

Chapter 6

Ellen G. White and the Use of Medicine: A Contextual Review

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Ellen G. White, an acknowledged pioneer of the Advent Movement that gave birth to the current Seventh-day Adventist Church, is hailed as a true prophetess of our time. She wrote extensively on various religious subjects such as spirituality, church community and Christian living. But she also wrote much about the human body, as a wonderful gift from God the Creator; its care, use and preservation in spite of the sinful world we live in. As one not trained in the field of medicine, yet highly acclaimed to see visions and receive instructions from God on the subject of human health, she has made many statements that have invited critical analysis, even controversial debates at times. The use of her books as medical “Bibles” has led to uprising of some extremist views especially in the interpretations of her views on Medicine and the use of medical implements/derivatives.

The question that often arises in this regard is: was Mrs. EG White’s instructions on the use of medicine absolutely prohibitive or permissive? In this paper, the author, having looked at the bulk of the publications (and unpublished letters) of Mrs. White on this subject, makes a critical review of the assertions made in light of medical history at the time of her writing and also current available evidence based scientific knowledge. The full library of the EGW center available online was reviewed with specific focus on the topic, for a comprehensive appreciation of the statements made to be true to their

context. Further research was done in context looking at these statements in line with publications by scientists, historians and medical professionals on the topics under consideration. The results and conclusions are discussed.

I. Introduction

Ellen G. White (Mrs. White), a highly acclaimed pioneer of the Advent Movement that gave birth to the current Seventh-day Adventist Church, is hailed as a true prophetess of our time. She wrote extensively on various religious subjects such as spirituality, church community and Christian living. But she also wrote much about the human body, as a wonderful gift from God the Creator, its care, use and preservation in spite of the sinful world we live in. As one not trained in the field of medicine yet acknowledged to see visions and receive instructions from God on the subject of human health, she has made many statements that have invited critical analysis, even controversial debates at times. The use of her books as medical “Bibles” by some, has led to the upsurge of some extremist views especially in the interpretations of her views on Medicine and the use of medical implements/derivatives.

In this paper, the author analyses many of the statements made in regard to health contextually. For this paper, the books, Ministry of Healing (MH), Ministry of Health and Healing (MHH), Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene (CTBH), Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students (CT), Counsels on Health (CH), Counsels to the Church (CCh), Counsels on Diets and Foods (CD), Healthful Living (HL), Medical Ministry (MM), Selected Messages, Book 2 (2SM), and Mind, Character and Personality, vol. 1 & 2 (1MCP, 2MCP) were reviewed as the mainstay of the discussion. Furthermore, review was done on a number of Manuscript Releases, Miscellaneous collections – Loma Linda Messages, and some periodicals. It is noted that in many of her other writings not directly considered here, there are various references to the different topics of health though not relating to the question of medicine as under consideration.

The books selected above were considered to hold the greatest proportion of her writings with materials relevant to the subject and as such comprehensive enough to make reasonable relevant conclusions on the topic.

The conclusion reached is that Mrs. White was emphatic on disease prevention as the best approach to health preservation. This prevention will prioritize knowledge as well as appreciation of the human

anatomy and physiology, coupled with nature study. In the event of disease occurring, one should use knowledgeably and judiciously remedies that will have the least side effects on the patient.

II. State of Health and Medicine in the Late 1800 to Early 1900

To appreciate the writings of Mrs. White on health, one needs to appreciate the environmental and time context of these writings. Historical records show that health practices and general hygiene were very crude in the period that Mrs. White lived. The practice of medicine was just beginning to acknowledge and use evidence based scientific methods. Medical schools and institutions of training for health professionals were unregulated and at times fundamentally profit driven. In her book *Lotinos, Portions, Pills and Magic: Health Care in Early America*, scholar and writer Elaine G. Breslaw paints a very vivid yet bleak picture of the situation back then:

There were no licensing requirements for medical personnel or professional oversight. In the face of declining respectability, physicians, anxious to reestablish their credentials, began to use more extreme depletion methods. Their model was Benjamin Rush, who as a leading physician at the turn of the century proposed using more extreme bleeding and purging. The poorly trained could point to the dramatic effects of their therapies as a form of success.

