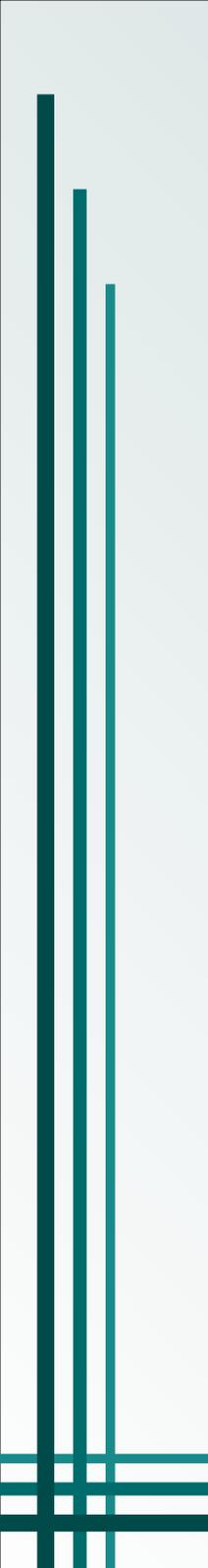




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REVERSING THE WORST EVIL



Ministry, 2.0

A NEW MODEL FROM DOWN UNDER

A Special Focus—Cities

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—*Loma Linda Messages*, 143

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—W.C. White to Dr. F.T. Lamb, August 23, 1899



Meeting the Need

“The failure of banks and the financial pressure make hard times everywhere in this country. It is difficult for students to obtain money to defray their expenses at school, or for our brethren to build even the most humble places of worship. We hear of people starving to death in the cities, and nearly every day persons come to our door begging for something to eat. They are never turned away....”

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“Sister Louise had been in their homes and nursed them when they were sick and given up to die, some of them; had nursed their mothers and cared for them, had shown them how to clean up their homes and make them brighter; had given them little picture cards and flowers, and had said kind words to them, and like their parents they were ready to go down on their knees to her.

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The Path of Influence

“On Sabbath afternoon, May 12 [1894], a special meeting of the North Fitzroy church was held to consider the Christian Help work. Bro. Daniells conducted the meeting, and cited his hearers to the example of Christ, who “went about doing good,” ministering to the suffering body as well as to the sin-sick soul. Bro. Semmens, who has had considerable experience in this work in America, told how the work is done there. Sister Ingels gave some examples of practical Christian work in Prahran.

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“Other bands will soon be organized in the various suburbs where our people reside. We look for this kind of work shortly to do as much or more for the propagation of the message of truth for these days as the regular preaching of the word.”

—J.O. Corliss, *Review and Herald*, July 24, 1894

Details...

“There have been 360 meetings held with a gross attendance of 6,000, or an average of nearly twenty per meeting. Thirty open air meetings have been held, forty prayer meetings, and 233 Bible studies, with an average attendance of six. In these meetings sixty-six men have made a profession of conversion. Of these a goodly number are, to our knowledge, standing well.

Details...

“Homes have been found for four old men and one baby girl. Fifty-eight men have been found billets, and medical attendance and treatments have been secured or provided for in 800 instances. Visits have been paid to the goal, hospital, and other institutions, and numerous visits made to the docks and slums. Very many of our principal merchants have been called upon and, brought into touch and hearty sympathy with our work.

Details...

“One man who has experienced the new birth this year says: ‘Nine months ago I was a drunkard, my wife had left me, I was hopeless. Today I am a Christian, a sober man, and have my home restored.’ Another says: ‘I have learned to trust the Lord this year.’ Another’s testimony is: ‘Twelve months ago I was friendless in Melbourne, today I have friends, work, and hope.’”

—Bible Echo, February 26, 1900

Assessing Progress

“I am more and more satisfied that the plans on which Elder Corliss is endeavoring to work, are in harmony with Apostolic methods. We have been very much encouraged by the growth in wisdom and in efficiency of the young men who are working with him, and we are much pleased with the results of their labors. There is now such a demand for Bible readings upon the part of the people to whom we have been distributing the printed sermons that we shall arrange to release Brethren Semmens and Pallant from the work of distribution, that they may spend their entire energies in holding readings.

—Letter, W.C. White to O.A. Olsen, August 20, 1895

Assessing Progress

“For some months they [A.W. Semmens and his wife, Emma] have been laboring in Sydney and its suburbs. He combines the work of a colporteur-evangelist and a missionary-nurse, and his labors are very effective. He is becoming one of the best Bible workers we have, and I think he is being much benefited by the course of instruction [in how to give ‘Bible Readings’] he is receiving from Elder Corliss.”

