Brother James was seized with an attack of what he calls lumbago. He had severe pains in his back, and could neither stand straight, nor bend down far enough to unlace his shoes. Sara gave him electricity, Sister James helping where she could. But Sister James was afraid of the battery, and would not touch the sponges. At first Brother James could hardly endure the application of the electricity, but Sara persevered, and wonderful relief came to him. He now thinks that electricity is a marvelous remedy. After the first application, he was able to walk straighter than he had been able to for days, and he continued to improve. Sara has given him electricity three times a day, and he has been able to keep at his work.” *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 7, 118.

Thus the Lord led, or allowed, Ellen White to use physical electricity in the treatment of disease. The specific cases described are both dealing with problems of the skeletal muscles. The first case consisted of an onset of muscle weakness and/or paralysis due to interruption of the nerve stimulus. The second case dealt with muscle spasm causing disabling pain. It is readily demonstrable that electricity can cause muscles to contract.



Science confirms Sister White's understanding of the effects of electricity, "to arousing the apparently benumbed faculties to vigorous and persevering action." *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, 198.

Also, it is well documented that after muscles contract maximally, such as after electrical stimulation, they tend to relax. This accounts for the relief of the attack of lumbago of Sister White's farm manager by the application of the battery. These examples, however, do not lend support to the use of electricity or magnetism in the treatment of disease unless the stimulus is strong enough to directly cause nerve and/or muscle action.

### **Electricity, Magnetism, and Mysticism**

As we have described in the previous two chapters, there are many methods of health care that purport to diagnose and/or treat disease through the electrical currents of the body or through magnetism. As noted, many of these health care methods have strong associations with mystical religions, and have been vigorously supported by the New Age movement. Many New Agers are quite frank about their rejection of standard anatomy and physiology textbooks. They say that we need an alternative model, one that is based on energy rather than matter. According to them, "We are not primarily physical forms. We are primarily energy—or magnetic or whatever you like—forms around which matter adheres. Our primary nature is not physical."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, illness is not seen by New Agers as a physical problem, but as an imbalance or deficiency of electrical energy. Cure thus focuses on the manipulation of, or the replenishing of, this purported energy to remove its blockages and to balance its flow.

It is true that all matter consists of energy—positively charged nuclei and negatively charged electrons. Science has historically been able to explain the various disease processes on the level of the atoms, molecules, organs, and tissues. The health care methods with their roots in spiritualism say that we need to explain and treat the illnesses of the body on its elemental, electrical level.

## Experience Not Reliable

Some people will say that they have used successfully, or they have observed others use successfully, one or more methods of diagnosis and treatment not yet acknowledged as being in harmony with natural law. They accept their successful personal or observed “experience” as evidence of the truthfulness of their methods. The Spirit of Prophecy states that experience alone is not a safe guide in arriving at truth:

“Experience is said to be the best teacher. Genuine experience is indeed valuable. But habits and customs gird men and women as with iron bands, and these false habits and customs are generally justified by experience, according to the common understanding of the word. Very many have abused precious experience. They have clung to their injurious habits, which are decidedly enfeebling to physical, mental, and moral health, and when you seek to instruct them, they sanction their course by referring to their experience. But *true experience is in harmony with natural law and science*. . . .

“Genuine experience is a variety of experiments entered into carefully, with the mind freed from prejudice and uncontrolled by previously established opinions and habits; marking the results with careful solicitude, anxious to learn, improve, and reform, on every or any habit, *if that habit is not in harmony with physical and moral law*. With some, the idea of others gainsaying that which they have learned by experience seems to them to be folly, and even cruelty itself. But there are more errors received, and firmly retained, under the false idea of experience, than from any other cause; for this reason, that which is generally termed experience is no experience at all, because there has never been a fair trial by actual experiment and thorough investigation, with a knowledge of the principle involved in the action. . . .

“*Genuine experience is in harmony with the unchangeable principles of nature*. Superstition, caused by diseased imagination, is frequently in conflict with science and principle. And yet the unanswerable argument is urged,

'I must be correct, for this is my experience.' ” *Health Reformer*, 78-79.

There are several reasons why personal experience is not a reliable method of determining truth in the health area. One is the placebo effect. It has been shown repeatedly that if one believes in a method of treatment, sixty to seventy percent of the time he will feel benefited by that treatment. Also, if one does not have faith in a given treatment, he will feel that he is worse sixty to seventy percent of the time after receiving that treatment. Another confounding factor is that most illnesses get better regardless of the treatment given. A third confusing factor is that usually more than one treatment is given at a time—such as a change in diet, rest, increased fluids, poultices, herbs, or medication. Thus, without controlled studies it is almost impossible to determine whether or not a given treatment is beneficial, neutral, or counterproductive—for the patient recovers in spite of the treatments. If we are using methods of health care that we know are in harmony with divine revelation and natural law, then we can thank God for the results and not be overly concerned about determining which remedy had which effect. It is too easy to give excess credit to the remedy and not enough to God who has worked through His natural means to bring about the healing.

### **Divine Guidance**

Because of the Spirit of Prophecy, we as Seventh-day Adventists have a tremendous advantage over the world in knowing beneficial and true methods of health care. We are told that after proper instruction in healthful living has been given, “If the sick and suffering will do only as well as they know in regard to living out the principles of health reform perseveringly, then they will in nine cases out of ten recover from their ailments.” *Medical Ministry*, 224. Thus, the true remedies of “pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power” (*Ministry of Healing*, 127), along with perhaps charcoal, poultices, massage, simple manipulation,