

A Critique of David Stewart's "Healing Oils of the Bible"

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But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil. 1 Thess. 5:21, 22

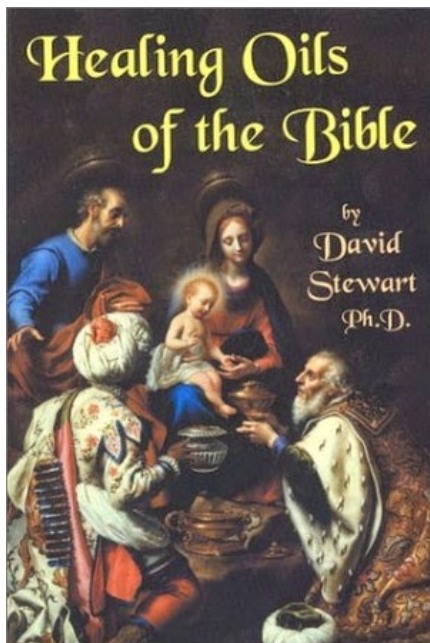
"But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here." Matt. 12:6

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. Phil 1: 9-11

(Note: The following article is an examination of some of the spiritual views in the book *Healing Oils of the Bible* by David Stewart, along with some other issues, but it is not a commentary on the use or components of essential oils or their medical efficacy.)

Healing Oils of the Bible by David Stewart, is a book whose title and content suggest it is compatible with a biblical and Christian worldview. However, in less than five minutes, by randomly reading a few pages, I was able to tell that a very non-biblical worldview is present in at least the pages I read. Further reading revealed more of the same. Yet there are several endorsements from Christians at the front of the book.

Several problems surface in the book, other than blatant non-Christian beliefs, including an adulation of nature, a dangerous anti-medical view, and a misuse and misapplication of Bible Scripture. Additionally, Stewart endorses a book by Pastor Henry Wright, a book which has been criticized for its misuse of Scripture. (I am also aware of the consternation Wright's book has caused among many Christian ministries).



It is undoubtedly true that some of the properties of the oils have the effects claimed by Stewart, and it is true that essential oils can help minor problems. However, Stewart

not only expresses hostility to any type of pharmaceutical treatment and to doctors, but he gives medical advice in this book, yet he is not a medical doctor!

Stewart had one semester in medical school. His undergraduate degree is in mathematics and physics, while his graduate degree (the PhD in the "Dr." title, which I am not using since it is misleading) is for geophysics (theoretical seismology), which has to do with earthquake study. This hardly qualifies him to give medical advice, yet he generously dispenses such advice, even suggesting that the use of two essential oil products "can create an environment that makes it difficult for cancer cells to survive" (283), and the use of another will straighten the spine and add up to an inch or more in height within an hour (80)! Such outrageous claims should cause any reader to take his other advice with a large shaker of salt.

If readers can be convinced that essential oils have healing power from God and that modern medicine and doctors are not from God, then the essential oils business this book services will garner more customers in the Christian community. Stewart pushes this thinking by constant attacks on the medical profession and pharmaceuticals. Oils are always from God and manmade medicines are not. This idea greets the reader in the first chapter, startlingly titled, "God: The First Aromatherapist." This view about what is and is not from God is not only false, but is mostly based on fallacious logic combined with New Age views about nature.

Mishandling of scriptural passages abound in this book. One is the convoluted attempt to apply First Corinthians 14:33 to the use of modern drugs. Another is citing Heb. 6:18 (that states God cannot lie) as meaning that essential oils are "*full of truth*" (47). The latter example is also a logical fallacy called begging the question because Stewart gives no biblical evidence that essential oils (which did not exist in Bible times anyway) were meant as medicine for today, so his assertion is baseless. In yet another instance, Stewart equates rejection of Jesus with disbelief in essential oils (82). This idea, if accepted, would certainly make those advocating oils feel righteous, but it is an insult to Jesus Christ. There are too many examples like this to discuss.

Before examining the spirituality in the book, three misleading assumptions need mention.

FAULTY ASSUMPTIONS

The book is based on the belief that essential oils were used in biblical times, but this is not true. Oils were either olive oils or infused oils, not the oils processed today as essential oils.