But not all people accepted this “heroic” medicine. The result was a proliferation of competing health initiatives, a growth of medical sectarians such as homeopaths, hydropaths, new botanical theorists such as Thomsonianism as well as fitness gurus such as Sylvester Graham and John Harvey Kellogg....

The more orthodox among the established physicians came to depend more and more on their extreme heroic depletion methods. The lancet, the glister (enema), and mercury were the major tools. The followers of folk medicine, the midwives, and other non-academic practitioners favored herbal therapies and diet more than depletion (although they never gave up purging their patients), and they grew in popularity among all segments of the population by the end of the eighteenth century.

Diagnostic tools like the stethoscope and thermometer were ignored, and those like X-rays had not yet been invented. The existence of cells, bacteria, or viruses was not known nor were the functions of most organs understood. (Breslaw, 2014, pp. 2-5).

This is a time where records show there was little, if any, understanding of human physiology, anatomy or even the presence of micro-organisms like viruses and bacteria as we know them today. The human body was believed to have various compartments with fluids, of four main types: blood, phlegm, green bile and yellow bile. This was known as humoral medicine, adopted from Ancient Greek and Roman physicians. Disease as such was caused by an imbalance in these fluids (Wikipedia, 2018, s.v. “Humorism”), hence the prescriptions of bleeding if one thought disease was due to the higher proportion of blood; purging through use of emetic solutions or enemas to cause vomit or diarrhea, etc. Many medical theories that rose during that era and have persisted to our time without much influence of scientific findings that are evidence based still hold similar positions. In fact, most main stream medical practices use a few of these remedies in restricted and specific ways guided by evidence base like bleeding to take blood for testing or enema to relieve constipation.

However, there are still other schools of thought that have clung tightly to these and using the remedies of periods before 1700 in much the same way, like Unani, Ayurveda and some so called alternative therapy methods (NCCIH, 2008). The end to humoral medicine, as far as the medical fraternity is concerned, came in 1858, thanks to Rudolf Carl Virchow (1821-1902) and his theory of cellular pathology (Silver, 1987).

Even nursing as practiced then was highly influenced by all these theories. These were highly revolutionized by Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), as exemplified in her School of Nursing at St Thomas Hospital, London, England. These principles were to be emulated in USA for the first time at Bellevue Hospital School of Nursing, New York City, 1873 (Wikipedia, 2018, s.v. “Nursing School”).

Mortality rates were high and many died more from the treatment of so called “doctors”, hence, the uprising of other streams of therapy like homeopathy, that rose in Germany from Samuel Hahnemann, first proposed in 1796 whose mainstay of treatment was highly diluted remedies (Loudon, 2006) and Iridology- the study and treatment based on the iris (eye component) chart established in 1880 (Day, n.d.), though the idea was around since around 1660 (to mention but a few). Furthermore, the opening of trade routes saw an import of other ancient treatments from other communities like Acupuncture from China, Reiki from Japan, Ayurveda from India, Aromatherapy from Egypt, India, among others.

The use of herbs as family recipes has always been a part of the

human race handed over among families within tribes for centuries worldwide, including America. As health challenges mounted due to a combination of many factors, these were the mainstay of community health survival. Each community had their medicine champion of one form or another.

