

Science and Religion
(Medicine & Religion)
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1. The divine model

"If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you." (Exo 15:26)

"Christ, the great Medical Missionary, is our example.... He healed the sick and preached the gospel. In His service, healing and teaching were linked closely together. Today they are not to be separated." Counsels on Health, 395

"No line is to be drawn between the genuine medical missionary work and the gospel ministry. These two must blend. They are not to stand apart as separate lines of work. They are to be joined in an inseparable union, even as the hand is joined to the body." Medical Ministry, 250

"The Christian physician should regard his work as exalted as that of the ministry. He bears a double responsibility, for in him are combined the qualifications of both physician and gospel minister." Counsels on Health, 550

Satan always prepares counterfeits:

Priest- in polytheistic religions.

Magicians, witch doctors, sorcerers, shamans - had power to heal the sick and to communicate with spiritual world. They were mediums. Prepared magical remedies, drugs, "pharmakeia" (Rev 22:15; Acts 8:11; Gal 5:20).

2. Science develops (finally, as science develops, religion was separated)

Science - is considered to be exact, proven, reproducible. It usually deals with material things that are tangible and can be measured.

Religion - mainly deals with spiritual issues, intangible, or mystical.

Since people tend to believe what they can see and touch, they tend to believe that science is true but religion can not be proven to be true. There are problems on both sides and reality is more than what is visible. You know the power of *virtual reality* on human functions.

Col 1:16 "...for in Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible."

Heb 11:27 "By faith he [Moses] left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

Heb 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

3. Body, mind and soul (WHO - "Health is the physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.")

Since we all agree that health is more than the mere absence of disease, we should also agree that restoring health is more than merely removing a disease. Restoration of total health (wholeness) is the aim of the real gospel: health of body, mind and soul (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

"Over the past several years, it has been suggested that spirituality is another important, yet often neglected, factor in the health of patients." (Levin JS, Larson DB, Puchalski CM. Religion and spirituality in medicine: research and education. JAMA 1997;278:792-3).

Consequently there are attempts to incorporate spirituality in medicine - but not religion. What is the difference (if there is any)?

Religion - encyclopaedia is unclear but religion has to do with God, organized system (forms, creed, rituals), 3 options: pantheism (impersonal universal energy), monotheism, polytheism.

Spiritualism - reality of the nonmaterial, spiritual world -> communication with spirits (spiritism).

Spirituality - searches the meaning of life, suffering, etc. This again depends on the religious world view.

This often causes conflicts between differing religious beliefs and healing philosophies. To harmonize the concepts it's urgent to proclaim the everlasting gospel - to worship the Creator of heaven and earth (Rev 14:6, 7).

"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)

"He who has a knowledge of God and His word through personal experience has a settled faith in the divinity of the Holy Scriptures. He has proved that God's word is truth, and he knows that truth can never contradict itself. He does not test the Bible by men's ideas of science; he brings these ideas to the test of the unerring standard. He knows that in true science there can be nothing contrary to the teaching of the word; since both have the same Author, a correct understanding of both will prove them to be in harmony. Whatever in so-called scientific teaching contradicts the testimony of God's word is mere human guesswork." Ministry of Healing, p. 462)

4. Mind/spirit

We all agree that the body is the physical part of our organism. But when it comes to differentiate between the mind and the soul we may run into problems.

It is accepted that discrimination, judgment, self-control and willpower are mental/moral faculties located in the frontal lobe of the brain (M. Hardinge, A Philosophy of Health, p. 138). These faculties (intangible) are the expression of the functions of the physical brain cells (tangible). With this in mind let's now examine the following quotes from Ellen G. White:

"Intemperance of any kind benumbs the perceptive organs and so weakens the brain-nerve power that eternal things are not appreciated, but placed upon a level with the common. The higher powers of the mind, designed for elevated purposes, are brought into slavery to the baser passions. If our physical habits are not right, our mental and moral powers cannot be strong; for great sympathy exists between the physical and the moral." (Temperance, p. 12)