"The oils referred to in the Bible are infused oils, not essential oils. The Bible also refers to incense – which is also a completely different product than an essential oil.... And those four Thieves blend you also may have read about? They ALSO were not using

essential oils!...The story goes something like this, four thieves in France protected themselves from the black plague with cloves, rosemary, and other aromatics while robbing victims of the black plague, but who never got sick. "When captured, they were offered a lighter sentence in exchange for their secret recipe."

This "Thieves oil blend" usually includes Clove, Cinnamon Bark, Rosemary, Lemon and Eucalyptus. This story is historical fiction. The thieves were probably using a botanical vinegar and not essential oils" ([online source](#))

"The process of steam distillation was at least eight centuries away from refinement and popular use. Healing oils and unguents of the biblical age were infused oils, made largely from macerating plant matter in olive oil, palm oil, or tallow." ([online source](#))

"[T]here is no evidence of distillation taking place during biblical times. Many modern authors incorrectly refer to essential oil use during this time of history. When old, translated material refers to a healing oil, for example, many have erroneously assumed this is an essential oil. It is thought that aromatic oils were made by infusion, which we now refer to as infused oils" ([online source](#))

Yet Stewart continues to allude to "essential oils" of the Bible. This in itself is enough to discredit most of the book.

There is the assumption that because certain oils were used in Bible times there is something sacred or special about them, and we should be using them now as our main medicine. Plants and oils were used then because that is what they had. Anointing with oil in the Old Testament is usually symbolic, often of the Holy Spirit. There is nothing inherently sacred or supernaturally healing in oils, as Stewart clearly believes. However, this is Stewart's clear assumption. There is a spiritual reason for this, as we shall see.

Even if the above problems did not exist, the profound non-Christian spiritual views in the book are so prevalent that they alone are a sufficient reason to warn against this work.

VITALISM, PANENTHEISM AND GNOSTIC ESOTERICISM

The overwhelming worldview in the book is a mixture of Vitalism and Gnostic esotericism, all of which are part of New Thought and New Age spirituality.

Vitalism: Life Force, Divine Intelligence, and Panentheism

On the very first page of the Introduction, "Healing Versus the Practice of Medicine," we find this statement:

"These oils are the vital fluids of the plants that are their life blood....Essential oils contain life force, intelligence, and vibrational energy that imbues them with healing power that works for people."

The "life force" and "intelligence" of plants are concepts from Vitalism, an ancient pagan philosophy with a long history that includes the animal magnetism of hypnotist Anton Mesmer (a pioneer of New Thought), and which revived in the 19th century with Samuel Hahnemann, founder of the energy-based method Homeopathy. The basic view is that there is an invisible energy or life force which can be channeled, captured, or manipulated for healing.

Contemporary forms of this are New Age energy healing modalities such as Reiki, Therapeutic Touch, and any alleged healing treating the body's energy field or chakras (invisible wheels of energy in the body connected to spiritual awakening, according to Hinduism).

While treating his pastor's pneumonia using his famed "raindrop technique," Stewart writes that, as he did so, he told the patient:

"by dropping these oils a few inches about the skin, they are falling through your electromagnetic field and will start administering therapy to you **before they even hit your body**" (emphasis added, 214).

How will oils "*administer therapy*" before hitting one's body? This can only happen if one believes in an energy field surrounding the body, what is called "the subtle body" in the New Age. This "body" has no visible or objective data supporting it because it is a pagan spiritual view very much related to the New Age. It is not based on rational thinking, facts, or a Christian outlook.

Stewart's acceptance of New Age views of energy are blatantly sprinkled throughout the book. Oils were "gently extracted" in Bible times, claims Stewart, "to preserve their life force and therapeutic constituents" (177).

God's word in speaking creation into existence, according to Stewart, imbued nature with a special vibration: "Word is a vibration, a frequency, a consciousness, an expression of energy" (Introduction, xvii). By speaking plants into existence, God "imbued them with his word and his intelligence" and this, of course, included the oils (ibid).

Astonishingly, Stewart tells readers that demons "don't like essential oils" because the "high vibrations" and "high energies" of oils "put there by God are too much to take and make them want to leave" (89). Not only is this a Vitalist, New Thought view, but it also reveals elevating natural substances to a higher level than how God created them. This view of nature is the same as the magical environmentalism in the New Age. There are further references to the "vibrations" of the oils so this is not a random remark.

To believe that plants contain God's intelligence and a consciousness is Panentheism,

the claim that God is contained in creation and creation is in God. God speaking creation into existence did not in any way meld any part of God with creation, but that is what this view asserts.

Therefore, man-made or synthetic products are “dead” since they do not contain “the life force, the intelligence, and the vibrational energy found in healing oils” (xvi) and so will have “no healing quality” (187).

I had this same view when I was a New Ager, that synthetic materials would be “dead” and have a negative “energy.” This is why we clothed our son only in cotton or “natural” materials, and did not use plastic dishes or tableware, believing that it would “kill” the “energy” in the food we ate.

Compounding this unbiblical view, Stewart claims that since essential oils are products of God’s word, they will respond to our thoughts and words! “Essential oils magnify intent” so we can “mentally or verbally direct them to places in the body that need therapy” and “the oils respond to your thoughts and understand.” Not only do we have that very New Age proclamation, but “when we pray over oils, their frequencies increase” (93).

Here is a worldview that a non-thinking extraction from a plant can understand and respond to our thoughts and words; and that prayer, rather than an appeal to the Lord of the universe, works by increasing the “frequencies” of the oils.

Only man is made in God’s image; plants are part of God’s creation but they do not possess the ability to respond to thoughts and words. Such a belief system is not only New Age but occultic, and is contrary to every principle of God’s word about God, man and creation.

New Thought and Divine Intelligence

This “intelligence” of plants and nature is common to New Age philosophy because it is a component of it. An example is Deepak Chopra’s view of God as a “divine intelligence” permeating creation. This is a view also from New Thought, a movement claiming to be Christian but which denies all the essentials of the Christian faith. New Thought gave rise to Unity, Christian Science, and the Church of Religious Science (the teachings of the latter church’s co-founder, Ernest Holmes, influenced Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller as well as many Christians).

Expressing this view about intelligence, a New Thought luminary, Abel Leighton Allen, writes in his book, *The Message of New Thought*: “The adherents of New Thought conceive of a universal mind or divine intelligence pervading and permeating the universe, manifesting in all forms of creation; that there is also a unity of life and that each individual is a part of that intelligence and that

universal life and spirit. The visible forms of nature are the expressions of that divine life and intelligence, and the same life and intelligence that seek expression in the bud, the grass blade, the flower, the bird and animal, are also seeking expression in man."

and

"The highest conception of religion as taught by New Thought is to unfold and develop the soul into harmonious relations with divine intelligence, and thus come into spiritual unity with God." ([online source](#))

Why is it so essential to have this life force and vibration from the plants via (supposedly) essential oils? Stewart tells us:

"One of the most important modalities of the oils is their ability to lift our bodily frequencies to levels where disease cannot exist" (33).

If you have not been involved in or studied the New Age, this statement might seem strange. But in the New Age, this makes sense because the body is seen as existing on vibrational levels, and the "higher" the level one reaches, the more "pure" and healthy one becomes. Here Stewart claims that the oils will help raise the vibrations of the body to higher levels.

The concept of spiritual levels is in the New Age and the occult and could be classified under Gnostic esotericism, the foundation of such thinking.

Gnostic Esotericism

Stewart extolls something he calls the "the seven levels of heaven," a "secret teaching" of the Jews, which is the name for his 7th Heaven Kit of oils. Stewart explains what this term means:

"In order to reach God, one ascends through seven 'levels' or 'rings' of consciousness (or spiritual awareness) with the top, or seventh level, being total awareness of or complete communion with God, himself" (273).

Why is this teaching not in the Bible? Stewart's conclusion is that the Bible's authors did not share this because it could be "shared only with persons of sufficient spiritual development" (273).

Stewart then tries to support this view from the Second Corinthians 12 passage where Paul writes about going to (or his vision of) the "third heaven" as well as the repeated use of "seven" in the book of Revelation.

Did Jesus teach the 7th heaven concept? Stewart writes that we cannot know but claims that Jesus did teach secrets and "esoteric" and "hidden" matters via parables, allegories, and "symbols" (275). While parables veiled the meaning from those who refused to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus never taught esoterica, which is a hallmark of occultism. Esoterica is intended only for a few who are initiated into a secret group or body of beliefs, such as the Gnostic beliefs which attacked the teachings of Jesus and denied his nature.

Jesus himself said: *"I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret" (John 18:20).*

This erroneous occult concept is compounded in the discussion of the seven oil blends in the 7th Heaven Kit (where the assertion that Paul's term "third heaven" supports seven levels of heaven is repeated). Claims for all of these include a promotion of New Age views.

The most egregious are Awaken, which is to "awaken our spiritual awareness and consciousness of our true inner selves" to bring an "inner knowing to reach one's highest potential" (277), and White Angelica, whose oils allegedly were used to increase the intensity and size of the "aura (electric field) around the body)" as well as claiming that "its frequency neutralizes negative energy" (278).

The information on the 7th Heaven Kit is to be passed on in sales situations, so this New Age occultism is being promoted to even more people than those who read the book. This is deeply disturbing.

So what was Paul's "third heaven?" Is this a "level" of heaven? The "third heaven" referred to the location of God:

Paul was suddenly snatched up into the third heaven which, transcending the first (earth's atmosphere; Deut. 11:11; 1 Kings 8:35; Isa. 55:10) and second (interplanetary and interstellar space; Gen. 15:5; Ps. 8:3; Isa. 13:10) heavens, is the abode of God (1 Kings 8:30; Ps. 33:13–14; Matt. 6:9). ([online source](#))

Also see [What Does It Mean When the Bible Refers to Third Heaven](#)

SCRIPTURE BLUNDERS

As mentioned, there are numerous misuses of Scripture but two examples especially highlight this.

God told the Israelites to strike the lintels and doorposts in Egypt with hyssop during the last plague because the fragrance of hyssop supposedly "was a part of the ritual to cause the evil spirit of death to pass over" them (209).

But there was no "evil spirit of death!" The Lord himself announced that He would pass over them:

"The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" (Ex. 12:13; also vv. 23, 27).

How can Stewart ignore the clear data in the passage and tell his readers that it was "an evil spirit of death" that was passing over Egypt? It is difficult to know what to conclude from such a gross error except that one should be skeptical about Stewart's information about and conclusions from biblical passages.

When David begs forgiveness from God in the anguished Psalm 51, he states in verse 7: "*Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*" Stewart writes that the hyssop oil "directed by our sincere intent" can actually "create a clean heart and restore a right spirit in ourselves" and "can blot out our transgressions" (both statements are quotes from Ps. 51) as well as "erase the sinful tendencies (negative emotions) stored in cellular memory, thus releasing and cleansing the root cause of wrong action" (210).

Note that Stewart points to the hyssop oil as the agent of healing and forgiveness. This is an audacious assertion. Verse 7 in Psalm 51 is a parallelism where the purifying with hyssop is referring to and representing God's washing of David through forgiveness. Secondly, no substance can do what Stewart is stating the hyssop did. Furthermore, what does "directed by our sincere intent" mean? That we are actually in charge of creating a clean heart and restoring a right spirit through our intention? New Thought-New Age author and speaker, Wayne Dyer, would agree (ironically, Dyer has been a speaker at Young Living conventions, the company for which this book was written). And finally, note that Stewart equates sinful tendencies with "negative emotions." These views are perfectly consistent with New Thought and New Age beliefs.

The hyssop in Psalm 51 is possibly alluding to the cleansing of the leper in Leviticus 14, but it is not the hyssop that heals the leper, but God who forgives and heals based on the sacrifices delineated in the rest of that chapter. "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22). This is a picture, as all sacrifices were, of the blood that would be shed by Christ in the atonement as payment for the penalty of sins. Hyssop in Psalm 51 is clearly a picture of God's forgiveness based on mercy and grace due to David's repentance.

By ascribing healing and forgiveness power to a plant, Stewart undermines God's majesty and power and gives magical abilities to a plant. If it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to remove sin (Heb. 10:4), how can our intention and the oil of plant do so?