

The Orthodox Church and Homeopathy

The Fathers of Saint Edward Brotherhood

Preface

We submitted this article to Bishop Ambrose for review, and we have included his remarks below:

I looked though this, and it seemed to me excellent. With homeopathy we have a system demanding faith in something that is to the logical mind ludicrous; that is a bad beginning, but most people using it are presumably quite unaware of its occult foundation; this little work should be very useful in opening eyes.

Introduction

The practice of Homeopathy in post-World War Two Britain had dwindled, almost to extinction, before it was revitalised by Chief Druid Thomas Maughan and his disciples. How has homeopathy moved from being a dying esoteric art in the 1950's to a multimillion pound industry today? Part of the answer is the public distrust of the commercial activities of pharmaceutical companies and the marketing of expensive drugs with dangerous side-effects for relatively minor illnesses. The medical profession has also lost stature, with many patients dissatisfied with a long wait for a short appointment. The wide acceptance among the general populace of New Age teachings has also had a pronounced effect.

However, the most important reason is the almost complete absence of traditional Christian teaching from mainstream heterodox Churches. No longer are people taught about the effects of sin, and the importance of repentance. A belief in scripture and tradition has been replaced by a general 'feel good (and do what you want) gospel of self'. As we shall see later, a devotion to 'self' is what homeopathy promotes.

What is homeopathy?

This question is best answered by describing what homeopathy isn't. Homeopathy is not: drinking Chamomile tea for a stomach upset, taking garlic extract or using vitamin supplements. Indeed, non-homeopathic complementary medicines are helpful in treating a number of conditions. Echinacea is thought to be useful for treating the common cold, and *andrographis paniculata* has been proved to be a useful treatment for upper respiratory tract infections. Fish oil (omega 3) lowers blood pressure and eases the pain from rheumatoid arthritis.¹ These remedies are not homeopathic because they all contain something. A normal capsule of fish oil contains a yellow liquid which is, unsurprisingly, fish oil. A homeopathic fish oil capsule (if it existed) would be labelled 'homeopathic fish oil' but would contain nothing but water. We can see from the above that homeopathy and complimentary herbal medicine are different. So, what is homeopathy?

Homeopathy is a holistic treatment developed by the 19th century German physician Samuel Hahnemann whose teachings, according to the Society of Homeopaths, still form the basis of homeopathy today.² Like all 'holistic' treatments, homeopathy's effectiveness lies in treating all aspects of the person: physically, emotionally and psychologically. Hahnemann had a deep

¹ E. Ernst, M.H. Pittler, B. Wider, K. Boddy, *Oxford Handbook of Complimentary Medicine* (Oxford: OUP, 2008)

² <http://www.homeopathy-soh.org/research/provings>

interest in the esoteric and arcane tradition, and was a practising and initiated Mason, which helped him supplement his already extensive knowledge of the teachings of the 16th century occultist Paracelsus. Using decidedly masonic language Hahnemann, writing in 1829, described his life's work as 'carrying out that plan, for which the Great Spirit, Who is All in All, vouchsafed me power and insight'.³

Homeopathic Theory

According to Hahnemann, homeopathy is founded on the following principles:

Like cures like

This principle describes a medicine, which, while differing in its nature from the disease, resembles it very closely in the symptoms it causes. An example of 'like cures like' would be using chilli extracts to treat diseases that create a burning feeling. This theory became popular in the 19th century because it bears some resemblance to the principle of vaccination in which a weakened virus is used to prevent a later infection. However, 'like cures like' is different from vaccination in that it groups together symptoms and not causes: A runny nose due to a cold virus, a flu virus, or by cutting onions have very different causes.

Increased dilution leads to increased effectiveness

According to classical homeopathic teaching, the more dilute a solution is, the stronger its effect as a medicine. Compare dissolving an aspirin in a glass of water to dropping an aspirin into a lake, and stirring the lake vigorously. According to human intuition, the aspirin dissolved in the glass of water would be more likely to cure a headache. but according to homeopathy, a glass of the aspirin/lake water solution would be more effective. This effectiveness is called 'potency' by homeopaths. Most homeopathic remedies are so dilute that they contain no molecules of the medicine at all.

To give an idea of the scale of dilution involved in creating homeopathic medicine, a 6X decimal potency homeopathic medicine is diluted 1 part medicine to 1 million parts water. This is equivalent to dissolving 1 teaspoon of salt into 2800 litres of water (1120 2.5 litre soft drink bottles). However, a 6X decimal potency is a relatively concentrated homeopathic medicine; the more commonly used 12C potency medicine has roughly the same concentration as half a teaspoon of salt dissolved in all the water on the earth.