"The brain nerves which communicate with the entire system are the only medium through which Heaven can communicate to man and affect his inmost life. Whatever disturbs the circulation of the electric currents in the nervous system lessens the strength of the vital powers, and the result is a deadening of the sensibilities of the mind." (Temperance, p. 13)

It is evident that the mental faculties located in the frontal lobe are intimately coupled with the moral qualities of the character that sometimes are associated with the concept of soul and spirituality. However, not every mental process is necessarily spiritual. In medical research on 'spirituality and health' it seems that there is some overlapping between the influence of mental (psychological) factors, e.g. positive thinking, and spiritual (religious) factors. The latter are difficult to individualize and to measure. The separation between mental and spiritual in the following lines is therefore somewhat artificial.

5. Mental/spiritual influence on health

The influence of mental factors upon health has been clearly demonstrated, either in a positive or a negative way. "The relation that exists between the mind and the body is very intimate. When one is affected, the other sympathizes. The condition of the mind affects the health to a far greater degree than many realize. ...In the treatment of the sick the effect of mental influence should not be overlooked. Rightly used, this influence affords one of the most effective agencies for combating disease". (Ministry of Healing, p. 241)

Here is an area where every individual can do something to improve his/her health by cultivating positive thoughts and feelings. This can be achieved by carefully selecting the topics our mind would dwell upon. The apostle Paul recommends: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things" (Philippians 4:8). And Ellen G. White continues by saying that "Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise. It is a positive duty to resist melancholy, discontented thoughts and feelings - as much a duty as it is to pray." (Ministry of Healing, p. 251)

The beneficial effects of positive thinking can be physiologically explained through the release of endorphines and neurotransmitters that boost the immune system. In fact, because of such intricate relations, the new name is psycho-neuro-immune system.

Mental and spiritual factors are both important and work in conjunction.

Spirituality and/or religion may help in several ways:

- a) Through a better lifestyle: exercise, healthy diet, avoiding alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, regularity in sleeping, etc.
- b) Through social support in the religious community.
- c) Through mental attitude. Ellen White states clearly that "many of the diseases from which men suffer are the result of mental depression. Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, distrust, all tend to break down the life forces and to invite decay and death.... Courage, hope, faith, sympathy, love, promote health and prolong life. A contented mind, a cheerful spirit, is health to the body and strength to the soul. 'A merry [rejoicing] heart doeth good like a medicine.'" Proverbs 17:22 (Ministry of Healing, p. 241)
"The consciousness of rightdoing is one of the best medicines for diseased bodies and minds. When the mind is free and happy from a sense of duty well done and the satisfaction of giving happiness to others, the cheering, uplifting influence brings new life to the whole being." (Ministry of Healing, p. 257)
- d) Through supernatural intervention of God

6. Total healing/salvation

The ultimate goal of spiritual help is not only to improve physical or emotional health, to treat mental diseases, but overall to achieve complete healing, freedom from sin, that means salvation of the whole (entire) individual - sometimes called soul in the Bible (Ex. 1:5). In this regard it is important to know that "salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" than the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). Jesus himself said "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)

Spiritual healing cannot be achieved by *merely believing in something, and not only by being connected to any church or religious community*. The problem of guilt, as a result of sin, cannot be resolved by any natural healing method that deals with impersonal energies; neither can such provide forgiveness, hope and love. Only Jesus Christ is the solution for the human needs.

"The Savior's work was not restricted to any time or place. His compassion knew no limit... In every city, every town, every village, through which He passed, He laid His hands upon the afflicted ones and healed them... It was His mission to bring to men complete restoration; He came to give them health and peace and perfection of character." (Ministry of Healing, p. 17, Mark 6:56)

"The love which Christ diffuses through the whole being is a vitalizing power. Every vital part - the brain, the heart, the nerves - it touches with healing. By it the highest energies of the being are aroused to activity. It frees the soul from the guilt and sorrow, the anxiety and care, that crush the life-forces. With it come serenity and composure. It implants in the soul, joy that nothing earthly can destroy - joy in the Holy Spirit - health-giving, life-giving joy." (Ministry of Healing, p. 115)

"Christ, the great Medical Missionary, is our example.... He healed the sick and preached the gospel. In His service, healing and teaching were linked closely together. Today they are not to be separated." (Counsels on Health, 395)

7. Modern health problems and proposed solutions

- a) Main health problems
 - cardiovascular diseases
 - cancer
 - diabetes, hypertension, obesity
 - depression
 - addictions (alcohol, tobacco, drugs, etc.)
- b) Solutions
 - NEWSTART
 - John McDougall
 - Nathan Pritikin
 - Dean Ornish
 - others

The latter programs try to solve the spiritual needs of the patients using yoga.

