Homeopathy and Catholicism: Saintly and Wholesome Medicine

St. Peter’s Square, Vatican City

Years ago, I spent four weeks visiting a cloistered convent to instruct the sisters on how to use homeopathy. Mother Superior, as well as other members, had been my clients for some years when they asked if I could teach them some basics in homeopathy enough to rely on it on their own.

Other convents across the U.S. and in distant areas of the world such as Africa and India have also asked my advice, and many times, I sent a homeopathy kit and my book to boost their often already well-established knowledge of homeopathy.

Indeed, several Catholic priests have been my clients. One exceptional one, who influenced me probably more profoundly than I him, married my husband and me years after our civil

marriage and later baptized our sons.

In each case, I gave the gift of homeopathy. In turn, they gave me a deeper connection to my faith.

None of this is unusual.

Why, the use of homeopathy has been permitted, even championed in the Vatican itself for centuries!

Numerous popes have used and supported homeopathy, including St. John Paul II, who awarded the Order of St. Gregory to his homeopathic physician, Dr. Francesco Negro.

Should you not be up on your church history, the Order of St. Gregory is the highest honor currently bestowed on a layperson by the Vatican.

In fact, the Vatican's association with homeopathy dates back to the advent of homeopathy in Europe in the early 1800s.

The success of homeopathy in treating cholera epidemics was partly responsible for the acceptance and spread of this medical paradigm.

For example, a report delivered to the House of Lords after the cholera epidemic of London in 1854 estimated the mortality rate under allopathic care was 59% while under homeopathic care the mortality was only 9%.

This is in step with what was happening in the Vatican.

Pope Gregory XVI awarded the Grand Cross (the highest order he could bestow on a layperson at the time) to the famous Italian doctor Settimio Centamori after his homeopathic treatment triumphantly restored health to those in the Vatican and Italy who suffered from that horrible disease.

When doctors were not available, both Pope Gregory XVI and Pope Pius IX permitted the clergy to administer homeopathic remedies to the people of Italy and beyond.

The Jesuits, too, have a long history of having counted on homeopathy throughout the world. In fact, *Ignatia*, a common homeopathic medicine for grief and worry bears St. Ignatius' name.

And, of course, Mother Theresa used homeopathy in her work with the poorest of India, with her order, the Sisters of Charity.

Dr. Banerji, the doctor with whom I work side-by-side in Calcutta, knew Mother Teresa and personally confirmed this to me.

Further, many Catholic hospitals and clinics throughout the world, in European countries as well as South America and India, had and still today depend on homeopathy.

Why does the Vatican and many offshoots, large medical facilities and governments use this medicine? Because homeopathy is safe, inexpensive and has the ability to effectively address serious acute, chronic and epidemic diseases.

Why do some think the Church has taken a position against the use of homeopathy?

Unfortunately, some people associate homeopathy with "new age." Critics of homeopathy (made up of a conventional, despotic, medical faction most readily poised to lose market share if homeopathy regains a foothold in the medical arena) must use terms such as "voodoo medicine" to heighten a new-age association and cast suspicion.

It is true that alternative medicine has appealed to the

new-age outlook and those interested in Eastern philosophies like yoga and such because alternative medicines tend to recognize that the patient has a spiritual feature, in juxtaposition to the often sterile and mechanical environment of allopathic medicine.

And so, homeopathy has been inaccurately clumped into a particular group by erroneous and unfortunate association.

Although new-agers and hippies have shown an interest in homeopathy in the last decades, I find in my own practice that just the opposite has presented itself.

I largely work with conservative Catholics, traditional Christians including Amish and Mennonites as well as conservative Jews, all of whom love homeopathy because it has helped them and their families.

Perhaps they chose me as their practitioner because they have noted my leanings towards a more conservative lifestyle and felt comfortable with me for that.

Perhaps it is simply my good fortune that I get to work with such a splendid lot.

Since these folks are users of and show an interest in homeopathy, does that make anyone else interested in homeopathy associated with Catholicism, traditional Christianity, Amish or Jewish?