Not only was medical practice and drug use as practiced back then a challenge to general health and survival, the medical practitioners themselves were rare, even in the rather industrialized places like the America in the early 1800. Although the first medical school in America was opened in 1722, this cadre grew very slowly and only the few privileged could gain admittance to such schools which were generally private (National Institutes of Health, 2018). For example, admittance to such schools was only the privilege of the male gender as history records that the first female doctor in America, Elizabeth Blackwell (1821-1910) graduated in 1849 (Wikipedia, 2018, s.v. "Elizabeth Blackwell"). Later, the enrolment of women increased in the nursing schools which were mostly run by Catholic orders and the first national school was only opened in 1884, the School of Nursing at Detroit's Harper Hospital 873 (Wikipedia, 2018, s.v. "Nursing School"). As such professional nurses or doctors were rare in simple farming and working communities where the masses lived. Against the above background, Mrs. White received her first visions on health reform in 1863 (White, 2014, p. 481).

III. The Approach and Viewpoint of Health Portrayed by Mrs. White

From the first recorded vision in Otsego, 1863, through all subsequent instructions given, the premise of concern is the restoration of man to his original image, as when he came from the hands of God. This viewpoint then leads one to pursue preventive medicine and preservation of the health one already has. She says:

In order for children and youth to have health, cheerfulness, vivacity, and well-developed muscles and brains, they should be much in the open air, and have well-regulated employment and amusement. Children and youth who are kept at school and confined to books cannot have sound physical constitutions. The exercise of the brain in study, without corresponding physical exercise, has a tendency to attract the blood to the brain, and the circulation of the blood through the system becomes unbalanced. Ellen Gould White, 1913, p. 83; White, 1991, p. 209).

She is looking at the youth as already having this precious gift of

health, which they can preserve and keep at optimal by following the ancient Biblical practices as given to Adam and Eve in Eden. She is not against children studying or the reading of books but advocates for balance in the use of the brain and the muscles. In so doing, a lot of possible diseases born out of indolence will be avoided. Now we know today that diseases like obesity and diabetes can be traced to inactivity among children. This approach to health of preservation and prevention of disease is seen in her advice on general lifestyle issues like dressing and general temperance:

When the weather will permit, those who are engaged in sedentary occupations, should, if possible, walk out in the open air every day, summer and winter. The clothing should be suitable, and the feet well protected. (White, 1890, p. 100)

It is important that instructions should be given by ministers in regard to living temperately. They should show the relation which eating, working, resting, and dressing sustain to health. (White, 1933, p. 10)

Temperance in all things of this life is to be taught and practiced. Temperance in eating, drinking, sleeping, and dressing is one of the grand principles of the religious life (White 1954, p. 394)

It is within the same essence that she gives advice in diet, drinks and all food items, including how or when these are used as shown in the quotation below. She asserts that they are to be used primarily for nourishment and keeping the body fit. And much care should be taken that food or drinks do not bring disease to the body, or breakdown the existing health. This is very much in line with 1 Cor 10:31 “whether we eat or drink, do this to the glory of God”. God cannot be glorified by a sick body, especially of a self-inflicted nature.

Many make a mistake in drinking cold water with their meals. Taken with meals, water diminishes the flow of the salivary glands; and the colder the water, the greater the injury to the stomach. Ice water or ice lemonade, drunk with meals, will arrest digestion until the system has imparted sufficient warmth to the stomach to enable it to take up its work again.... Eat slowly, and allow the saliva to mingle with the food. The more liquid there is taken into the stomach with the meals, the more difficult it is for the food to digest; for the liquid must first be absorbed. Do not eat

largely of salt; give up bottled pickles; keep fiery spiced food out of your stomach; eat fruit with your meals, and the irritation which calls for so much drink will cease to exist. But if anything is needed to quench thirst, pure water, drunk some little time before or after the meal, is all that nature requires. Never take tea, coffee, beer, wine, or any spirituous liquors. Water is the best liquid possible to cleanse the tissues (The Review and Herald, July 29, 1884)

The advice given in the above is both scientifically and medically correct. But more than that, it helps the reader to understand the perspective of the writer, which is, your body is primarily healthy and can stay so if you do not hurt it, thus your mainstay for health is prevention of disease.