—Letter, W.C. White to Elder Robert Hare, November 20, 1896

Assessing Progress

“We have been taught by the example of Christ, and by the Testimonies that have been repeatedly given to our brethren in the ministry, and to the physicians and managers of the Battle Creek Sanitarium and the Health Retreat, that the work of the gospel minister and of the physician should be combined; that the minister should have a care for the physical prosperity of his flock, that the physician should be a true minister of Christ, laboring for the health of the soul as well as for the body.

Assessing Progress

“With this instruction in view I have felt that our brethren made a grave mistake when they put a check upon our ministers from teaching health reform, and called for specialists to do that work. It would have been better if the specialists had been employed to teach the ministers, so that their work with the people would have been more effective.

Assessing Progress

“I have felt that it was just as grave an error for Dr. Kellogg to make everything of the health work, and belittle the evangelistic work, as he virtually does by magnifying the one so far above the other.

Assessing Progress

“I have felt that his criticisms were largely out of place regarding the work of Brother Semmens during the past two years, because in treating the matter as though Semmens was not fulfilling his mission while dividing his time between evangelical and nursing work, he virtually says that persons trained in the health work must make that their exclusive business; and thus he does just what the [General] Conference did in putting asunder that which God has joined together.”

—Letter, W.C. White to A.G. Daniells, June 17, 1896

Differences of Opinion

“You may be familiar with the circumstance which attended the coming back to Australia, of Brother and Sister Semmens, and with the fact that they have always looked forward to the time when they should be principally engaged caring for the sick.

Differences of Opinion

“Dr Kellogg has never been able to understand why our Conferences should not employ them to work in the interests of the sick and suffering, and to instruct our people in the principles of healthful living, the same as many workers trained at the Sanitarium are employed by the American Conferences. He has been very much dissatisfied that Brother Semmens was so largely employed in evangelistic work....”

Differences of Opinion

“We have been anxious to make a beginning in some line of work that would be largely self-supporting, and that would provide an opportunity for the sick among us to have rational treatment, and that would also open the way for the training of Christian Help workers....

Differences of Opinion

“From our experience with the health work, and health institutions in America, and from the testimonies sent to the managers and physicians at the Sanitariums, during the last twenty-five years, our brethren came to the unanimous opinion, that it was right, and essential to the highest success of the health work, that our health institutions should be sustained, and directed by the body, acting through properly appointed Committees. And that all physicians and nurses should be as fully under the supervision of the general body, as are the ministers and Bible workers.

Differences of Opinion

“It is the recognition of these principles, that has led to the rapid growth of our health institutions, and our Medical Mission work in its various branches, during the last seven years.”

—W.C. White, Aug 11, 1896. WCW Bk 10, 328

A United Work

“I want to tell you that when the gospel ministers and the medical missionary workers are not united, there is placed on our churches the worst evil that can be placed there. Our medical missionaries ought to be interested in the work of our Conferences, and our Conference workers ought to be as much interested in the work of our medical missionaries.”

—Loma Linda Messages, 59

A Great Destiny

“In considering the work to be done here in Australia, we see before us a great destiny. While talking with Sister White recently about this matter she made the following remark, ‘The medical work in Australia is destined to do more in this field than it has done even in America.’ Is it possible that we shall have such gigantic institutions and piles of buildings as they have? No; we have been told that this is not the best way to carry it forward.

A Great Destiny

“The remark was also made in that conversation that the medical work here in Australia is to be an example of what the work should be. In what respect? I ask. Evidently in the... harmonious relations existing between the medical work and the other branches of the third angel’s message.

“In Newcastle we have tried the experiment of uniting our evangelistic and medical missionary work, and now, Brother Starr, what has been the result, has it been successful or otherwise?

A Great Destiny

“Elder Starr: ‘Splendid. The people themselves are unwilling that there should be a separation....’

“[I have never] seen a community in which our peculiar views had been fully presented where there was less prejudice existing. This is as God would have it. Our work is not to create prejudice but to disarm it. We want nurses who are Bible workers; and we want Bible workers and canvassers who are nurses.”

—*Australasian Union Conference Record*, July 2, 1899

A Great Destiny

“Our first work began in the Australasian Bible School, located at St. Kilda, Victoria. Here we had many varied experiences.... Later we labored in tent and Bible work in Sydney, under the direction of J.O. Corliss, doing much work among the sick. We did not then understand why we could not enter upon strictly medical work; we know now. God was training us, that we should not be one-sided workers, but have an all-around experience.”

—*General Conference Bulletin*, June 2, 1909, 284

Paying the Bills

“Our medical work stands in the same relation to the evangelical work and organizations that all the rest of the work does. We have no separate medical organization.... That is a part of our evangelical work; and the leading physician, or physicians, are members of our Union Conference Committee, and they hold licenses to preach the gospel, and we encourage them to be ministers of Jesus Christ as well as physicians. We foster the medical work the same as we do anything else.”

Paying the Bills

“Yes, when they need it. When we first started out, the first man that came to us was Brother A.W. Semmens, a nurse who graduated from the Battle Creek Sanitarium. When he came out there, I did not know what to do, to get him started in the medical work.

“Some of our brethren had a little more light, and they said, ‘Let us make him a preacher and a medical worker combined; let us have him work in the churches, and tell the brethren of the gospel of health, and let us help support him from the tithes of the Conference.’

Paying the Bills

“So we gave Brother Semmens some money from the tithes, and we said, ‘He shall have his living now, and we want him to teach the principles of health and temperance, and of the gospel in all its branches, doing what he can to educate the people in all these things. And so he went right along, like all our Conference laborers, making a report of his receipts, and then the Conference paid him what they ought to pay him to make a fair living.’”

—A.G. Daniells, *General Conference Bulletin*, April 7, 1901

Paying the Bills

“I send you... a letter written for America... which will show you how I regard the tithe money being used for other purposes. This is the Lord’s special revenue fund, for a special purpose. I have never so fully understood this matter as I now understand it. Having had questions directed here to me to answer, I have had special instruction from the Lord that the tithe is for a special purpose, consecrated to God to sustain those who minister in the sacred work as the Lord’s chosen, to do His work not only in sermonizing but in ministering. They should understand all that this comprehends.

—Manuscript Releases, vol. 13, 281

Paying the Bills

“In the night season I am laboring earnestly with persons who do not seem to understand that in the providence of God the medical missionary work is to be as the right hand of the body. Some utterly fail to realize the importance of missionaries being also medical missionaries. A gospel minister will be twice as successful in his work if he understands how to treat disease.

Paying the Bills

“Continually increasing light has been given me on this subject. Some, who do not see the advantage of educating the youth to be physicians both of the mind and of the body, say that the tithe should not be used to support medical missionaries, who devote their time to treating the sick.

Paying the Bills

“In response to such statements as these, I am instructed to say that the mind must not become so narrowed down that it cannot take in the truth of the situation. A minister of the gospel, who is also a medical missionary, who through Christ can cure physical ailments as well as minister in spiritual things, is a much more efficient worker than one who cannot do this. His work as a minister of the gospel is much more complete.

Paying the Bills

“For many years I have been gathering rays of divine light on this subject. Let those who are being educated for the ministry receive an education in medical missionary lines. It is of great advantage to the minister of the gospel who expects to go to foreign fields that he should have a knowledge of surgery, that in cases of necessity he will know how to handle medical instruments. This knowledge will open doors for the presentation of the truth to the higher classes, as well as to the most lowly.”

—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 14, 269

The Bottom Line

“I wish to tell you that soon there will be no work done in ministerial lines but medical missionary work. The work of a minister is to minister. Our ministers are to work on the gospel plan of ministering....

“Had you carried the work forward in the lines in which God intended you to, had you done medical missionary work, trying to heal soul and body, you would have seen hundreds and thousands coming into the truth....

The Bottom Line

“You will never be ministers after the gospel order till you show a decided interest in medical missionary work, the gospel of healing and blessing and strengthening. Come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty powers of darkness, that it be not said of you, ‘Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord.’”

—*General Conference Bulletin*, April 12, 1901

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REVERSING THE WORST EVIL

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My book on Adventist History, *Hindsight*, is also available through that address. (\$10 +s/h; free s/h on 5 or more copies). The book upon which this series of talks is based, (same title and subtitle as above) is currently available online from Remnant Publications. The HEALTH program (that's "Health Evangelism And Leadership Training for Him" and I highly recommend the class) operated by Weimar Institute has a supply, and the book is also available in at least some ABC's. If you are interested in box lots (36 copies per box), you could get in touch with me at the email above and I may (or may not) be able to help out on the pricing.

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Ministry, 2.0

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A Special Focus—Cities

“There is to be a working of our cities as they never have been worked. That which should have been done twenty, yes, more than twenty years ago, is now to be done speedily.”