Ridiculous! (I can’t believe I must even make this argument.)

The manufacturing process of homeopathic medicines causes confusion to the newcomer.

Apparently, one of the points of confusion to those new to

homeopathy is the dilution process by which the remedies are made. Since it is not readily understood how something highly diluted can be effective, it has been dismissed by opponents that homeopathy must be something magical.

I chuckled the first time I heard this and a titter in me still reverberates when I think of the sophomoric logic in this argument.

I still don't understand how a microwave oven works. But does that mean I ascribe it to magic?

And just as a conventional doctor's prescription of Ritalin is not influenced by his faith, (Ahem … if it were, he might not write it), a homeopath's effectiveness is not influenced by his beliefs, religion or lifestyle.

My husband and I have toured large and small homeopathic pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities in the U.S. and India where remedies are made.

What we witnessed in every instance was technical and scientific settings, regularly visited by the FDA (in the U.S.) and other national and international pharmaceutical governing bodies.

Christians, Christians, everywhere Christians

(and everyone else)

At this point, I hesitate to risk sharing that I often say a prayer for the well-being of my clients and students, because it might lead some to think it's part of some homeopathic ritual or something.

My prayers happen to be Catholic in nature because that is what I am, but it has nothing to do with the action of the medicines.

It’s simply my personal, old-fashioned point of view that prayer augments good in general.

Yet, if one absolutely *insists* on casting a religious hue to homeopathy, it might historically be one of a Christian note, since it was largely developed and practiced by European and later Indian and American Christians.

The founder of modern homeopathy, Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, was said to be a “puritanical Christian.” His writings of the time (late 1700s) reference his gratitude to God for “permitting” him to discover homeopathic principles.

Monument to Dr. Samuel Hahnemann
Washington, D.C.

Regardless of his religious beliefs though, he was a scientist and a noted chemist of his day. He followed a very strict scientific method in studying the effects of homeopathic remedies in his data.

Following the adoption of homeopathy throughout Europe, it

was the German Christian missionaries who brought homeopathy to India in 1810 while charitably treating the poor and converting many to Christianity.

Today homeopathy is an established medical paradigm there, with clinics, hospitals and medical schools, thanks to those missionaries. What the Indians have done since that time that furthered homeopathy is fodder for a future blog.

Lastly, allow me to offer another thought that may help you sort out the difference between the integrity of homeopathy and the kind of medicine that is prominent in North America; the one you've likely been using for decades without giving it a thought.

If how a medicine is practiced on the innocent is a measure of its honor, then we must consider the following:

You will never find a homeopathic physician performing an abortion in a women's clinic.

Nor will you catch one behind closed doors (while the intentionally clueless mother is assigned to the waiting room) inducing an adolescent girl to take birth control pills.

Indeed, if any questions of legitimacy ought to be asked, should it not be directed at those who perform questionable, nay, immoral practices?

Unlike substantial segments of its modern medical counterpart, homeopathy provides wholesome, non-violent, truthful and curative medicine based on scientific pharmacology.

So, have no fear!

Follow in the path of customary Catholics, priests, nuns,

popes, Christian missionaries, conservative Christians, an imminent saint and traditional Jews – yes and even seculars, atheists, agnostics and new-agers – all adding up to over 450 million users of homeopathy on earth today.

Just like owning a microwave, you needn't hold a particular religion to use it.

So, count on this gentle and effective medicine to heal your family no matter your religion or discipline.

After all, it's simply good medicine.

Want to learn more about how homeopathy, Catholicism and Christianity work together seamlessly? Read Dana Ullman's book *The Homeopathic Revolution: Why Famous People & Cultural Heroes Choose Homeopathy.*

For those interested in further study of the compatibility of homeopathy and Christianity, I recommend the book *A Christian's Guide to Homoeopathy* by Alan Crook, MA, MCH, RSHom. He sums his argument up well with this statement: "It [homeopathy] is based on a scientific law, and the careful observation of cause and effect … There is nothing in any of this which could be suspected of sorcery or occultism once its scientific mechanism is understood." (Winterpress, 1996, pg 53).