It is in the same line of thinking that Mrs. White addresses the issue of drug use, which is, although one may do all that one can to stay healthy, disease may come. If it does, one should not poison his/her body any further by introducing substances that will do more harm than good. First, one should find out the root of the problem, then use the treatment that does the least damage. This is in line with the position of medicine, *Primum non nocere* - "First do no harm" introduced into American and British medical culture by Worthington Hooker in his 1847/1850 book *Physician and Patient* (Wikipedia, 2018, s.v. "Worthington Hooker"). This mindset is clearly demonstrated in *Counsels on Health*, when she says,

A practice that is laying the foundation of a vast amount of disease and of even more serious evils, is the free use of poisonous drugs. When attacked by disease, many will not take the trouble to search out the cause of their illness. Their chief anxiety is to rid themselves of pain and inconvenience. So they resort to patent nostrums, of whose real properties they know little, or they apply to a physician for some remedy to counteract the result of their misdoing, but with no thought of making a change in their unhealthful habits. If immediate benefit is not realized, another medicine is tried, and then another. Thus, the evil continues. (White, 1923, p. 89)

Moreover, contextually, Mrs. White is not teaching the removal of drug use to create a vacuum and leave people untreated. She recognizes the need for drugs as conditions dictate, but emphasizes the necessity to eliminate that need by removing the cause of disease as

well as education:

Drug medication, as it is generally practiced, is a curse. Educate away from drugs. Use them less and less, and depend more upon hygienic agencies; then nature will respond to God's physicians—pure air, pure water, proper exercise, a clear conscience. Those who persist in the use of tea, coffee, and flesh meats will feel the need of drugs, but many might recover without one grain of medicine if they would obey the laws of health. Drugs need seldom be used. (White, 1923, p. 261)

The principle is, preserve the body in good health by not introducing harmful substances to it. Furthermore, keep it fit with the simple remedies provided by God. Noting the previous section on the times she lived in, she is precise to point out that “drug medication as is generally practiced.” this is a contextual concern which is in line with her mind set and view point. It is not to be seen as general dismissal of drugs for disease treatment. Note, she also says, “drugs need seldom be used” which is not an absolute prohibition, but a precaution. Furthermore, the remedies she is calling for above are not an introduction of other substances in the body, whether herbs or teas, but simple water, air, exercise etc.

In this context, Mrs. White is absolutely correct. Even in our day, the use of teas and coffee, sedentary life, uncontrolled diets lead to diseases that are best treated by simple water, rest and exercise. She would still be right to say the same today that people should stop poisoning their bodies and thus they will seldom need to use drugs.

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. (White, 1932, p. 14)

IV. Other Concerns and Considerations of Note

As noted above, during the lifetime of Mrs. White (1827-1915), the

winds of change were blowing through the ranks of medicine. This is the era of great discovery and advancement in general in the world of medicine. The era is also a time of the opening formal schools like Baltimore College of Dental Surgery in 1840, the World's first dental school, the start of American Public Health movement in 1850, promotion of legalization of the use of cadavers in 1854, the establishment of the first Board of Health in USA (1866), and the creation of the world's first hospital ambulance (1869), as well as establishment of America's first garbage incinerator (National Institutes of Health, 2018).

This is the era that the fraternity begins to zone in on anatomy and physiology, begins to understand truly how the human body is arranged, to appreciate that there are organisms that cause diseases. The era of Louis Pasteur, pioneered the discovery of germs as responsible for spreading disease and completed tests for pasteurized milk (1862), developed anthrax and rabies vaccines (1881-1882). This was the era of other vaccines like the first cholera vaccine (1879), tetanus and diphtheria vaccine (1890). It is also in this period in America that the great wars of slavery, even the American civil war (1861-1865) took place. It was a time of other advancements beyond just drugs but also diagnostics like the use of X-ray in medical imaging which came into being in 1895 and the ECG in 1903. Moreover, there was a breakthrough into trace elements in food pioneered by Frederick Hopkins who came with his theory vitamins in 1906, which opened gates for later discovery of other vitamins and their uses (Wikipedia, 2018, s.v. "Timeline of Medicine and Medical Technology").

Seen in this perspective, one acknowledges that "there is a time and a season" for everything. In His own time God allowed the eyes of the sons and daughters of men to be opened. It is not surprising that He chose to show Mrs. White also other truths unknown to men. When we realize that most of these amazing discoveries were made by people in those fields and actually studying to understand, and that she is right in league and line with them, we must acknowledge that she was inspired and in many cases was way ahead of her time as some of the things she spoke of back then only got understood later. Take for instance the particular drugs she spoke strongly about as quoted below (emphasis provided):

Tea acts as a stimulant, and, to a certain extent, produces intoxication. The action of coffee and many other popular drinks is similar. The first effect is exhilarating. The nerves of the stomach are excited; these convey irritation to the brain, and this

in turn is aroused to impart increased action to the heart, and short-lived energy to the entire system. Fatigue is forgotten, the strength seems to be increased. The intellect is aroused, the imagination becomes more vivid. Because of these results, many suppose that their tea or coffee is doing them great good. (White, 2014, p. 424)

The use of tea, coffee, tobacco, opium, wine, beer, and other stimulants gives nature a false support. (White, 1897, p. 247)

At the time she wrote against tea, coffee, beer and opium, they were very popular and used freely – as most of them are still used freely even today, save for opium. (see statement below)

There were no legal restrictions on the importation or use of opium in the United States until the San Francisco Opium Den Ordinance, which banned dens for public smoking of opium in 1875, a measure fueled by anti-Chinese sentiment and the perception that whites were starting to frequent the dens. This was followed by an 1891 California law requiring that narcotics carry warning labels and that their sales be recorded in a registry; amendments to the California Pharmacy and Poison Act in 1907 made it a crime to sell opiates without a prescription, and bans on possession of opium or opium pipes in 1909 were enacted. (Wikipedia, 2018, s.v. “Opium”)

Or seen in the following advertisement of the infamous Mrs. Winslow syrup used for soothing babies especially those with teething problems; “For children teething. Greatly facilitates the process of Teething, by softening the gums, reducing all inflammation; will allay ALL PAIN and spasmodic action, and is SURE TO REGULATE THE BOWELS. Depend on it, Mothers, it will give rest to yourselves and RELIEF AND HEALTH TO YOUR INFANTS. Sold by all chemists, at 1s 1/2d per bottle” (Future Opioids, 2018, para 3). The main ingredient here was opium. These were later banned or controlled as their untoward effects were realized. Mrs. White long warned about these even at the time the drugs were popular. Indeed, even today, tea and coffee are still popular, and the warning still stands.

V. Medical Procedures, Implements and Remedies

As stated above, Mrs. White lived at a wonderful time of great discovery especially in the field of medical science. As with all things new, there was a lot of skepticism around these implements, but more than that, a number of them were having the teething problems of most new implements. But that notwithstanding, we see her subjecting herself to be assisted with those proven to give the best chance of survival. In this, one still sees her true to her stand of giving the least side effects; for what would be the effect of refusing treatment and losing a life? Is that not the worst form of side effect?

a) Surgery

Surgery Not a Denial of Faith—It is our privilege to use every God-appointed means in correspondence with our faith, and then trust in God, when we have urged the promise. If there is need of a surgical operation, and the physician is willing to undertake the case, it is not a denial of faith to have the operation performed. After the patient has committed his will to the will of God, let him trust, drawing nigh to the Great Physician, the Mighty Healer, and giving himself up in perfect trust. The Lord will honor his faith in the very manner He sees is for His own name's glory. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:3, 4). (White, 1958, p. 284)

According to the above quotation, Mrs. White was not against surgical operations. In several places in her writings she affirms the use of surgery when performed by a knowledgeable, qualified, God-fearing physician.

b) Radiation, vaccines and transfusion

It is noteworthy that in personal letters to the brethren that lived at the same time with Mrs. White who came to her with questions on issues like blood transfusion or the use of radiation, some of which, as shown above, were very new technology at the time, her response was to encourage their use, if these were the best available remedies. She even confirms using radiation herself when the need called for it. Note the quotations below:

Blood Transfusions—There is one thing that has saved life—an infusion of blood from one person to another; but this would be

difficult and perhaps impossible for you to do. I merely suggest it (To Dr. D. H. Kress) (White, 1932, p. 257).

X-ray Treatment at Loma Linda—For several weeks I took treatment with the X-ray for the black spot that was on my forehead. In all I took twenty-three treatments, and these succeeded in entirely removing the mark. For this I am very grateful.—Letter 30, 1911 to her son J. E. White. (White, 1958, vol. 2, p. 303)

Mrs. EG White did not make direct reference to vaccination or serum. “You ask for definite and concise information regarding what Sister White wrote about vaccination and serum?” This question can be answered very briefly for so far as we have any record, she did not refer to them in any of her writings (White, 1958, p. 303). This is not surprising because while she wrote prophetically, in general her writings on medical issues were direct, relevant and practical to her time. As such, she wrote about issues that were prevalent then. Historical records as shown in previous sections (section 4), indicate that general acceptance of disease being caused by bacteria and virus was not there. The USA had indeed established a Vaccine Agency in 1813, but vaccines were not readily available. Only small pox was well established as a vaccine for a long time. That notwithstanding, did not stop resident Lincoln from contracting Small pox in 1863 which was in the lifetime of Mrs. White. It is thus interesting and not surprising to find the records of Mrs. Robinson, an old friend of Mrs. White (White, 1998, p. 225) stating that when vaccines were offered, Mrs. EG White took also.

You will be interested to know, however, that at a time when there was an epidemic of smallpox in the vicinity, she herself was vaccinated and urged her helpers, those connected with her, to be vaccinated. In taking this step Sister White recognized the fact that it has been proven that vaccination either renders one immune from smallpox or greatly lightens its effects if one does come down with it. She also recognized the danger of their exposing others if they failed to take this precaution. [Signed] D. E. Robinson. (White, 1958, vol. 2, p. 306)

It will thus be contrary to her nature to partake of something and speak against it. She was a strong advocate for consistency in word and action: “I do not preach one thing and practice another. I do not present

to my hearers rules of life for them to follow while I make an exception in my own case. (White, 1958, vol. 2, p. 302)

c) Herbs and other remedies

As stated before, because of the state of medical fraternity at the time of Mrs. White, a situation that has not improved much in many parts of the world including Southern Africa, herbs and household traditional brews were the order of the day. Unsurprisingly, she has many herbs and simple remedies quoted and even recommended in her writings. These include:

- Poultice of figs - Manuscript 29,1911
- Eucalyptus oil– throat, foot baths– Letter 348,1908
- Honey – for throat (White, 1958, vol. 2, p. 301)
- Charcoal and flaxseed– insect bite – manuscript 68,1899
- Catnip herb for quieting the nerves (White, 1958, vol. 2, p. 297)
- Hop tea, Hop poultice for stomach pain (White, 1958, vol. 2, p. 297)

To mention but a few. Modern evidence-based science has gone on to prove these to actually have medicinal value, and for the most parts, these include the uses that she had mentioned in her writings. Some, like the poultice of figs, are found even in Biblical times when King Hezekiah was sick unto death and was instructed to use this (Isaiah 38:21 KJV)

Even in her time, there were those who had taken a position that the use of all remedies should be prohibited. To these she wrote:

The idea which you hold, that no remedies should be used for the sick, is an error. God does not heal the sick without the aid of the means of healing which lie within the reach of man; or when men refuse to be benefited by the simple remedies that God has provided in pure air and water. (White, 1958, vol. 2, p. 286)

