

Thoughts on Ministry of Healing

(25) Extremes in Diet (pages 318-324)

Summary:

This chapter outlines some of the pitfalls on the way to dietary reform.

Thoughts:

The chapter opens with a quick outline of three extremes in dietary reform. 1) Some discard selected unhealthy foods, but the rest of the diet remains the same. They don't understand the larger principles. 2) Others go to the opposite extreme and ban nearly everything, even if the resulting diet is unhealthy. 3) A third group opts for a simple diet but does not include the variety needed to supply the needs of the system. The bottom line is that a partial understanding of the principles of dietary reform can do more harm than good. (318)

A major theme of the chapter is that dietary reform must be grounded in principles rather than specifics. Those operating by principle will avoid the extremes of indulgence and restriction. There needs to be a lot of common sense involved. Not all can eat the same things. What is palatable and wholesome to one can be harmful to another. Diet reform needs to be thought through and progressive. (319-320)

Specific suggestions include two meals a day where that makes sense, make your best choices and then be at peace, don't scrimp on daily fare in order to have extra for entertaining, food needs to be tasty as well as healthy, and everyone should have at least some knowledge of cooking. Instead of being as different from others as possible, it is wiser to as near as possible without the sacrifice of principle. (321-324)

An important excursus on Ellen White's view of sexuality: On page 320, Ellen White uses the language of "animal passions" and "sensual habits." She does not seem to address the issue of sexuality anywhere else in *Ministry of Healing*, so it may be wise to say something about it here. The language of "animal passions" is awkward today, as a Google search will confirm. In her mind, it probably meant a man allowing sexual urges to overpower the needs and feelings of his wife. Ellen White was not against sexual pleasure, there are no statements forbidding it directly. But she was certainly against a man using his wife for his own pleasure as if she were a prostitute. The following statement seems apropos to the meaning of her language: "No man can truly love his wife when she will patiently submit to become his slave and minister to his depraved passions. In her passive submission she loses the value she once possessed in his eyes. He sees her dragged down from everything elevating to a low level, and soon he suspects that she will as tamely submit to be degraded by another as by himself. . . . These men are worse than brutes; they are demons in human form." *The Adventist Home*, 125. Her goal was not the stifling of marital pleasure but preservation of the value and dignity of the wife.

Some possible background information. In the Middle Ages women were thought to be sexual creatures and men the controlled ones. If men were feeling or behaving in a lusty fashion, it was presumed that some woman cast a spell on them. In the Victorian period (when much of Ellen White's ministry occurred) the situation had reversed. Men were beasts and godly women needed to distract and attract them away from their brutish nature. This viewpoint helps explain some of the language Ellen White uses. Today the culture has shifted again. We encourage

sexuality within the marriage bound and some of her statements in another context can be perplexing.

According to a representative of the White Estate, much of Ellen White's still-unpublished writings (60-70% in his estimate) relate to the issue of sexual abuse. People didn't talk openly about such things in her day, but she addresses such issue frankly and personally in her correspondence. This helps explain her concern that certain food elements, like pepper, red meat and coffee, might prove to be stimulants of the "animal passions." In today's world aphrodisiacs, in food, herbs and pharmaceuticals are sought after! As Ellen White herself often stated, circumstances alter cases. We read with open minds and hearts, but we also read with caution, lest we misunderstand or misinterpret and thereby cause needless pain and confusion.

Quotable Quotes:

"Those who have but a partial understanding of the principles of reform are often the most rigid, not only in carrying out their views themselves, but in urging them on their families and their neighbors. The effect of their mistaken reforms, as seen in their own ill-health, and their efforts to force their views upon others, give many a false idea of dietetic reform, and lead them to reject it altogether." (318-319)

"Those who understand the laws of health and who are governed by principle, will shun the extremes, both of indulgence and of restriction. Their diet is chosen, not for the mere gratification of appetite, but for the upbuilding of the body. They seek to preserve every power in the best condition for highest service to God and man. The appetite is under the control of reason and conscience, and they are rewarded with health of body and mind. While they do not urge their views offensively upon others, their example is a testimony in favor of right principles. These persons have a wide influence for good." (319)

"There is real common sense in dietetic reform. The subject should be studied broadly and deeply, and no one should criticize others because their practice is not, in all things, in harmony with his own. It is impossible to make an unvarying rule to regulate everyone's habits, and no one should think himself a criterion for all. Not all can eat the same things. Foods that are palatable and wholesome to one person may be distasteful, and even harmful, to another." (319-320)

"Some are continually anxious lest their food, however simple and healthful, may hurt them. To these let me say, Do not think that your food will injure you; do not think about it at all. Eat according to your best judgment; and when you have asked the Lord to bless the food for the strengthening of your body, believe that He hears your prayer, and be at rest." (321)

"When those who advocate hygienic reform go to extremes, it is no wonder that many who regard these persons as representing health principles reject the reform altogether. These extremes frequently do more harm in a short time than could be undone by a lifetime of consistent living. Hygienic reform is based upon principles that are broad and far-reaching, and we should not belittle it by narrow views and practices. . . . Those who are governed by principle will be firm and decided in standing for the right; yet in all their associations they will manifest a generous, Christlike spirit and true moderation." (324)

Tweets of Healing:

Not all who profess to believe in dietetic reform are really reformers. (318)

Those who have but a partial understanding of the principles of health reform are often

the most rigid. (318)

Those who are governed by principle will shun the extremes, both of indulgence and of restriction. (319)

Not all can eat the same things. (320)

Diet reform should be progressive. (320)

An impoverished diet produces poverty of the blood. (321)

All should learn what to eat and how to cook it. (323)

Keep appetite under the control of reason. (323)

The narrow ideas of some would-be health reformers have been a great injury to the cause of diet reform. (323)