—Loma Linda Messages, 143

When Ellen White went to Australia in 1891, she ran into something new to her—a country without small towns. There were exceptions, to be sure, but the great majority of the population was clustered in the large cities of the Eastern Seaboard.

Circumstances necessitated an emphasis on reaching the people in the cities. Except for the educational work at rural Cooranbong, work for the cities was nearly the sole focus.

This priority continued when she returned to the United States in 1900, and in time her comments became more emphatic. Here are some examples:

CLICK

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—Testimonies, vol. 9, 167

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“In every city there should be a city mission, that would be a training school for workers. Many of our brethren must stand condemned in the sight of God because they have not done the very work that God would have them do.”

—Medical Ministry, 303

So what did all this mean?

Let's look at the work in Australia.... or, perhaps more accurately, let's look at what the work in Australia was ideally supposed to be. That's an important idea, because the work in Australia was *supposed* to be “ideal.”

The most well-known aspect of this “model-work” was the new college started there.

A Model Work

“The Avondale school was established, not to be like the schools of the world, but, as God revealed, to be a pattern school.”

—Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 349

“The light which has been given me regarding the work of the Avondale school is that we must not pattern after the similitude of any school which has already been established.”

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A Model Work

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Avondale’s role as a “model” is not commonly recognized, but not entirely unknown either. But even less common is a recognition that the rest of the work was to be a new model, as well.

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“It is [God’s] purpose that there shall be a true pattern in Australia—a sample of how other fields shall be worked. The work should be symmetrical, and a living witness for the truth.”

—General Conference Daily Bulletin, March 2, 1899

A comment from Willie White gives a little more detail as to what Ellen White was thinking in this regard....

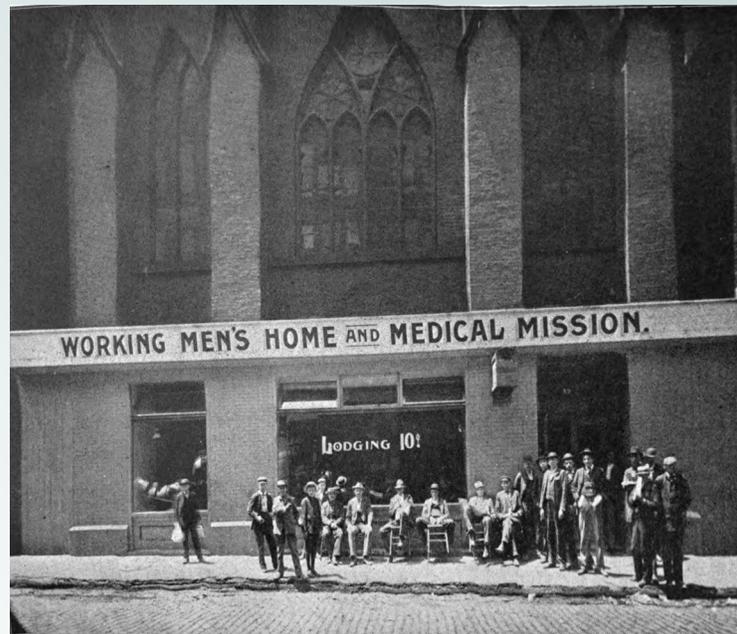
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—W.C. White to Dr. F.T. Lamb, August 23, 1899

{Quotation taken from Bert Haloviak, *Ellen White and the Australasian Ministers, 1893 to 1901*, 5}

Unfortunately, this goal was never achieved as fully as Ellen White wished. The problem was a perpetual shortage of financial support from the church in America. There were a number of factors that contributed to this but chief among them was the large amount of money expended on the ever-growing work of the Chicago City Mission.



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Here's one example. This is the "Working Men's Home." In the 1897 Yearbook of the International Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association it is described like this:

The "Workingmen's Home, located in Chicago,... lodges between three and four hundred persons daily, and feeds more than two thousand." --p. 10

And that wasn't the only expense... there were a *lot* of expenses in Chicago. This was especially unfortunate in light of the circumstances in Australia at the time.

Meeting the Need

“The failure of banks and the financial pressure make hard times everywhere in this country. It is difficult for students to obtain money to defray their expenses at school, or for our brethren to build even the most humble places of worship. We hear of people starving to death in the cities, and nearly every day persons come to our door begging for something to eat. They are never turned away....

Perhaps as a blessing in disguise, the great need of the people they sought to win provided the opening God’s workers needed to reach them. The resulting emphasis on practical service was not a new thought to Ellen White, but she certainly emphasized it during her time in Australasia more than she ever had before.

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“O how thankful I shall be when we can see the work going with power, and many souls compelled to come in from the highways and hedges because of the overwhelming evidence of the truth that the Lord impresses upon the human heart.”

—Review and Herald, May 29, 1894

One of the metaphors for this work is evident in these lines—the “Last Call to the Supper,” when the servants were bidden to “compel them to come in.”

The second major Scriptural tie which Ellen White employed in discussing this sort of ministry can be seen here:

Meeting the Need

“We cannot with our wills sway back the wave of poverty which is sweeping over this country; but just as far as the Lord shall provide us with means, we shall break every yoke, and let the oppressed go free.”

—Manuscript Releases, vol. 16, 69

The allusion is to Isaiah 58, of course—the passage of scripture Ellen White referred to more than any other, with the possible exception of the Three Angels messages in Revelation 14.

Meeting the Need

“Yesterday it all opened before me that in this very line of hospitality, I have been repeatedly shown that we can unite the people with us, and can have twofold influence over them. This was unfolded before me in the first experience in this work, many years back, and we have ever linked our interest with humanity.”

—Letter, Ellen White to W.C. White, August 6, 1894

It almost sounds like this was the first time the idea of “hospitality” as an evangelistic tool had crossed Ellen White’s mind. It wasn’t, of course. But somehow it seems to have been strongly impressed on her thinking just then.

She wasn’t the only one, though. About this same time, articles stressing the Christian Help Work being done back in the States were running commonly in denominational periodicals. Here’s a typical account:

A Success Story

"I started out with Sister Louise last Sunday morning to visit some of the subjects for the purpose of taking a few photographs to throw upon the screen in talking about this work and to interest people in it. I had no sooner turned the corner than a little girl shouted at the top of her voice, 'O here is Sister Louise!' and ran and threw her arms about her and expressed the greatest delight at seeing her. Her cry attracted others, and soon children were running from every direction, shouting, 'Sister Louise,' and in a few minutes there was such a crowd I had to go out into the middle of the street.

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“Sister Louise had been in their homes and nursed them when they were sick and given up to die, some of them; had nursed their mothers and cared for them, had shown them how to clean up their homes and make them brighter; had given them little picture cards and flowers, and had said kind words to them, and like their parents they were ready to go down on their knees to her.

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“It is no trouble for any of our nurses to gather any number of children together for a Sabbath-school, and no trouble to keep them absolutely quiet, even though they are brought in from the very lowest haunts of vice in the city. It is perfectly wonderful what power there is in the influence of medical missionary work.”

—Bible Echo, March 18, 1894

This kind of ministry began to take tangible shape in Australia a few months later with the return of Arthur W. Semmens to his native land. You may remember Arthur from our last meeting—he was the leader of the very first Christian Help Band formed at the Sanitarium.

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“During the past six months there has been a greater interest manifested in this church in the missionary meetings than for years past, and the attendance has been increased fourfold.”

—Anna L. Ingels, *Review and Herald*, December 4, 1894

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The Path of Influence

“Other bands will soon be organized in the various suburbs where our people reside. We look for this kind of work shortly to do as much or more for the propagation of the message of truth for these days as the regular preaching of the word.”

—J.O. Corliss, *Review and Herald*, July 24, 1894

But what were they actually doing? What sort of activities filled their days?

To get a more detailed account, we have to jump down a few years.

Details...

“There have been 360 meetings held with a gross attendance of 6,000, or an average of nearly twenty per meeting. Thirty open air meetings have been held, forty prayer meetings, and 233 Bible studies, with an average attendance of six. In these meetings sixty-six men have made a profession of conversion. Of these a goodly number are, to our knowledge, standing well.

Details...

“Homes have been found for four old men and one baby girl. Fifty-eight men have been found billets, and medical attendance and treatments have been secured or provided for in 800 instances. Visits have been paid to the goal, hospital, and other institutions, and numerous visits made to the docks and slums. Very many of our principal merchants have been called upon and, brought into touch and hearty sympathy with our work.

Details...

“One man who has experienced the new birth this year says: ‘Nine months ago I was a drunkard, my wife had left me, I was hopeless. Today I am a Christian, a sober man, and have my home restored.’ Another says: ‘I have learned to trust the Lord this year.’ Another’s testimony is: ‘Twelve months ago I was friendless in Melbourne, today I have friends, work, and hope.’”

—Bible Echo, February 26, 1900

Now this report is from Melbourne, but there were also “Helping Hand” Missions in Adelaide, Perth, and North Fitzroy. Closely related to this last establishment was the “Helping Hand Wood Yard,” where men could work in a firewood business to pay for food and lodging.

In addition, a “Hydropathic Institute” was operated in Adelaide, and two “Health Homes” in Perth and Summer Hill. As best I can tell from the published reports about these institutions, they were pretty much “standard” Sanitarium-type operations that did a fair amount of free and reduced-cost charity work.

So, how was it going? Was all this working out well? Here are Willie White’s thoughts...

Assessing Progress

“I am more and more satisfied that the plans on which Elder Corliss is endeavoring to work, are in harmony with Apostolic methods. We have been very much encouraged by the growth in wisdom and in efficiency of the young men who are working with him, and we are much pleased with the results of their labors. There is now such a demand for Bible readings upon the part of the people to whom we have been distributing the printed sermons that we shall arrange to release Brethren Semmens and Pallant from the work of distribution, that they may spend their entire energies in holding readings.

—Letter, W.C. White to O.A. Olsen, August 20, 1895

Assessing Progress

“For some months they [A.W. Semmens and his wife, Emma] have been laboring in Sydney and its suburbs. He combines the work of a colporteur-evangelist and a missionary-nurse, and his labors are very effective. He is becoming one of the best Bible workers we have, and I think he is being much benefited by the course of instruction [in how to give ‘Bible Readings’] he is receiving from Elder Corliss.”

—Letter, W.C. White to Elder Robert Hare, November 20, 1896

Everything seemed to be going well... but why? In Willie White’s mind, it was simple: they were following God’s plan.

Assessing Progress

“We have been taught by the example of Christ, and by the Testimonies that have been repeatedly given to our brethren in the ministry, and to the physicians and managers of the Battle Creek Sanitarium and the Health Retreat, that the work of the gospel minister and of the physician should be combined; that the minister should have a care for the physical prosperity of his flock, that the physician should be a true minister of Christ, laboring for the health of the soul as well as for the body.

Assessing Progress

“With this instruction in view I have felt that our brethren made a grave mistake when they put a check upon our ministers from teaching health reform, and called for specialists to do that work. It would have been better if the specialists had been employed to teach the ministers, so that their work with the people would have been more effective.

OK... so what is Willie talking about here? This may be a reference to the formation of the largely independent Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association. This was done at the General Conference of 1893, and the records of those proceedings were left out of the Daily Bulletin along with Kellogg's talks. That information was to be published in a second Extra edition of the Medical Missionary. I've never seen a copy of that, and I don't even know whether or not it was ever printed.

But let's go on...

Assessing Progress

“I have felt that it was just as grave an error for Dr. Kellogg to make everything of the health work, and belittle the evangelistic work, as he virtually does by magnifying the one so far above the other.

Assessing Progress

“I have felt that his criticisms were largely out of place regarding the work of Brother Semmens during the past two years, because in treating the matter as though Semmens was not fulfilling his mission while dividing his time between evangelical and nursing work, he virtually says that persons trained in the health work must make that their exclusive business; and thus he does just what the [General] Conference did in putting asunder that which God has joined together.”

—Letter, W.C. White to A.G. Daniells, June 17, 1896

But there's even more going on behind the scenes. For one thing, A.W.—and maybe Emma as well—wasn't entirely happy with his job. Once again the story comes from a letter by Willie White, this time to the Executive Committee of the Australasian Union Conference:

Differences of Opinion

“You may be familiar with the circumstance which attended the coming back to Australia, of Brother and Sister Semmens, and with the fact that they have always looked forward to the time when they should be principally engaged caring for the sick.

Notice what Brother and Sister Semmens wanted to do. That is, after all, what they had been trained to do in the Nursing Course at Battle Creek....

Well, a lot of people have wanted a change in their first job assignment, so this isn't too surprising. What makes it more interesting is what Willie White goes on to say:

Differences of Opinion

“Dr Kellogg has never been able to understand why our Conferences should not employ them to work in the interests of the sick and suffering, and to instruct our people in the principles of healthful living, the same as many workers trained at the Sanitarium are employed by the American Conferences. He has been very much dissatisfied that Brother Semmens was so largely employed in evangelistic work....

It seems there was at least a slight difference of opinion between the Australian brethren and Doctor Kellogg.

Later in that same letter, Willie comments:

Differences of Opinion

“We have been anxious to make a beginning in some line of work that would be largely self-supporting, and that would provide an opportunity for the sick among us to have rational treatment, and that would also open the way for the training of Christian Help workers....”