Having appreciated that she recommended many herbs, and these have often been seen under the heading of ‘natural remedies’, it is important to also note that she did not give a blanked sanction to the use of herbs, any herb. Furthermore, her advice should not be taken in isolation as she emphasizes education, knowledge of anatomy and physiology, knowledge of the cause of disease and most importantly, abstinence from all things that causes disease to the body. The advice below is true for all remedies, be they drugs sold at the pharmacy, or herbs grown in the backyard:

God's servants should not administer medicines which they know will leave behind injurious effects upon the system, even if they do relieve present suffering. Every poisonous preparation in the vegetable and mineral kingdoms, taken into the system, will leave its wretched influence, affecting the liver and lungs, and deranging the system generally. (White, n.d., p. 140)

This is a very important statement because most of the drugs are made from vegetables and mineral kingdoms. The quotations below indicate a caution against drugs of her time which were, and still are highly toxic to the body even though they do provide relief. These are opium, calomel and Nux Vomica (emphasis provided):

This second physician gave her a liberal dose of opium, which he said would relieve her pains, quiet her nerves, and give her rest, which she much needed. The opium stupefied her. She slept, and nothing could arouse her from the death-like stupor. Her pulse and heart at times throbbed violently, and then grew more and more feeble in their action, until she ceased to breathe. Thus she died without giving her family one look of recognition....“The physician's last resort was calomel. For some time, she seemed to be between life and death.... He gave her a powder from a vial upon which was written, Nux Vomica.... She lingered a few years a helpless, pitiful sufferer, and died in much agony.” (White, 1958, vol. 2, p. 444)

Although these are classed in the writings of Mrs. White simply as ‘drugs’, it is interesting to note that these are actually plant products, and scientifically described as herbs. “The opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*), an annual herb 3-5 feet tall with gorgeous white to pink or purple flowers. . . . The plant produces copious amounts of a viscous latex, which is loaded with strong alkaloids...the dry, darkened, slightly sticky latex mass is called opium from the Greek opos, which means juice” (*Papaver somniferum*, 2015).

Nux vomica is a plant of scientific name *strychnos nux-vomica*. This plant is known for production of poison strychnine. The *strychnos* family has many plants under it which in Southern Africa include monkey orange, Natal orange and, spiny monkey orange. These plants are found in South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia and fruits are edible, but seeds are mildly poisonous. They are rich in vitamins (Wikipedia, 2018, s.v. “*Strychnos Nux-Vomica*”).

Calomel on the other hand is a mercury chloride crystal which people grind and use as a laxative. As can be noted, all these three substances are 'natural' and some are herbs where one part is even food. Therefore, this calls for knowledge and intense study. It will thus be incorrect to say Mrs. White allowed the use of herbs and prohibited the use of drugs. That which some may call drugs, are actually herbs as in the case of opium, and some which may call herbs are actually poisonous substance as in the case of *nux vomica*.

VI. Conclusion

From the above excerpts and quotations, it is clear that Mrs. EG White addressed herself to the situation at hand in terms of the approach to sickness. Though some of the statements may seem contradictory from one book to another, taken in their context both of writing and of the time she lived in, it will become clear that the thread that runs through is always of prevention and self-preservation. The use of any remedy is the last resort and should be used in the context of knowing the cause of the disease and change of lifestyle to stop exacerbation of the existing condition. Necessarily her prescription is abstinence from harmful substances, practice temperance in all things, use judiciously of nature's remedies: Sunshine, water, rest, air and exercise.

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 (White, 2014, p. 302).

The first labors of a physician should be to educate the sick and suffering in the very course they should pursue to prevent disease. The greatest good can be done by our trying to enlighten the minds of all we can obtain access to, as to the best course for them to pursue to prevent sickness and suffering, and broken constitutions, and premature death. But those who do not care to undertake work that taxes their physical and mental powers will be ready to prescribe drug medication, which lays a foundation in the human organism for a twofold greater evil than that which they claim to have relieved (White, 1932, p. 221).

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