Falun Gong - "is a Buddhist school of Qi Gong to cultivate body and spirit. It is the way to inner peace and harmony with self and the environment." Over 100'000 practicants worldwide. Based on truthfulness, charity, forbearance. (Wahrhaftigkeit, Barmherzigkeit und Nachsicht) (veracidad, caridad, indulgencia). Exercises bring cosmic energy and help it to flow between yin and yang. Falun Gong claims to be apolitical and non-religious. However, its philosophy and being based on Buddhism puts it into the category of pantheistic religion.

8. Prayer for the sick

Let's examine one example about God's intervention found in the book of Genesis. Abimelech's wife and all women in his house could not conceive because of Abimelech's sin. Infertility is a well described medical problem with different causes and corresponding treatments. "Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife and his slave girls so they could have children again, for the LORD had closed up every womb in Abimelech's household because of Abraham's wife Sarah." (Gen 20:17, 18) In this case, the effect of prayer could be clearly measured, but it was up to God's desire to heal or not. Even more, God promised to protect the Israelites from infertility if they would be willing to obey Him. "He [God] will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the crops of your land... You will be blessed more than any other people; none of your men or women will be childless, nor any of your livestock without young... The LORD will keep you free from every disease." (Deut 7:13-15)

Education is better than miraculous healing

"Some have asked me [Ellen G. White], 'Why should we have sanitariums? Why should we not, like Christ, pray for the sick, that they may be healed miraculously?' I have answered, 'Suppose we were able to do this in all cases; how many would appreciate the healing? Would those who were healed become health reformers, or continue to be health destroyers?'

Jesus Christ is the Great Healer, but He desires that by living in conformity with His laws we may cooperate with Him in the recovery and the maintenance of health. Combined with the work of healing there must be an imparting of knowledge of how to resist temptations. Those who come to our sanitariums should be aroused to a sense of their own responsibility to work in harmony with the God of truth.

We cannot heal. We cannot change the diseased conditions of the body. But it is our part, as medical missionaries, as workers together with God, to use the means that He has provided. Then we should pray that God will bless these agencies. We do believe in a God; we believe in a God who hears and answers prayer. He has said, 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' (Medical Ministry, p. 13)

9. When prayer for healing is presumption

"Many have expected that God would keep them from sickness merely because they have asked Him to do so. But God did not regard their prayers, because their faith was not made perfect by works. God will not work a miracle to keep those from sickness who have no care for themselves, but are continually violating the laws of health and make no efforts to prevent disease. When we do all we can on our part to have health, then may we expect that the blessed results will follow, and we can ask God in faith to bless our efforts for the preservation of health. He will then answer our prayer, if His name can be glorified thereby. But let all understand that they have a work to do. God will not work in a miraculous manner to preserve the health of persons who are taking a sure course to make themselves sick, by their careless inattention to the laws of health." (Medical Ministry, p. 13)

"Those who will gratify their appetite, and then suffer because of their intemperance, and take drugs to relieve them, may be assured that God will not interpose to save health and life which are so recklessly periled. The cause has produced the effect. Many, as their last resort, follow the directions in the word of God, and request the prayers of the elders of the church for their restoration to health. God does not see fit to answer prayers offered in behalf of such, for He knows that if they should be restored to health, they would again sacrifice it upon the altar of unhealthy appetite." (Medical Ministry, p. 14)

The relation between spirituality and health is absolutely evident and measurable. However, there are great differences in the interpretation and application of spirituality in the medical practice. This varies greatly according to each one's world view and religion. The great danger is to look at spirituality/religiosity merely as another tool for treatment of diseases. God is a personal being who cannot be used as a tool. We as Christians should know how to lead our patients to Jesus, how to speak to them about God and the future, and when and how to pray with them.

