

Thoughts on Ministry of Healing

(24) Flesh as Food (pages 311-317)

Summary:

In choosing the food for Adam and Eve in the garden, God made clear that the best human diet did not include animal food. By sending manna, He taught Israel the same thing.

Thoughts:

Ellen White frequently used the Garden of Eden as the model for health practices in her time. The question is to what extent is the Genesis ideal a permanent foundation for everything we do? Most men aren't in a position to work the soil today, for example. What parts of the Genesis story are models for us and what parts aren't.

In the wilderness Israel demanded flesh food. In granting their request God placed the allowance under careful restrictions (clean meats only and avoiding fat and blood) to limit the negative consequences. Nevertheless the use of meat resulted in disease and death for thousands. (311-312) It is surprising in this chapter how many different reasons she gives for avoiding meat in the diet.

Flesh food is best left alone because disease in animals is rapidly increasing. Swine are scavengers and full of parasites. Surprising, perhaps, is Ellen White's strong emphasis on the suffering of animals and the ethics of eating their flesh. (314-316)

Ellen White also argues against the idea that meat is necessary for building muscular strength. She argues that grains, fruits, nuts and vegetables contain all the properties necessary to maintain health and strength. (316-317)

Having said all this, note her strong statements that we need to show compassion for those who struggle with this issue. She herself seems to have struggled with it. Circumstances alter cases.

Many of her arguments for vegetarianism are widely confirmed today, please a couple of important new ones have arisen. Today it is widely understood that meat production is inefficient. Much plant food goes into animals to produce a relatively small amount of meat. This is not an efficient use of acreage. In addition, meat production is one of the biggest causes of atmospheric carbon and greenhouse gasses. So two major world problems could be largely resolved if most human beings ate a plant-based diet.

Quotable Quotes:

"The diet appointed man in the beginning did not include animal food. Not till after the Flood, when every green thing on the earth had been destroyed, did man receive permission to eat flesh. In choosing man's food in Eden, the Lord showed what was the best diet; in the choice made for Israel He taught the same lesson." (311)

"Those who eat flesh are but eating grains and vegetables at second hand; for the animal receives from these things the nutrition that produces growth. The life that was in the grains and vegetables passes into the eater. We receive it by eating the flesh of the animal. How much better to get it direct, by eating the food that God provided for our use!" (313)

"The moral evils of a flesh diet are not less marked than are the physical ills. Flesh food

is injurious to health, and whatever affects the body has a corresponding effect on the mind and the soul. Think of the cruelty to animals that meat-eating involves, and its effect on those who inflict and those who behold it. How it destroys the tenderness with which we should regard these creatures of God!" (315)

"The intelligence displayed by many dumb animals approaches so closely to human intelligence that it is a mystery. The animals see and hear and love and fear and suffer. . . . They manifest sympathy and tenderness toward their companions in suffering. Many animals show an affection for those who have charge of them, far superior to the affection shown by some of the human race. They form attachments for man which are not broken without great suffering to them." (315-316)

"We should, however, consider the situation of the people, and the power of lifelong habit, and be careful not to urge even right ideas unduly. None should be urged to make the change abruptly." (317)

"In all cases educate the conscience, enlist the will, supply good, wholesome food, and the change will be readily made, and the demand for flesh will soon cease." (317)

"Is it not time that all should aim to dispense with flesh foods? How can those who are seeking to become pure, refined, and holy, that they may have the companionship of heavenly angels, continue to use as food anything that has so harmful an effect on soul and body? How can they take the life of God's creatures that they may consume the flesh as a luxury? Let them, rather, return to the wholesome and delicious food given to man in the beginning, and themselves practice, and teach their children to practice, mercy toward the dumb creatures that God has made and has placed under our dominion." (317)

Tweets of Healing:

The diet appointed man in the beginning did not include animal food. (311)

Those who eat flesh are but eating grains and vegetables at second hand. (313)

When it comes to dietary change, we should consider the situation of the people, and not urge even right ideas unduly. (317)

None should be urged to make dietary changes abruptly. (317)