Vital force

According to homeopaths, the increased effectiveness of dilute solutions is due to energy produced when the medicine bottle is diluted and then banged ten times against an elastic surface. Homeopathic medicine is unique, according to the theory of Hahnemann, because the dilution and shaking of the medicine gives it a 'spirit-like power to alter man's state of health'.⁴ According to Hahnemann, 'the organism will be powerfully affected and taken possession of by the power of even a very small dose of a medicinal substance'.⁵ In his *Organon of Medicine*, Hahnemann described how the 'animal magnetism' generated by Franz Mesmer (1734 – 1815) was able to redistribute the body's vital force, even without bodily contact:

³ R. Haehl, *Samuel Hahnemann His Life and Work* (New Dehli, B. Jain Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 2003) p.265

⁴ W. Boerick (trans.), *Organon of Medicine* (New Dehli: B. Jain Publishers (P) Ltd., 2004) p.65

⁵ R.E. Dudgeon (trans.), *Materia Medica Pura Vol. 1* (Liverpool: Hahnemann Publishing Society, 1880) p.16

I find it necessary to allude here to animal magnetism, as it is termed, or rather Mesmerism (as it should be called in deference to Mesmer, its first founder [...]) It is a marvellous, priceless gift of God to mankind by which by means of which the strong will of a well intentioned person upon a sick one by contact and even without this and even at some distance, can bring the vital energy of the healthy mesmerizer endowed with this power into another person dynamically (just as one of the poles of a powerful magnetic rod upon a bar of steel).⁶

Homeopaths have sought for many years to find an explanation for this 'spiritual energy' contained within homeopathic medicines. However, spiritual energy is not only common to homeopathy. We have mentioned Mesmer, but the vital force or energy tradition has developed, over time, under different names. For example, Madame Blavatsky's occult Theosophist movement described it as 'auric' or 'astral force'. Blavatsky (1831-1891) was also a great proponent of homeopathy, and like Hahnemann, she recognised that homeopathy and mesmerism are complementary.

How do homeopathic medicines work?

It is beyond argument that many people have been helped by homeopathic medicine. However, how it works on a molecular level (if it does) is still disputed. Although a detailed analysis of the state of 'pro' and 'anti' homeopathic research is far beyond the scope of this article, it is fair to say that the positions of the two groups are now well entrenched. Homeopaths still remain convinced of the validity of experiments that scientists reject as unreliable. The debate over the effectiveness of homeopathy is not new, and it is unlikely to be settled one way or the other in the new future. Indeed, as Edzard Ernst, retired Professor of Complementary Medicine at the University of Exeter, points out, detailed scientific comparisons were undertaken in the German Third Reich, instigated no doubt, by supporters of homeopathy such as Rudolf Hess and Heinrich Himmler:

During the Third Reich the (mostly pro-homeopathy) Nazi leadership wanted to solve the homeopathy question once and for all. The research programme was carefully planned and rigorously executed. A report was written and it even survived the war. But it disappeared nevertheless – apparently in the hands of German homeopaths. Why? According to a very detailed eye-witness report [cited in article] they were wholly and devastatingly negative.⁷

Water memory

One explanation for the effectiveness of homeopathic remedies in high dilution is the theory known as water memory. This theory, as the name suggests, is based on the idea that the water molecules that surround a molecule of medicine in solution can remember the shape of that molecule even when it is no longer present.

The Benveniste group's claim, in 1988, to have found water memory caused a considerable stir in scientific circles.⁸ Unfortunately, other scientists were unable to replicate the results of this paper, with the exception of the Ennis group at Queen's University Belfast.⁹ Their results, in turn,

⁶ *Organon of Medicine* p.288

⁷ E. Ernst, *The Truth about Homeopathy*. Br. J. Clin. Pharmacol. 2008; **65** (2): 163–164.

⁸ E. Davenas, J. Beauvais, M. Oberbaum, B. Robinzon, A. Miadonna, A. Tedeschi et al., *Human basophil degranulation triggered by very dilute antiserum against IgE*. Nature. 1988; **333** (6176): 816-818.

⁹ P. Belon, J. Cumps, M. Ennis et al., *Inhibition of human basophil degranulation by successive histamine dilutions: results of a European multi-centre trial*. Inflamm Res (Suppl.1) 1999; **48**: S17–S18.

could not be reproduced by other research groups, and the fact that no follow-up papers have been published by Ennis would indicate that the research was flawed in some way.

More recent work on the forces between water molecules has shown that these forces are constantly being broken and remade, and that the network that they create between molecules only lasts in the region of 50 femtoseconds.¹⁰ A femto second is 1/1,000,000,000,000,000 of a second, so this research makes the 'water memory' theory much less plausible.

The water memory theory provides a physical, thermodynamic explanation for the effectiveness of homeopathy. Unfortunately, the balance of the evidence at the moment indicates that 'water memory' does not exist. There is, therefore, no pharmacological explanation for the observed effectiveness of homeopathy in some patients.

Placebo Effect

Another, non-spiritual, reason that homeopathy might work is the placebo effect. A placebo is a tablet, injection or medical procedure that should have no effect on the patient. The placebo effect is demonstrated in clinical trials that are double blind – neither the doctor nor the patient knows whether the new drug, or the placebo, is being administered. Strangely, a relatively high percentage (normally around 30%) of patients show an improvement after taking the placebo. This improvement is not simply feeling better, but a scientifically measurable difference.

Those taking homeopathic medicines often feel better for it, for the same reason that patients taking the placebo in medical drug trials often shown improvement in their symptoms. Homeopaths claim that homeopathy is more effective than the placebo, whilst scientists claim that it is only as effective. Extensive meta-analyses of various trials have failed to prove that homeopathy is more effective than the placebo. For example, a recent review carried out by homeopaths was unable to provide any 'generalisable conclusions about the efficacy of homeopathic intervention in animals.'¹¹

Regression to the mean

Another explanation for the effectiveness of homeopathy is that symptoms that flare up tend to go back down again on their own. This 'regression to the mean' describes the observation that a series of unnaturally high numbers will eventually be followed by a series of lower numbers as the results creep back towards the mean (average level). In English football, the 'Manager of the Month Curse' is believed to make the manager given the award lose his next match. A loss however, is not due to the curse, but simply his team finding its true level – they have regressed back towards their average.

