

Thoughts on Ministry of Healing

(32) The Child (pages 379-387)

Summary:

This chapter covers much of the same ground as the previous chapter but focuses less on the parents and more on the child.

Thoughts:

In chapters 30-32, Ellen White covers the raising of children in four stages. First, she focuses on the role of the parents before the child is conceived. The character parents have developed long before the appearance of children has a powerful effect on the child. Second, during the pre-natal period the mother's behavior and the father's treatment of the mother is critical to the child's physical, mental and spiritual development. Third, she focuses on the training and nurture that must take place in the early years of development. Finally, she focuses on the impact of the choices young people make when they reach the teen years. This chapter focuses particularly on stages three and four.

The stories of Samson and John the Baptist are biblical examples of the importance of child training. Parents need to understand the principles of child training and the laws of nature relating to it. (379-381)

The more quiet and simple the life of the infant the better. Babies should be kept free from every influence that would tend to weaken or poison the system. Considerable space is given to how infants should be dressed, how the temperature of the room they are in should be regulated, and the importance of lots of fresh air. When properly dressed, children should spend much time in the open air. (381-383)

While a quiet and simple life for children is important, it is not incompatible with the best kind of stimulation; travel, quality concerts, gardens and zoos, museums, or hiking and biking through dramatic natural settings (among other things).

The best food for infants is that which nature has provided, breast feeding. But Ellen White does not limit the value of breast-feeding to nutrition, she also sees emotional and character implications. (383)

As children grow out of babyhood, they need to be taught good dietary habits: regularity, moderation, and wholesome choices. It is equally important for mealtimes to be a happy, cheerful time. But children's preferences in these matters should also be respected. (383-385)

Parents are also encouraged to study the causes of the illnesses that their children contract and correct those causes. Related to this is the importance of a practical knowledge of physiology. (385-386) The advice in these last paragraphs is connected with an important theological statement: "It is not a 'mysterious providence' that removes the little children. God does not desire their death." (384) God is often blamed when children die prematurely. But it is not God who "took them," such deaths are a consequence of human decisions and the actions of the great Enemy in the cosmic conflict.

Quotable Quotes:

"Every influence that affects the health of the body has its bearing upon mind and

character. Too much importance cannot be placed upon the early training of children. The lessons learned, the habits formed, during the years of infancy and childhood, have more to do with the formation of the character and the direction of the life than have all the instruction and training of after years.” (380)

“Most of the evils that are bringing misery and ruin to the race might be prevented, and the power to deal with them rests to a great degree with parents. It is not a ‘mysterious providence’ that removes the little children. God does not desire their death.” (380)

“The more quiet and simple the life of the child, the more favorable it will be to both physical and mental development. At all times the mother should endeavor to be quiet, calm, and self-possessed. Many infants are extremely susceptible to nervous excitement, and the mother's gentle, unhurried manner will have a soothing influence that will be of untold benefit to the child.” (381)

“Parents should train the appetites of their children and should not permit the use of unwholesome foods. But in the effort to regulate the diet, we should be careful not to err in requiring children to eat that which is distasteful, or to eat more than is needed. Children have rights, they have preferences, and when these preferences are reasonable they should be respected.” (384)

“Teach your children from the cradle to practice self-denial and self-control. Teach them to enjoy the beauties of nature and in useful employments to exercise systematically all the powers of body and mind. Bring them up to have sound constitutions and good morals, to have sunny dispositions and sweet tempers. Impress upon their tender minds the truth that God does not design that we should live for present gratification merely, but for our ultimate good.” (386)

“Above all things else, let parents surround their children with an atmosphere of cheerfulness, courtesy, and love. A home where love dwells, and where it is expressed in looks, in words, and in acts, is a place where angels delight to manifest their presence.” (386-387)

“Parents, let the sunshine of love, cheerfulness, and happy contentment enter your own hearts, and let its sweet, cheering influence pervade your home. . . . The atmosphere thus created will be to the children what air and sunshine are to the vegetable world, promoting health and vigor of mind and body.” (387)

Tweets of Healing:

When it comes to the child's physical well-being, nothing is unimportant. (380)

Parents should understand the principles that underlie the care and training of children. (380)

Parents should study the laws of nature. To assume the responsibilities of parenthood without such preparation is a sin. (380)

Most of the evils that are bringing misery and ruin to the race might be prevented. (380)

The more quiet and simple the life of the child, the more favorable it will be to both physical and mental development. (380)

Every influence that affects the health of the body has its bearing upon mind and character. (380)

It is not a ‘mysterious providence’ that ends the lives of little children. God does not desire their death. (380)

The baby should be kept free from every influence that would tend to weaken or to poison the system. (381)

The one who nurses a baby imparts her own temper and temperament to the child. (383)

Little ones need to learn that they eat to live, not live to eat. (383)

We should not require that children eat that which is distasteful to them, or to eat more than is needed. (384)

Teach your children from the cradle to practice self-denial and self-control. (386)

Above all else, let parents surround their children with an atmosphere of cheerfulness, courtesy, and love. (386)