10. Conclusion

- Spirituality and religion in medicine - yes, absolutely!
- But only based in Jesus Christ, the Creator and true physician!
- All others are only palliative and imitation!
- The SDA Church has the responsibility and mission to preach the entire gospel of healing through its sanitariums!
- A revival and reform are necessary!

E.G. White, Manuscript Releases Vol. 1

MR No. 27 - Counsels Relating to Certain Phases of Our Medical Work

[Release requested by the General Conference Medical Department for these statements which would give guidance in the study of certain phases of our medical work.]

Distinctive Work

"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 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, 1899, p. 1. (To Dr. J. H. Kellogg, December 19, 1899.) {1MR 66}

Not to Be Run Like Other Institutions

"We never proposed to establish Sanitariums to have them run in nearly the same grooves as other institutions. If we do not have a Sanitarium which is, in many things, decidedly contrary to other institutions, we can see nothing gained." Letter 72, 1896, p. 1. (To Brother and Sister Maxson, November 5, 1896.) {1MR 66}

Established to Educate the Public

"The blessings that attend a disuse of tobacco and intoxicating liquor, are to be plainly pointed out. Let the patients be shown the necessity of practicing the principles of health reform, if they would regain their health. Let the sick be shown how to get well by being temperate in eating and by taking regular exercise in the open air." {1MR 66}

"It is that people may become intelligent in regard to these things that sanitariums are to be established. A great work is to be done. Those who are now ignorant are to become wise. By the work of our sanitariums, suffering is to be relieved and health restored. People are to be taught how, by carefulness in eating and drinking, they may keep well. Christ died to save men from ruin. Our sanitariums are to be His helping hand, teaching men and women how to live in such a way as to honor and glorify God. If this work is not done by our sanitariums, a great mistake is made by those conducting them." {1MR 66}

"Abstinence from flesh meat will benefit those who abstain. The diet question is a subject of living interest. Those who do not conduct sanitariums in the right way lose their opportunity to help the very ones who need to make a reform in their manner of living. Our sanitariums are established for a special purpose, to teach people that we do not live to eat, but that we eat to live." {1MR 67}

"In our sanitariums, the truth is to be cherished, not banished or hidden from sight. The light is to shine forth in clear, distinct rays. These institutions are the Lord's facilities for the revival of pure, elevated morality. We do not establish them as a speculative business, but to help men and women to follow right habits of living." Letter 233, 1905, pp. 9, 10. (To Dr. and Mrs. D. H. Kress, August 9, 1905.) {1MR 67}

Spiritual Welfare of Patients

"In training workers to care for the sick, let the minds of the students be impressed with the thought that their highest aim should always be to look after the spiritual welfare of their patients. To this end they should learn to repeat the promises of God's Word, and to offer fervent prayers, daily, while preparing for service. Let them realize that they are always to keep the sweetening, sanctifying influence of the great Medical Missionary before their patients. If those who are suffering can be impressed with the fact that Christ is their sympathizing, compassionate Saviour, they will have rest of mind, which is so essential to recovery of health." Letter 190, 1903, p. 3. (To Elder A. G. Daniells, August 28, 1903.) {1MR 67}

For further reading:

- E.G. White, Ministry of Healing
 - chap. 16 "Prayer for the Sick"
 - chap. 18 "Mind Cure".
- E.G. White, Mind, Character and Personality
 - chap. 2 "The Christian and Psychology"
 - chap. 4 "Spiritual Influences and the Mind"
 - chap. 8 "Religion and the Mind"
 - chap. 42 "Mind and Health"
 - chap. 43 "Mind and Spiritual Health".
- E.G. White, Manuscript Releases Vol. 1, No. 27
- Journal of the American Academy of Family Physicians, January 2001, "Spirituality and Medical Practice..."
www.aafp.org/afp/20010101/81.html