Spiritual healing

There is a strong possibility that in some cases, neither physical nor psychological effects are at work. Homeopaths believe that illness is caused by body's energy called 'vital force' being affected in some way. Homeopaths seek to free this vital force and liberate the energy contained within the body. This idea of a vital force is also common to other religions:

The concept of vitalism, that man is more than just the sum of his physical or mechanistic parts reappeared within the elitist Western universities of Europe during the late 18th and

¹⁰ M.L. Cowan, B.D. Bruner, N. Huse et al., *Ultrafast memory loss and energy redistribution in the hydrogen bond network of liquid H₂O*. Nature 2005;**434** (7030) 199–202.

¹¹ R.T. Mathie, J. Clausen, *Veterinary homeopathy: systematic review of medical conditions studied by randomised placebo-controlled trials*. Vet Rec. 2014 Oct 18;**175**(15) 373-81.

early 19th centuries in a response to the new science of mechanics and rational thought. The concept of vivifying force that made man alive and was the essence of his being had been the fundamental basis of most early medical philosophies, and still has its expression in Ayurvedic medicine as 'prana', in homeopathy as the 'vital force' and in acupuncture as 'Qi'.¹²

The concept of vital force has some similarity to the Orthodox doctrine of soul, which should come as a warning to those contemplating consulting a homeopath or alternative medicine practitioner. The influential homeopath James Tyler Kent (1849–1916) pointed out that 'you cannot divorce medicine and theology. Man exists all the way down from his innermost spiritual to his outermost natural'.¹³

Homeopathy Today

Modern homeopathy is heavily influenced by the mystical ideas of Kent, many of which were based on the writings of the 18th century Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg who believed that he was inspired by Christ and able to visit heaven and hell and to talk with angels and demons. According to homeopath Peter Morrell, Kent 'created the first coherent, persuasive and highly influential philosophy, which has largely gone unchallenged within the movement. It was formulated as a synthesis of Swedenborgian mysticism and the more romantic portions of Hahnemann's *Organon* and the *Miasm Theory of The Chronic Diseases*'.¹⁴

In recent years British homeopathy, heavily influenced by former students of Chief Druid Thomas Maughan, has rediscovered its spiritual roots. Peter Morrell continues:

Maughan believed that 'evolutionary homeopathy' was what people needed, which should help people to evolve along a spiritual path, not just alleviate illness. He believed that a high potency remedy primarily affects the mind and spirit and must often be accompanied by low potencies of the same or related remedies to support the physical body while the high potency acted. He believed the remedy would only act if the patient was willing to change, i.e. to move from negative to positive mental states. This held true particularly of the higher potencies, which, like Kent, he seemed to regard as highly spiritualised substances.¹⁵

By all accounts, Maughan, with his long white beard and fearsome manner, inspired loyalty, love and fear in equal measure. This founder of British Homeopathy was the link between the occult and 'science', and between Theosophy and the New Age:

His intuitive perception of people was extraordinary and his standards of homoeopathy very high. He had an air of mystery about him; you never quite knew where he'd come from. He'd been a Doctor of Philosophy, but no-one knew much else about his past. He had a large picture of Mme Blavatsky in his consulting room, and he obviously had a deep understanding of the occult and alchemy.¹⁶

Chief Druid Maughan here describes the aim of modern homeopathy without even mentioning it: the development of 'Self'. The Rosicrucians mentioned below were a 17th century occult sect:

¹² J.W. Diamond, *The Clinical Practice of Complementary, Alternative, and Western Medicine* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2001) p. 17.

¹³ P. Morrell, *Hahnemann and Homoeopathy* (New Dehli: B Jain Publishers (P) Ltd, 2003) p.320.

¹⁴ http://www.homeoint.org/morrell/articles/pm_kent.htm

¹⁵ <http://www.homeoint.org/morrell/british/maughan.htm>

¹⁶ *The Society of Homeopaths Newsletter* June 1990 pp. 39-40.

The Druids are mystics; that is to say that they are partakers of the One Primitive and Universal Source of Wisdom which forms the basis of whatever is true in the world's great exoteric religions. It means that Druids, like other mystical brotherhoods, have that breadth of outlook which overleaps the narrow boundaries of a creed. It means they teach the art of developing the Inner Self — the "Giant within" as the Rosicrucians put it; that Self which is in touch with the Central Sun of the Cosmos, and is the motive power, of which the physical brain and body are but the tools.¹⁷

Maughan's spiritual influences are still current in the world of British homeopathy as the British homeopath Sue Young observes: 'Later UK students – from late 60's until his death in 1976 – [are] almost all Druids and include most of the founders of the Society of Homeopaths and directors or lecturers at several Colleges of Homeopathy.'¹⁸

Although there are some 'medical homeopaths' that rely solely on diagnosis by 'scientific' methods combined with a professional and reassuring bedside manner, many homeopaths prefer to use what can only be described as occult techniques such as dowsing, (also known as divining or water witching) to treat their patients. According to one British homeopath, the use of occult practices among homeopaths is widespread:

It is in many ways an interesting time in the development of homeopathy. On the one hand, mainstream homeopathic education is becoming increasingly left-brain, academic and medically aligned, and thousand of practitioners are dependent on computer programmes to assist them in their practice. On the other hand, there are a growing number of people developing the feminine, right brain side of homeopathy, with the introduction of meditation and dream provings and a whole host of intuitive diagnosis and prescribing techniques. Hopefully, these two branches will find ways to complement one another so that future homeopaths will learn both the art and science of homeopathy.¹⁹

Homeopathy is not concerned with curing diseases, but with healing the person. For some homeopaths, it is about embarking on a spiritual journey with the homeopath as a guide. A co-founder of the College of Homeopathy explains:

Most disease is karmic, the result of separation from the self from a state of oneness – to that of multiplicity. There comes a time in the individual's evolution when it is right for them to be rid of their diseases. They may become aware of themselves as evolving spirit in matter, and from then on make some conscious effort to align themselves with the forces of nature, and return to a state of natural integrity. Working with homeopathy encourages this process, and the patient who works consciously with the prescriber is one who will make strides that may not otherwise have been taken. This is homeopathy as a tool of evolution in action.²⁰

The essence of both classical and modern homeopathy is the liberation of the self. By taking homeopathic medicine and avoiding substances that interfere with it, the person is regenerated and able to become pure 'Self'. This process is not about striving for the Kingdom of God, but freeing the vital force so it can function properly:

¹⁷ <http://www.neopagan.net/Maughan.html>

¹⁸ <http://sueyounghistories.com/archives/2008/09/19/thomas-lackenby-maughan-1901-1976/>

¹⁹ I. Watson, *A Guide to the Methodologies of Homeopathy* (Totnes: Cutting Edge Publications, 2004) p. 32.

²⁰ M. Miles, *Homeopathy and Human Evolution* (West Wickham: Winter Press, 1992) p.72.

*The constant searching and long, often without a specific goal or objective, but sensed as an impelling need, brings a quickening to the individuation process of the individual. The final sublimation will bring the realisation that what they have sought for all their lives actually lies not in any outer world, or other dimension, but within themselves, All they have suffered and enjoyed, all the longings and strivings, and all the success and failures were designed to bring them self-knowledge, in the which limitations of ego-personality are transcended and oneness with all is experienced.*²¹

Homeopathic treatments

Homeopathy claims to be able to treat all illness, because illness is caused by our natural vital force being somehow affected. Many homeopaths are able, or claim to be able, to cure psychological problems using homeopathic treatment:

*I find that a useful initial question is: 'What would you like to change about your personality?' This often gets to the heart of the weaknesses that are useful in identifying the remedy. If the patients cannot think of a single thing that they would like to change, they are either perfect or they belong to one of the proud types, which include Arsenicum, Lachesis, Lycopodium, Nux, Platina, Sulphur, and sometimes Natrum and Tuberculinum.*²²

It should come as no surprise that, because gold glitters and shines, homeopaths use it as remedy for depression. The British Homeopathic Association advises:

*The sun is the celestial image of divinity; gold, "crystallised sunlight", is the image of solar light and radiance, hence of divine consciousness, wisdom, perfection, truth and love and of the sublime in man. The image of the sun in the earth is gold; the image of the sun in the body is the heart, for just as the sun radiates life-giving energy to the solar system, so the heart circulates blood, oxygen, warmth, nutrients and life to the body. The symbol of gold in the body is therefore also the heart, but so too the uterus, which harbours, nurtures and brings forth life (this latter relationship reveals the less obvious feminine aspect of gold). The sun and gold of the conscious mind is the will, which radiates confidence, hope, courage, power, motivation, drive and ambition to the emotional being. The sun and gold of the soul is the conscience, the voice of the higher self, radiating virtue, silent knowledge and spiritual aspiration to the lower-self.*²³

Gold (aurum) is prescribed by homeopaths for a variety of spiritual and psychological disorders:

*Aurum is an important remedy for unsuccessful love, rejection, betrayed friendship and loss of a loved one or beloved pet. It is a jealous and possessive archetype and when spurned a dark side may emerge, which maliciously desires to hurt the one who has caused the humiliation.*²⁴

The use of gold in homeopathy is traced back to the mythical rejection of Apollo by Cassandra the princess of Troy. As a result of this rejection, Apollo punished her by decreeing that no one would believe her prophesies. Apollo also removed the gift of eternal youth from Sibyl. For this cause, homeopathic gold is capable of causing 'implacable resentment and vengeful hatred'.²⁵

²¹ D. Owen, *Principles and Practice of Homeopathy* (London: Churchill Livingstone Elsevier, 2007) p.231.

²² P.M. Bailey, *Homeopathic Psychology* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995) p. xvi.

