

## Thoughts on Ministry of Healing

### (17) The Use of Remedies (pages 234-240)

#### Summary:

Disease never comes without a cause. Disease is invited by disregard of the laws of health, either by the individual, or through inheritance from the parents. Among the causes of disease are intemperate eating, overwork, inactivity, and excessive mental labor. Among the best remedies for disease are carefulness in diet, the proper use of water and physical exercise.

#### Thoughts:

A very important principle needs to be reiterated here. Ellen White makes many strong, prophetic statements such as “If we carefully preserve the life force, . . . the result is health.” Such statements are best read along the lines of the Proverbs in the Bible. “All other things being equal” the righteous prosper and the wicked suffer. But things are not always equal in this life. Thus some who live impeccable lives in relation to the laws of health die young and others who smoke, drink and carouse live to be a hundred. There are other factors in play beside obedience or disobedience to the laws of health. “All other things being equal” the health counsels of Ellen White produce better health outcomes, but in a sinful world, things are not always equal. There is always the danger that we will pass judgment on others on the basis of their health outcomes. Such use is a misuse of Ellen White’s gift.

There is also the principle of individuality. General principles such as one finds in *Ministry of Healing* work in the majority of cases, but followers of Ellen White’s counsel are encouraged to study themselves and understand what things are beneficial and harmful to them personally, and that is a knowledge that usually does not come from direct inspiration, but rather from careful study and observation.

Ellen White herself points to these qualifiers in the very last sentence of the chapter: “*In most cases* (italics supplied) if they would eat temperately, and take cheerful, healthful exercise, they would recover health and would save time and money.” (240)

A historical footnote. The concept of a “life force” was common at the time. Some called it the theory of vitalism. Doctors of the time felt that they could project how long someone had left to live by the amount of “vitality” left. This view has largely been abandoned by medicine today, even at Loma Linda, although new iterations of it, such as Hans Selye’s “adaptation energy” theory, are still held to have validity.

It needs to be understood that in inspiration God meets people where they are. That means that in communicating truth, God uses the language, cultural concepts and scientific limitations of the prophet’s time to articulate and explain that truth. Thus Ellen White’s explanations of health principles may at times express information that cannot be validated scientifically today or may even seem flat-out incorrect. But that is not surprising when one sees how God communicated with the biblical prophets. God does not always disabuse people of their scientific or philosophical oddities, but communicates the truth they need for salvation in terms they can understand. There is a similar process at work in Ellen White’s writings.

#### Quotable Quotes:

“Disease never comes without a cause. The way is prepared, and disease invited, by

disregard of the laws of health. Many suffer in consequence of the transgression of their parents. While they are not responsible for what their parents have done, it is nevertheless their duty to ascertain what are and what are not violations of the laws of health. They should avoid the wrong habits of their parents and, by correct living, place themselves in better conditions.” (234)

“God has endowed us with a certain amount of vital force. . . . If we carefully preserve the life force, and keep the delicate mechanism of the body in order, the result is health; but if the vital force is too rapidly exhausted, the nervous system borrows power for present use from its resources of strength, and when one organ is injured, all are affected.” (234-235)

“When the abuse of health is carried so far that sickness results, the sufferer can often do for himself what no one else can do for him. The first thing to be done is to ascertain the true character of the sickness and then go to work intelligently to remove the cause.” (235)

“Inactivity is a fruitful cause of disease. Exercise quickens and equalizes the circulation of the blood, but in idleness the blood does not circulate freely, and the changes in it, so necessary to life and health, do not take place.” (238)

“Ministers, teachers, students, and other brain workers often suffer from illness as the result of severe mental taxation, unrelieved by physical exercise. What these persons need is a more active life. Strictly temperate habits, combined with proper exercise, would ensure both mental and physical vigor, and would give power of endurance to all brain workers.” (238)

“When invalids have nothing to occupy their time and attention, their thoughts become centered upon themselves, and they grow morbid and irritable. Many times they dwell upon their bad feelings until they think themselves much worse than they really are and wholly unable to do anything. In all these cases well-directed physical exercise would prove an effective remedial agent. In some cases it is indispensable to the recovery of health.” (239)

“Those whose habits are sedentary should, when the weather will permit, exercise in the open air every day, summer or winter. Walking is preferable to riding or driving, for it brings more of the muscles into exercise. The lungs are forced into healthy action, since it is impossible to walk briskly without inflating them. Such exercise would in many cases be better for the health than medicine.” (240)

### **Tweets of Healing:**

Disease never comes without a cause. (234)

God has endowed everyone with a certain amount of vital force. (234)

Intemperate eating is often the cause of sickness. (235)

When one organ is injured, all are affected. (235)

Inactivity is a fruitful cause of disease. (238)

When invalids have nothing to occupy their time and attention, their thoughts become centered upon themselves. (239)

Exercise is in many cases better for the health than medicine. (240)