Here we start to see the difference between medical missionary work in America and medical missionary work in Australasia. It's not that either group was doing something that the others would consider totally heretical, but the overall balance was far different.

Differences of Opinion

“From our experience with the health work, and health institutions in America, and from the testimonies sent to the managers and physicians at the Sanitariums, during the last twenty-five years, our brethren came to the unanimous opinion, that it was right, and essential to the highest success of the health work, that our health institutions should be sustained, and directed by the body, acting through properly appointed Committees. And that all physicians and nurses should be as fully under the supervision of the general body, as are the ministers and Bible workers.

Willie puts this down as a strongly held conviction. What's more, he attributes the success that they had had in their work to this very policy:

Differences of Opinion

“It is the recognition of these principles, that has led to the rapid growth of our health institutions, and our Medical Mission work in its various branches, during the last seven years.”

—W.C. White, Aug 11, 1896. WCW Bk 10, 328

{Haloviak, 29, 30}

What Willie is talking about here was important.

How important?

Really, really, *really* important!

A United Work

“I want to tell you that when the gospel ministers and the medical missionary workers are not united, there is placed on our churches the worst evil that can be placed there. Our medical missionaries ought to be interested in the work of our Conferences, and our Conference workers ought to be as much interested in the work of our medical missionaries.”

—Loma Linda Messages, 59

How could this be such a big issue? Really, the “worst” evil seems like a bit of an overstatement. Worse than Kellogg’s pantheism? Worse than giving up the Sabbath?

Grammarians may have to help hold the line on this, but “worst” is unarguably a superlative. There really is nothing worse than the worst. And Ellen White hardly ever uses hyperbole. (That’s just a fancy word that English teachers use for exaggeration.)

So what makes it so bad? And does it really affect just the churches, and do nothing bad to doctors?

No answers for those questions right now. Let’s just look a bit more at the “model” Ellen White was trying to create in Australia.

A Great Destiny

“In considering the work to be done here in Australia, we see before us a great destiny. While talking with Sister White recently about this matter she made the following remark, ‘The medical work in Australia is destined to do more in this field than it has done even in America.’ Is it possible that we shall have such gigantic institutions and piles of buildings as they have? No; we have been told that this is not the best way to carry it forward.

Perhaps the most encouraging thing about the effort to blend medical and evangelistic work together is that it worked. This next comment is from a speech by an MD from New Zealand, Dr. Edward Caro:

CLICK for text:

A Great Destiny

“The remark was also made in that conversation that the medical work here in Australia is to be an example of what the work should be. In what respect? I ask. Evidently in the... harmonious relations existing between the medical work and the other branches of the third angel’s message.

“In Newcastle we have tried the experiment of uniting our evangelistic and medical missionary work, and now, Brother Starr, what has been the result, has it been successful or otherwise?

A Great Destiny

“Elder Starr: ‘Splendid. The people themselves are unwilling that there should be a separation....’

“[I have never] seen a community in which our peculiar views had been fully presented where there was less prejudice existing. This is as God would have it. Our work is not to create prejudice but to disarm it. We want nurses who are Bible workers; and we want Bible workers and canvassers who are nurses.”

—Australasian Union Conference Record, July 2, 1899

And success comes in many forms. One of the better effects of all this was that A.W. and Emma Semmens ended up happy with the way things had turned out. It took a while, but the concept of a mingled ministry that Ellen White was promoting finally made sense to them. Here’s how he described it some years later:

A Great Destiny

“Our first work began in the Australasian Bible School, located at St. Kilda, Victoria. Here we had many varied experiences.... Later we labored in tent and Bible work in Sydney, under the direction of J.O. Corliss, doing much work among the sick. We did not then understand why we could not enter upon strictly medical work; we know now. God was training us, that we should not be one-sided workers, but have an all-around experience.”

—General Conference Bulletin, June 2, 1909, 284

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So... what does all this mean? What are we to make of it?

This idea that the Lord was trying to establish a new model for our work... how big of a deal was that? In my opinion, pretty big. Big enough to make the difference between success and limping along afflicted by the “worst evil.”

Here’s another measure of this issue’s magnitude: It may sound crass, but one of the surest ways to measure commitment—and this works for both individuals and corporate entities—is, to “follow the money.”

So how serious were the brethren about all this? How serious was Ellen White? Let’s look at finances for a moment.