²³ <http://www.britishhomeopathic.org/bha-charity/how-we-can-help/medicine-a-z/aurum-metallicum/>

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ *ibid.*

According to homeopaths, the appearance and life cycle of the cuttlefish (*Sepia apama*) explains the powers of the homeopathic treatment. A person exhibiting the habits of the cuttlefish is called a 'Sepia person'. A cuttlefish moves backwards rapidly when frightened, so a Sepia person flees from people and company. A Cuttlefish is shy; so are Sepia people. A cuttlefish readily abandons its young; a Sepia woman is a bad mother...' You get the drift. 'The cuttlefish's body is slightly flat with a supple fin. Similarly, the Sepia woman has a tendency to have masculine features, including flat-chestedness, and with their supple legs, they love to exercise, especially dancing and aerobics.'²⁶

It is clear that modern homeopathy accepts a form of 'like cures like', but most homeopaths do not follow the teachings of Hahnemann, but the more mystical synthesis of Kent. According to classical homeopathy, the vital force will not be cured if other medicines are used with homeopathy because they interfere with it. This idea is still prevalent among many homeopaths who advise patients to give up coffee or tea, but fortunately few advise, as Hahnemann did, that they stop consulting medical doctors. According to classical homeopathy, consulting anyone else, apart from the homeopath, will result in the remedy's failure. Professor Edzard Ernst analyses this contradiction succinctly:

If this analysis is correct, we are today faced with the situation where homeopathy is used by many people worldwide but, according to the teachings of homeopathy's founder, it is currently badly misused – so much so that, according to Hahnemann's most clearly and repeatedly expressed views, it cannot possibly result in clinical benefit. Considering that most of today's homeopaths would insist that the words of Hahnemann as pure gospel, this situation is most bizarre and ironic indeed. It becomes even more ironic when we realize that the only group of clinicians who employ homeopathy in the 'correct' way is also the one which is the most serious danger to public health.²⁷

Is homeopathy permitted by the Orthodox Church?

It should be clear, from the quotes above, why the Orthodox Church does not approve of modern homeopathy. Apart from the pagan influences, the idea that chemical elements or compounds have a spiritual power is not Orthodox. This type of homeopathy is completely anti-Christian in that it gives us chance of attributing our sins and failing to an overdose or 'underdose' of homeopathic medicine, thereby depriving us of the chance of repentance.

Canon Eleven of the QuiniSext Oecumenical Council forbids Orthodox Christians from consulting or receiving medicines from Jewish doctors.²⁸ This canon was introduced because of the holistic nature of the medical profession at that time in which prayers always accompanied medical treatment. It was also to prevent Christians being asked to, or offering to, keep Jewish religious customs as part of the treatment. Today, this canon is not applied to non-holistic medicine, but it certainly applies to consulting anyone, (Jewish or not) who offers holistic healing. If homeopathy, as is claimed, cures the whole person, then what type of medicine is it providing for the soul? Is it the medicine of the Orthodox Church, whose grace-filled Mysteries are for the healing of soul and body?

²⁶ https://www.homeopathic.com/Articles/Introduction_to_HomeopathyUnderstanding_Nature_to_Learn_Materia_Medica.html

²⁷ <http://edzardernst.com/2013/03/the-four-types-of-homeopaths-would-hahnemann-approve/>

²⁸ G. Nedungatt, M. Featherstone Ed., *The Council in Trullo Revisited* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1995) p.81.

The essence of homeopathic treatment is the liberation of the self, the reordering of the vital force contained within each person. However, the teaching of the Orthodox Church is very different. The cure does not come from within, but from without. Through the fall, we inherited corruption, and we are, as Saint Gregory of Nyssa teaches, clothed in an 'image that is of clay and mortal'. Christ came as the Second Adam to take upon Himself our nature and heal it. The first stage in our personal healing is at our baptism when we are 'buried with Him by baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life' (Rom. 6:4). This spiritual rebirth gives us the 'power to become sons of God' (John 1:12).

This spiritual rebirth is not the result of any re-aligning of our energy or vital force, but it is by the Holy Spirit as St Paul teaches: 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.' (Eph. 2:8) We have received this gift of God, and to bring it to fruition we need to take our cross (cf. Matt. 16:24) and embrace the ascetical and mystical life of the Church.

The Orthodox Church is not against holistic healing *per se*. After all, holistic healing was practiced by the un-mercenary healers Saints Panteleimon and Saints Cosmas and Damian among others. There is nothing wrong with holistic healing as long as it is performed by the Church. The Mysteries of the Church are able to heal us holistically if we combine them with repentance and asceticism. For those that are physically sick, the Church works with medical professionals to combine physical bodily healing with prayer; this is why we visit the sick in hospital and ask the prayers of the Church before undergoing medical procedures.

Before the advent of Christianity, holistic healing was practiced by the Ancient Greeks, but the Orthodox Church wisely dispensed with these holistic healing centres, a fact lamented by homeopaths:

The Aesclepiion, the ancient medical school and hospital on the island of Kos, boasted sleep temples where patients would await the dreams of Aesculapius, the god of healing, while other areas of the hospital were reserved for surgery and herbal treatment. In a feat that is unique in the history of medicine, the Greek physicians were able to integrate the use of rationalism with empirical principles. Several centuries after the Golden age of Greece, this union of rational and intuitive knowledge was decimated by the rise of Christianity. What was once an exploration of the inner experience of humanity and the natural world was taken over by the authority of the church, which demanded faith and belief in the scriptures as the only road to truth.²⁹

Homeopathy in nineteenth century Russia

In nineteenth century Russia, homeopathy was promoted by church figures such as St. John of Kronstadt. However, the homeopathy used at that time in Russia was not of the classical variety promoted by Hahnemann, or James Tyler Kent's more mystical version, as Alexander Kotok explains:

Russian Homeopathy had a strongly pronounced domestic character. The number of homeopathic physicians in pre-World War 1 Russia had always been insignificant. There were about 100 openly practicing homeopathic physicians and the same number of others who were hiding their practice behind terms like 'specific' from among 16-18000 doctors who were practicing through the Russian Empire. So, the Russian homeopathic literature reflected the demand of a wide public for 'understandable' homeopathy. This is one of the

²⁹ J. Cicchetti, *Dreams, Symbols, and Homeopathy* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2003) pp.6-7.

*reasons why Russian homeopathy, which had not adopted the pure classical homeopathy of Hahnemann, did not integrate the new ideas of John Henry Clarke (1853-1931) and James Tyler Kent (1849-1916).*³⁰

Russian homeopathy did not require a visit to a homeopath, which for the Church, was undoubtedly a point in its favour: 'everyone treats with homeopathy because it is not difficult and requires no specific knowledge' wrote Professor Alexander Engelhardt in 1873.³¹ The support of the Russian Church for 'non-Hahnemann' homeopathy was driven by the poor state of regular medicine and the widespread use by folk healers of a combination of herbal remedies and witchcraft.³² Saint John of Kronstadt supported the homeopathic idea of 'like cures like' which had risen to prominence in the nineteenth century due to Edward Jenner's discovery of the smallpox vaccine. 'Like cures like' was a principle that was easy to understand, and immensely popular at the time.

In nineteenth century Russian usage, the word 'homeopathy' described almost all herbal treatments from Church supported homeopathic pharmacies to blessed grains from monks and elders. However, Russian Church-sponsored homeopathy was deeply Church centred. Nowhere in the literature do we find the Church dispensing homeopathic remedies as a cure for sin, nor do we find any evidence of official Church figures supporting some of Hahnemann's more occult ideas.

Homeopathy and the New Age

A distorted view of Orthodoxy can lead to a strange combination of New Age beliefs combined with a fascination in the end times. The result is strikingly similar to the views of occult homeopath Luc Jouret, the co-founder of the *Order of the Solar Temple* cult, forty-eight of whose members died in a mass murder-suicide pact in 1994. According to Jouret, the imposition of new laws by the dark forces of the state can only be resisted by freeing our own vital force using, amongst other things, homeopathy:

*Pollution, Jouret said, affects the earth in the same way that a bad diet affects the human body—it disrupts the vital energy. In fact, pollution is not merely the 'exterior degradation of the Planet, of Life as such', it is 'an exterior reflection of a pollution much deeper inside Man—mental pollution, emotional pollution, and at the extreme, an authentically spiritual pollution'. Against this grim vision Jouret counterposed the transition from the Age of Pisces to the Age of Aquarius. However, this passage would not be as peaceful as the 1960s vision. We face 'a kingdom of fire in which everything will be consumed'. For those who survive and cross over, the Age of Aquarius will bring new laws, new ways of thinking, and new vibratory harmonies. In the meantime Jouret intimated, controlling the vital force will not only assure victory over disease and pollution in the world, it can completely liberate us from the human condition.*³³

A belief in homeopathy is often demonstrated by Orthodox Christians who are fascinated by the idea of conspiracies, particularly those of an eschatological nature. Homeopathy is seen as an alternative to using medicines developed by pharmaceutical companies, which are, apparently, part of an international anti-Christian conspiracy. There is no doubt that the pharmaceutical

³⁰ A. Kotok, *Patients of Russian Pre-World War I Homoeopathy*. Chapter in Martin Dinges, Ed., *Patients in the History of Homoeopathy*. (Sheffield: European Association for the History of Medicine and Health, 2002) p.167-168.

³¹ *Patients of Russian Pre-World War I Homoeopathy* p.164.

³² J. Koslow, *The Despised and the Damned* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972) p.60.

³³ J.R. Lewis (Ed.) *The Order of the Solar Temple* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006) p.66.

industry has been deeply involved in some huge financial and ethical scandals, but is pagan holistic medicine the answer?

Homeopathy and the Orthodox Spiritual Life

A homeopathic consultation involves, not just discussing the affected part of the body, but one's whole emotional and psychological state. After all, this is how homeopathy works. In a sense, it's like going to confession, but without the repentance before it, or the uniting to the Orthodox Church after it. According to a Theosophical Society journal:

*It is a noteworthy fact in Occultism that the great Masters who in the body have worked among men have been members of the healing craft, the noblest of all the learned professions. It is the noblest, because in its true character it combines the functions of both priest and physician: healer of the soul as well as of the body.*³⁴

Homeopathy claims to be able to cure the passions. We know, as Orthodox Christians, that pills cannot cure our sins and passions. It is only through spiritual struggle and partaking of the Mysteries of the Church that we can obtain freedom from passion. It is only in the Orthodox Church that we can obtain true health of body and soul. However, homeopaths beg to differ, and this is the biggest danger of homeopathy for Orthodox Christians. If homeopathy can cure our sins and passions, then why be Orthodox? If our passions are only a result of our vital force being impaired, why not change our homeopathic medication to solve it?