Paying the Bills

“Our medical work stands in the same relation to the evangelical work and organizations that all the rest of the work does. We have no separate medical organization.... That is a part of our evangelical work; and the leading physician, or physicians, are members of our Union Conference Committee, and they hold licenses to preach the gospel, and we encourage them to be ministers of Jesus Christ as well as physicians. We foster the medical work the same as we do anything else.”

This raised a question in mind of one of the delegates; he wanted to know, “Do any of the medical workers receive any support from the tithes?”

Here’s Elder Daniell’s response:

Paying the Bills

“Yes, when they need it. When we first started out, the first man that came to us was Brother A.W. Semmens, a nurse who graduated from the Battle Creek Sanitarium. When he came out there, I did not know what to do, to get him started in the medical work.

“Some of our brethren had a little more light, and they said, ‘Let us make him a preacher and a medical worker combined; let us have him work in the churches, and tell the brethren of the gospel of health, and let us help support him from the tithes of the Conference.’

Paying the Bills

“So we gave Brother Semmens some money from the tithes, and we said, ‘He shall have his living now, and we want him to teach the principles of health and temperance, and of the gospel in all its branches, doing what he can to educate the people in all these things. And so he went right along, like all our Conference laborers, making a report of his receipts, and then the Conference paid him what they ought to pay him to make a fair living.’”

—A.G. Daniells, *General Conference Bulletin*, April 7, 1901

It's nice to note that, like many other frustrated Christians, Arthur Semmens ended up being thankful for the experience which had troubled him at the time.

Paying the Bills

“I send you... a letter written for America... which will show you how I regard the tithe money being used for other purposes. This is the Lord’s special revenue fund, for a special purpose. I have never so fully understood this matter as I now understand it. Having had questions directed here to me to answer, I have had special instruction from the Lord that the tithe is for a special purpose, consecrated to God to sustain those who minister in the sacred work as the Lord’s chosen, to do His work not only in sermonizing but in ministering. They should understand all that this comprehends.

—Manuscript Releases, vol. 13, 281

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What does she mean by those closing comments?

“not only in sermonizing but in ministering”

“understand all that this comprehends”

Well, it’s safe to say that for most of us, “understanding” can take a while. Evidently she was still working on spreading that “understanding” in 1901 when Elder Daniells made told his story about A.W. Semmons at the General Conference. Four days after Daniells spoke, she had this to say:

Paying the Bills

“In the night season I am laboring earnestly with persons who do not seem to understand that in the providence of God the medical missionary work is to be as the right hand of the body. Some utterly fail to realize the importance of missionaries being also medical missionaries. A gospel minister will be twice as successful in his work if he understands how to treat disease.

Paying the Bills

“Continually increasing light has been given me on this subject. Some, who do not see the advantage of educating the youth to be physicians both of the mind and of the body, say that the tithe should not be used to support medical missionaries, who devote their time to treating the sick.

Paying the Bills

“In response to such statements as these, I am instructed to say that the mind must not become so narrowed down that it cannot take in the truth of the situation. A minister of the gospel, who is also a medical missionary, who through Christ can cure physical ailments as well as minister in spiritual things, is a much more efficient worker than one who cannot do this. His work as a minister of the gospel is much more complete.

Paying the Bills

“For many years I have been gathering rays of divine light on this subject. Let those who are being educated for the ministry receive an education in medical missionary lines. It is of great advantage to the minister of the gospel who expects to go to foreign fields that he should have a knowledge of surgery, that in cases of necessity he will know how to handle medical instruments. This knowledge will open doors for the presentation of the truth to the higher classes, as well as to the most lowly.”

—Manuscript Releases, vol. 14, 269

Maybe what she said didn't have the desired effect. Maybe she just knew that it takes a while to get a new idea into people's heads. Whatever the reason, it was the next day that she made this famous comment:

The Bottom Line

“I wish to tell you that soon there will be no work done in ministerial lines but medical missionary work. The work of a minister is to minister. Our ministers are to work on the gospel plan of ministering....

“Had you carried the work forward in the lines in which God intended you to, had you done medical missionary work, trying to heal soul and body, you would have seen hundreds and thousands coming into the truth....

Not clear enough? Well, she wasn't done...

The Bottom Line

“You will never be ministers after the gospel order till you show a decided interest in medical missionary work, the gospel of healing and blessing and strengthening. Come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty powers of darkness, that it be not said of you, ‘Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord.’”

—General Conference Bulletin, April 12, 1901

And so that’s where we’ll stop for now. Wondering about the fate of the “hundreds and thousands” who would have come into the faith. And pondering what it will take for us—laymen, too!—to become ministers after the gospel order.



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