Consider the following hypothetical situation. A man rows with his wife and becomes upset; he can't forget about it, so he visits the homeopath. She listens, sympathises and then gives him some medication to help him get better. The man is therefore forming an emotional bond with his homeopath who is 'helping' him, when he should be reconciling himself with his wife and with the Church.

In case this might seem far-fetched, let us see what an 'off-the-shelf' homeopathic kit has to offer to solve the above problem. Homeopathic *Staphysagria* is apparently good for 'resentment and feeling physically or emotionally cut up'. The symptoms that we should look for are: 'suppression of emotions, particularly in relationships, suppressed indignation, very excitable and easily aroused....Appear calm or timid, yet turmoil inside. Feeling powerless, which may have arisen from abuse or humiliation....'³⁵ So, a quick course of *Staphysagria* and it's job done. The good news is that any left over is also good for 'resentful and indignant pets': 'Cat spraying over your possessions deliberately. Sensitive animals that are easily upset with lingering anger lasting all day'.³⁶

Seriously though, placing faith in homeopathy can lead to a decreasing lack of faith in the healing power of the Church. This is observed in a lessening in Church attendance, choosing not to keep the fasts because of perceived interactions with homeopathic medicines, and a general weakening of prayer life. The decline in church attendance is often preceded by physical symptoms of discomfort when attending the Liturgy. This discomfort can be triggered by smells, light or by the sheer number of people attending the service. Devotees of homeopathy put these physical feelings of nausea or headaches down to 'side effects' of their homeopathic medicine or as a result of not taking their medicine before coming to church. Relief from the symptoms is felt by leaving the church for 'fresh air'. As a result, some children subject to homeopathy spend

³⁴ http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/path/v02n01p20_paracelsius.htm

³⁵ Ainsworths Remedy Prescriber (London: Ainsworths, 2006) p.33-34.

³⁶ *ibid.*

more time outside church than in it, and rarely partake of the Mysteries; coming to church is believed to be a problem for which homeopathy has the solution.

Some victims become almost deluded in their fanaticism for homeopathy – receiving assurances from ‘god’ about its effectiveness, and warning clergy who oppose homeopathy to be careful about rejecting the ‘spirit’. In the worse case scenario, homeopathy becomes the panacea that can cure all bodily and spiritual illness – instead of partaking of the Mysteries of the Church in a spirit of repentance, the victim consults the homeopath.

Many Orthodox Christians, lacking knowledge of their own faith, are unable to discern the difference between spiritual healing and physical healing. Within the Church, we are able to receive healing for our souls, and our bodies, according to our faith. Outside the Church, we should not seek spiritual counsel or holistic healing even if we are convinced that it works, and we should be very careful about revealing our temptations and feelings to strangers. In Russia today, the line between spiritual healing inside and outside the Church has become blurred to say the least:

Most of the rituals performed by ‘white magi’ are variation of a few specific themes, and these themes lean heavily on church attributes and paraphernalia. Many magi, both those who claim folk, or rural descent and those of the more syncretistic brand, consider themselves pious Russian Orthodox Christians. They go to church regularly, follow church holidays and prescriptions, fast according to the elaborate Orthodox schedule, wear a cross, surround themselves with church candles and icons, regularly acquire holy water blessed in church and make plentiful use of church paraphernalia in their rituals. As a standard part of their treatment of all kinds of complaints, many magi ask their patients to buy a popular brand of mineral water called ‘Holy Spring’ bottled by the Church as a part of its thriving business activities, and blessed by the Patriarch himself (as the bottle label informs the buyer). The magus then charges the water with her own energy and instructs the patients to drink it at certain times of the day, and to wash their hands and face with it.³⁷

Homeopathy, Astrology and Witchcraft

Homeopaths, and supporters of homeopathy, are often heavily involved in various aspects of the occult such as fortune telling and ‘clairvoyance’. Clairvoyants who are able to see ‘auras’ are able to detect different potencies of homeopathic medicine from the energy that they emit, and the use of the pendulum in homeopathy is widespread enough to have been subject to scientific investigation.³⁸ Of course, not all homeopaths are involved in clairvoyance, nor are most of those who take homeopathic medicines, but homeopathy has always attracted those with an interest in the occult.

We have mentioned above that, according to homeopaths, gold is crystallised sunlight. This belief in spiritual energy contained in minerals or elements is another link between the forces of the occult and the beliefs of homeopaths. According to the *Encyclopedia of Wicca and Witchcraft*:

...the stars and planet radiate celestial energy into the crystalline forms of the mineral kingdom. The crystallised energy within any given stone produces an astral virtue specific to the nature of the mineral form itself. For this, the ancient mystics established a table of correspondences connecting the stones with specific planets and specific powers. Modern

³⁷ G. Lindquist, *Conjuring Hope: Healing and Magic in Contemporary Russia* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006)p.29

³⁸ R. McCarney, P. Fisher, F. Spink, G. Flint, R. van Haselen, *Can homeopaths detect homeopathic medicines by dowsing? A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial.* J R Soc Med. 2002 Apr; **95**(4): 189–191.

*occultists associate, for example, iron with Mars, copper with Venus, lead with Saturn, quicksilver with Mercury, gold with the sun, and silver with the moon.*³⁹

Perhaps it might be interesting to see how this compares to the information about silver provided on the British Homeopathic Association's website: 'Just as gold is regarded as the metal of the sun, so silver is perceived as the metal of the moon.'⁴⁰ In addition, in her book *Metals in Homeopathy*, Patricia Le Roux associates silver not just with the moon but with the planet Venus.⁴¹

Le Roux also quotes the work of the homeopath Edward Berridge (1843-1923) in curing a child using homeopathic silver. Berridge is another link between homeopathy and the occult; he was heavily involved in the occult Golden Dawn⁴² group and was believed, by its members, to be able to 'bring about cures on the astral plane.'⁴³ Modern homeopathy continues this tradition. The British Homeopathic Association advises:

*Nor may we forget "the crystal ball" which enhances psychic powers, the eye through which the fortune-teller or prophetess peers into the halls of other dimensions. Just as glass fibre optics extends our means of communication over vast distances on the earthly plane, so the sensitivity of Silicea extends beyond the merely physical, accessing the vibrations of unseen realms by means of love, empathetic perception, intuition, telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, trance states, astral-projection and hypnosis. Quartz crystals possess healing power and since they have power to split light into its component colours, their healing influence can touch all levels of disease manifestation, all the chakras and hence all the systems and organs of the body.*⁴⁴

The link between witchcraft and homeopathy is astrology: 'Unlike other individuals who use herbs in the healing practice, the Witch pays attention to two distinct sciences: homeopathy and astrology.'⁴⁵ Witches also recognise the usefulness of homeopathy in casting spells:

*Modern Witches may use herbs in two ways: through homeopathy and natural medicine, and in magickal application for health and healing as well as success, prosperity and harmony etc. The magickal intent of the herb always matches its medical intent, which is good—there's less to confuse the mind. Therefore, if you don't know what an herb can do on the magickal realm, and you can't find it anywhere in books on magic, you can always read about its medicinal properties and match the energy of the plant to a specific magickal working.*⁴⁶

Astrologers also understand that astrology and homeopathy have a shared mode of action:

Studying the homeopathic literature, astrologers will discover a beautiful reflection of our own art, but cast in the garb of mundane substances, mental states and physical symptoms...astrology and homeopathy have in common the experience of pushing the

³⁹ R. Grimassi, *Encyclopedia of Wicca & Witchcraft* (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 2002) p.395.

⁴⁰ <http://www.britishhomeopathic.org/bha-charity/how-we-can-help/medicine-a-z/argentum-metallicum/>

⁴¹ P. Le Roux, *Metals in homeopathy* (Kandern: Narayana Verlag GmbH, 2009) p.218.

⁴² A 19th century occult group, not the modern Greek far-right movement.

⁴³ G. Strong, *The Golden Dawn A Key to Ritual Magic* (Alfresford: Axis Mundi Books, 2014) p.100.

⁴⁴ <http://www.britishhomeopathic.org/bha-charity/how-we-can-help/medicine-a-z/silicea-2/>

⁴⁵ S.R. Wolf, *Solitary Witch* (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 2003) p.272.

⁴⁶ *Solitary Witch* p.269.

known limits of reality. Homeopathy uses medicinal substances that work with no material cause; potentized homeopathic remedies are diluted far beyond the possibility that even a single molecule of the substance made it into the final medicine. Their effect is “non-material.”...But moreover, astrologers who investigate homeopathy will discover we are not alone in the cosmos among practitioners who are using subtle energy, seemingly abstract concepts and a holistic model of reality when working with someone we recognize as a whole person.⁴⁷

Conclusion

There is nothing wrong with holistic healing when it is carried out in the Orthodox Church, indeed Christ commands us to visit the sick (cf. Matt. 25:36) and Saint James the Brother of God teaches in his epistle: ‘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’ (Jam. 5:14). Just because someone proclaims himself a Christian and carries out healing does not mean that this practice is Orthodox: the huge number of ‘Orthodox’ faith healers in Russia are a prime example.

Our brief investigation of classical and modern homeopathy has shown that not only does it have a spiritual side to it, an occult thread runs through it. The close association of modern homeopathy with the occult should give rise to serious concerns amongst all Orthodox Christians and it is something that should be avoided; parents who are tempted to treat their children with homeopathy should remember this especially.

As we saw above, Canon XI of the Quinisext Oecumenical Council forbids Christians from consulting non-Orthodox physicians for holistic care. Instead of homeopathy, it is worth exploring traditional herbal remedies that are effective in treating a wide range of conditions and do not rely on any spiritual or ‘vital force’ for their effectiveness. These remedies can be bought from pharmacies or supermarkets without the need to consult a ‘herbalist’.

Homeopathic medicine cannot cure spiritual illness even though it might claim to. As Orthodox Christians we should change our lives by repentance, by living the ascetic life of the Church, by keeping the fasts. Until we come to the conclusion that the problem with our life is not our disordered vital force, but our sins, we will never be able to start on the path of repentance. Instead of trying to obtain blessings from clergy for permission to break the canons and traditions of the Church, we should embrace them. Instead of trusting in homeopaths, we should run to Christ as the ‘Physician of our souls and bodies’.⁴⁸ We should trust in the Church from whom we receive, as Saint Ignatius of Antioch teaches, the true ‘Medicine of Immortality’.

⁴⁷ <http://www.planetwaves.net/homeopathy.html>

⁴⁸ Eucharistic Prayer of the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom.