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Since the successful establishment of the Battle Creek Sanitarium, Seventh-day Adventists have been best known for two distinguishing characteristics, the Sabbath and an interest in health.

The Adventists positive approach was not simply to condemn society's habits of life, but to offer something better. We made our original health outreach well known through health journals and books, public temperance lectures, and, under Dr. John Harvey Kellogg's leadership, the development of a worldwide chain of sanitariums.

With Dr. Kellogg's apostasy, the sanitarium work began to decline. World War I and then the depression accelerated the slide, but Adventist health outreach continued nevertheless on other fronts. The pioneering work of evangelist J. N. Tyndale combined health lectures with public evangelism and drew large, enthusiastic crowds. The College of Medical Evangelists (CME) trained physicians, nurses, and other health professionals. Its story is well known, and we won't repeat it here.

For a short time CME offered a quick training for those interested in giving simple treatments and health lectures. One native-American graduate of this innovative program, W. D. Frazee, went to Utah. Combining health lectures with lectures on the sanctuary and prophecy, he became the first to draw crowds and gain significant numbers of converts in this Mormon stronghold. He went on to establish Wildwood Sanitarium which through the years has remained strongly committed to health education and promotion.

In later years among the sophisticated, reserved, and secular citizens of Boston, Harvard graduate student Mervyn Hardinge drew large crowds with his lectures on health and the Bible. Subsequently in Southern California he again drew large crowds with these lectures. Dr. Hardinge became the Dean of the School of Health at Loma Linda University and, along with others on the faculty, deeply influenced scores of health professionals concerning the importance of health evangelism.

In the early 1960s Dr. J. Wayne McFarland and Elder E. J. Folkenberg worked together as a very successful doctor-minister team in Southern New England. I remember these men well. I was just a boy, but they were our neighbors and I often had the opportunity to go with my dad to visit them. I will never forget listening with interest as they studied and prayed together to devise more effective ways to help victims of tobacco addiction. The final result of their prayers and study was the internationally acclaimed Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking.

Over the years many other successful public health promotion programs have followed. Dr.
Scharffenbergs Heartbeat program has been well received. Weimars NEWSTART has been effective worldwide. Many other people, institutions, and programs could be mentioned. Most recently Dr. Hans Diehls CHIP program has proven effective in reaching the secular mind.

The uniform experience of decades of worldwide Adventist outreach confirms that medical missionary work is the most effective entering wedge to gain access to the people. Ellen Whites prediction has certainly proven true: Health talks will be given, publications will be multiplied. The principles of health reform will be received with favor; and many will be enlightened. The influences that are associated with health reform will commend it to the judgment of all who want light; and they will advance step by step to receive the special truths for this time. Thus truth and righteousness will meet together (Counsels on Diet and Foods, p. 442).

In this special issue of ADVENTISTS AFFIRM we focus on health ministry. Jesus is the model for a sensitive and loving approach to others. He teaches us not only to preach it, but much more importantly to live it. While He accepted invitations to feasts and gatherings, He did not partake of all the food offered Him, but quietly ate of that which was appropriate for His physical necessities, avoiding the many things that He did not need. His disciples were frequently invited with Him, and His conduct was a lesson to them, teaching them not to indulge appetite by overeating or by eating improper food. He showed them that portions of the food provided could be passed by and portions chosen. Christ went to these feasts because He wished to show those who were excluding themselves from the society of their fellow men how wrong their course of action was. He wished to teach them that truth was given to be imparted to those who had it not. If they had truth, why keep it selfishly to themselves? The world is perishing for want of the living Truth (Manuscript Releases, 7:412).

We are to do as Jesus did. While the principles of health reform should be presented, let the teaching be backed by example. . . . We must practice what we teach. When sitting at a table where meat is provided, we are not to make a raid upon those who use it, but we should let it alone ourselves, and when asked our reasons for doing this, we should in a kindly manner explain why we do not use it (Counsels on Diet and Foods, p. 462).

In this issue we introduce a host of first-time ADVENTISTS AFFIRM authors. Youll notice several husband and wife teams have contributed because healthful living is a family concern. Dr. George Guthrie, who has been active in health education for years, shares his insights that come from experience as a missionary, a teacher at the Loma Linda University School of Health in the nutrition department, and at present in a busy rural family practice. His wife Dena, a nurse, nurse practitioner, and formerly an instructor at the Loma Linda School of Nursing, is a major player in the international CHIP for Churches community health education program.

Cliff Korf, a physician assistant now heading up the clinical rotations for the Union College physician assistant program, shares his research and convictions. He is a recent convert to Adventism as a result of the Wichita, Kansas, CHIP health outreach program. His wife Lavetta, a home school mom, tells the story of their discovery of truth they werent even searching for.

Dale Leamon, senior pastor at Battle Creek, the original Adventist health Mecca, shares his testimony as a pastor. He speaks, not from the impractical ivory tower, but from his own experience in leading two large churches in establishing health outreach as a cornerstone of church ministry. His wife Yolanda, a nurse and midwife, co-edited this issue, behind the scenes giving encouragement and help with many articles. She is a spark plug behind the Battle Creek Lifestyle Health Center.

Dr. Gerard Damsteegt and his wife Laurel are well known to the readers of ADVENTISTS AFFIRM. They have been enthusiastic supporters of health evangelism. Dr. Damsteegt has felt the burden to convey the vision of health evangelism to his students at the seminary. His article traces the origins of our theology of health, and Laurel explores some practical implications.

New contributor Vicki Griffin, Ph. D., writes about wine, which has been making inroads into
the church. In an unpublished research survey which I did some years ago, alcohol consumption within the church had risen as high as 11-15% of the respondents. (By contrast, smoking was at 5% and recreational drug use at 1%.) Caffeine consumption, by the way, was an alarmingly high 66%, even among a large, relatively conservative congregation in a city that at one time boasted a sanitarium and even a large Adventist school of nursing.

The article by Elder Jay Gallimore, who has written for ADVENTISTS AFFIRM before, provides a perspective from a church administrator. He is the Michigan Conference president. Elder Gallimore was instrumental in influencing my wife and me to move to Wichita to work with him. To our dismay, on our first Sabbath to attend his church, he announced his acceptance of a call to move elsewhere and preached his farewell sermon!

Amy Sherrard, a retired missionary, nurse, and health educator, rounds out the list of contributors. At 84 years of age, healthful living and the blessing of God have kept her vigorous and active. She still is giving powerful public presentations on health in addition to writing a weekly Bible lesson, *My Bible First!*, that many churches are utilizing for their childrens Sabbath School department.

Shakeela Bennetts byline is not new to our readers. She reminds us that sometimes even those who are careful about health can experience a health crisis, which can then become a spiritual crisis. Mrs. Bennett shares with us a moving account of her own experience.

All of these writers model the health principles they teach. We appreciate the insights they bring from their own experience and research in the Bible and science.

I hope this issue will stimulate your thinking and your commitment. Today more than ever, as we near the coming of Jesus, it is important that ADVENTISTS AFFIRM the blessings of healthful living!
How did Seventh-day Adventists come to make health a matter of religious belief?

The Bible reveals God's interest in health for the body, not just for the soul. More than any other major group, Seventh-day Adventists have explored and embraced the Bible's message about health.

How did we come to have a theology of health? And what are the main elements of it, as found in Scripture? This article will not attempt to list all of our health-related beliefs, but it will concentrate on why we have a health emphasis—i.e., our theology of health—especially as this emphasis developed in the early years of our movement.

As people who accept the Bible as the revealed Word of God, we base our theology of health on divine revelation. A theology of health should reveal God's plan about healthful living for the human race. Yet so few, even among Bible-believing Christians through the ages, have given any heed to such a thing. A survey of the literature throughout the Christian era shows that churches in general gave little attention to the relationship between healthful living and spirituality.

Dual Nature? Christians have frequently assumed that human beings have a dual nature, made up of body and soul. Those who believe this way value the soul as the significant part of a person, far superior to the body, which functions as a prison house for the soul. Such a low opinion of the human body explains why over the centuries Christians have written so little on keeping the body in good health.

Health Reform Movement. In the 19th century, however, a new trend began to emerge, especially in the United States. The literature of that period reveals a growing emphasis on healthful living, leading to the rise of the health reform movement, which had no particular religious base. This movement sought to bring about greater health and improved longevity by helping people reform their habits.

And indeed, people were concerned about health. There was general dissatisfaction with the medical profession and growing agitation against the rising tide of intemperance. Yet at that time most Christians considered disease as a divine punishment for sin. By contrast, health reformers, reasoning from cause to effect, refused to blame God for all disease. Instead, they argued, disease was caused by peoples failure to follow the laws of nature.
Early Leaders. In the 18th century, various Methodists and Quakers had already expressed concern over the growing consumption of alcohol. In 1743, John Wesley appealed to Christians to abstain from drunkenness, buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity. In the United States, Dr. Benjamin Rush, a well-known Quaker physician and one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and Lyman Beecher, a prominent preacher and college president, began writing and speaking out on the detrimental effects of alcohol. These powerful influences led to the establishment of the American Temperance Society in 1826; ten years later the American Temperance Union was established.

One of the greatest leaders of the health reform movement was Sylvester Graham, who turned the movement into a moral crusade. His influence led to the founding of the American Physiological Society (1837) and the American Vegetarian Society (1850). Others who played a significant role in the health reform movement were Drs. Trall and Jackson, Dio Lewis, and Horace Mann.

Unity, Not Dualism. When the Seventh-day Adventist movement emerged in this climate of health reform, naturally its followers were exposed to the various health concepts being agitated. With so many people suffering from poor health due to intemperate living, the use of health-destroying substances, bad medical advice on treating disease, and ignorance regarding how to preserve health, Seventh-day Adventists began to see people as having been created with a wholistic nature. They asserted that God created us as a unity of physical, mental, and spiritual faculties, each important for the harmonious, healthy operation of the human organism. This view had far-reaching consequences for understanding the relationship between health and spirituality.

Ellen G. Whites Influence. Early Sabbath-keeping Adventist publications reveal a growing emphasis on the relation between health and ones religious experience, the imminent coming of the Lord, and the mission thrust of the church. This growing interest cannot be due to the health reform movement alone. The visions of Ellen G. White had a profound impact on Adventists understanding of the relationship between health and religion and on the attitude of the groups leaders toward healthful living. In fact, at first the early Adventist literature made no references to the health reform movement.

Our early publications emphasized several themes in their theological understanding of health:

1. Spirituality and Health. One of the first biblical arguments used to warn believers against the use of unhealthful substances concerned idolatry. In 1848, Ellen G. White had been shown the injurious effects of tobacco, tea, and coffee (Counsels on Diet and Foods, p. 495). As early as 1851, she linked these health dangers to spiritual matters by calling the use of tobacco an idol (Manuscript Releases, 5:377).

In the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, J. M. McLellan elaborated further by noting the connection between idolatry and covetousness. Citing such Scriptures as For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God (Eph 5:5), and Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry (Col 3:5), he concluded that those who use tobacco are idolaters, defiling the temple of God, and that the Bible equates such idolatry with covetousness.

J. H. Waggoner cited 1 John 5:21, Little children, keep yourselves from idols, to warn believers to keep themselves from the idol of tobacco. A little later Ellen G. White also explicitly named tea and coffee as idols (Testimonies for the Church, 1:222-224).

Our pioneers also argued that the complete development of our spiritual powers required the full cooperation of all our mental faculties. Unhealthful habits impair the mental powers. It follows, then, that those who use health-destroying substances cannot be as good Christians as those who abstain from them.
Moral Issue. An increasingly-frequent argument was that transgression of physical laws is a moral issue and thus a sinful act. God is the author of mans organic structure, our pioneers noted, which implies that Gods will is as manifest in this organism as in the ten commandments. Those who injure this divine workmanship through unhealthful living are in conflict with the will of God. This is rebellion against God, and sin. They saw sin, therefore, as the transgression of the law, written by the finger of God in the whole organism of a man, as well as in the Bible. Unconscious violation of physical laws was considered a sin of ignorance. Conscious violation, however, was a moral transgression: the act a sin, the actor a sinner.

D. T. Bourdeau took a slightly different tack. He declared that using tea and tobacco was itself a transgression of the Decalogue. Using these health-destroying products, he said, violated the sixth commandment of the Decalogue which states, Thou shalt not kill.

Sabbath-keeping Adventists developed a growing appreciation of how significant the human body is for the believers religious experience. They recognized that the physical body was not insignificant to spiritual life, as most other Christians believed, but was the habitat of Gods Spirit. This view elevated the role of the body to that of a temple in which the divine Presence dwells.

Scripture Base. Believers cited Scripture in support of caring for this body-temple: Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are (1 Cor 3:16, 17); What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (1 Cor 6:19); And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people (2 Cor 6:16). They identified the temple of God in 1 Corinthians 3:16 with the temple of the Holy Ghost in 1 Corinthians 6:19. In this light, James White could assert that it was quite unlikely that the Holy Spirit would dwell in those who followed the filthy, health-destroying, God-dishonoring practice of using tobacco or unhealthful substances like snuff and tea.

Our pioneers saw health as also associated with Christian perfection. In appealing for cleanliness of body, they cited especially 2 Corinthians 7:1: Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

For them, living to Gods glory involved treating the physical organism healthfully. After all, Scripture clearly stated, ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are Gods (1 Cor 6:20), and Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31).

Romans 12:1, they noted, taught the Christian to treat his body sacrificially:I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2. Eschatology and Health. Our Adventist pioneers related health to Christs return. They saw healthful living as an indispensable facet of the believers preparation for the Second Advent. Joseph Bates, therefore, stressed the need for cleansing body and spirit and perfecting holiness (2 Cor 7:1; Isa 52:11), because continuation of unhealthful, defiling practices would prevent entrance into the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:27).

Ellen G. White saw that using unhealthful substances would prevent a persons final sealing with the seal of the living God (Rev 7:1, 2; see Selected Messages, 3:273). She also associated Christian perfection with the Second Advent, noting that Christ will have a church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing to present to his Father (see Eph 5:27). Similarly, she said that Our souls, bodies, and spirits are to be presented blameless by Jesus to His Father [1 Thess 5:23], and unless we are clean in person and pure in heart, we cannot be presented blameless to God (Manuscript Releases, 6:217, 218).

In referring to health-destroying practices, J. N. Andrews stated, Deceive not yourself.
would stand with the Lamb on mount Zion [Rev 14:1], you must cleanse yourself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God [2 Cor 7:1].

In view of the imminent return of Christ, J. M. McLellan urged people to live healthfully and crucify the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5:24) because otherwise it will be impossible to stand before the Lord at His coming.

3. Gods Mission and Health. Our rapidly expanding mission work brought ever-growing demands for financial support. Ellen White called for denying unhealthful appetite so that money could be saved for the work of the Lord. In one of her appeals she employed arguments of economy, healthful living, and divine favor, stating that if all would study to be more economical in their articles of dress, and deprive themselves of some things which are not actually necessary, and lay aside such useless and injurious things as tea, etc., and give what they cost to the cause, they would receive more blessings here, and a reward in heaven (Early Writings, pp. 121, 122).

From this overview of the experience of the early Adventists one can clearly see the workings of Providence in the rise of the Advent movement. In the setting of a health reform movement in the secular world, and with Adventist pioneers minds open to reform, the Lord impressed Adventists with the vital relationship between spirituality and health of the body. They found a firm scriptural basis for being serious about matters of health. They perceived that health habits were not only for personal well being but played a vital role in the work of the church in preparing for Christs second advent. When these early believers became convicted of the importance of health reform they took steps to put these convictions into action, ordering their lives in harmony with what the Lord had revealed to them. All funds saved by eliminating health-destroying substances and adopting a modest and simple lifestyle were to be invested into the spreading of the last message of mercy for a dying world.

Whenever Adventists continue to walk in this scriptural light on health reform, their work prospers; whenever they neglect this light, their work languishes. The success of the Advent movement depends on how faithfully its believers implement Gods light.

NOTES


2 Ibid., p. 47.


6 Blake, Health Reform, pp. 36-44.


15. See, for instance, Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases, 7:370 (Ms. 3, 1854).


18. Quoted in Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White: The Early Years 1827-1862 (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1985), p. 224. Here she also stated that we must be perfect Christians, deny ourselves all the way along, tread the narrow thorny pathway that our Jesus trod, and then if we are final overcomers, heaven, sweet heaven will be cheap enough.


Does the vegetarian diet really make a difference?

Since the beginning of time, man has searched for the secret of youth or how to become a healthy functioning centenarian. Ponce de León's quest for the fountain of youth is one of the classic stories of man's search for eternal youth and health. More recently, stem-cell research has attempted to find a key to preventing aging or illness.

However, long before man attempted to discover or invent ways to prolong life, God gave us the formula for preventing the common diseases that plague mankind today. In 2 Chronicles 7:14 we are told, If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (emphasis mine).

Exodus 15:26 adds another component to maintaining health and preventing diseases such as were put upon the Egyptians. Speaking to His people, God said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all of his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have put upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee (emphasis mine).

This leads us to one of the very first provisions that God made for us. Genesis 1:29 describes how things were when God made them perfect. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat [food].

Fruit. In the perfection before sin destroyed God's perfect plan, He gave us fruit to eat. When God restores perfection, He will again provide food in the form of fruit—twelve fruits, to be specific. Revelation 22:2 reveals, . . . and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Ellen White wrote, The people have seldom accredited their sufferings to the true cause—their own wrong course of action. They have indulged in intemperance in eating, and made a god of their appetite (Counsels on Diet and Foods, p. 121). She also noted, Many persons bring disease upon themselves by their self-indulgence. Others have disregarded the laws of health in their habits of eating and drinking, dressing, or working (The Ministry of Healing, p. 227).

Moral Power. The controlling power of appetite will prove the ruin of thousands, when, if they
had conquered on this point, they would have had moral power to gain the victory over every other temptation of Satan. But those who are slaves to appetite will fail in perfecting Christian character. The continual transgression of man for six thousand years has brought sickness, pain, and death as its fruits. And as we near the close of time, Satans temptation to indulge appetite will be more powerful and more difficult to overcome (Testimonies for the Church, 3:492).

As man returns to a Garden of Eden diet, a vegetarian diet, scientific research confirms that this diet is responsible for the prevention, regression, or even the reversal of many of the diseases present in our society today. This gives credence to dietary truths found in the Bible and in Ellen Whites writings.

The medical literature reveals that large vegetarian populations have been studied. As a rule, they live approximately eight healthy years longer, with lower rates of the most common medical problems such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, and numerous cancers. The studies are numerous and impressive. I will survey some of them here, to show the kind of confirmation that exists today for the dietary program the Lord showed His people long ago.

Scientific Confirmation. The American Dietetic Associations position paper on vegetarianism states, Scientific data suggest positive relationships between a vegetarian diet and reduced risk for several chronic degenerative diseases and conditions. . . . [I]t is the position of the ADA that appropriately planned vegetarian diets are healthful, are nutritionally adequate, and provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. . . . [V]egetarian diets low in fat or saturated fat have been used successfully as part of comprehensive health programs to reverse severe coronary artery disease.¹

A 1997 symposium at Lake Buena Vista, Florida, called Summit on Cholesterol and Coronary Disease, was published in The American Journal of Cardiology. The Symposium concluded that Vigorous cholesterol lowering with diet (especially a Vegetarian diet), drugs, or a combination of diet and drugs has been shown to slow, arrest, or even reverse atherosclerosis.²

The British Medical Journal (BMJ ) concluded in 1994 that those who do not use meat and who avoid the consumption of a high-protein, high-fat diet were not as likely to develop diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and osteoporosis.³

The New England Journal of Medicine reported that following a plant-based diet (i.e., fruits, vegetables, and whole grains) with low use of animal products was most important in preventing or recovering from atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries).⁴

A 1999 study in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition followed 34,192 California-based vegetarians, all Seventh-day Adventists, and found an overall healthier life and lower risks of diabetes mellitus, hypertension, and arthritis among them, compared to non-vegetarians.⁵

Concerns. Neal Barnard, President of The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, in a letter to the Secretary of Agriculture in 1996, expressed concerns about the validity and value of the Food Pyramid as it is today. A few of the cosponsors of the letter included notables such as Dr. Benjamin Spock, Dr. Charles Atwood, Dr. William Castelli, Dr. Hans Diehl, Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, Jr., Dr. Dean Ornish, and Dr. John McDougall, to name a few. All of these have authored numerous books and articles in the mainstream scientific literature and are well respected in their areas of practice.

Following are excerpts from Dr. Barnards letter. Heart disease, cancer, stroke, hypertension, obesity and other serious illnesses are epidemics in America . . . . Dietary factors play an important role in the etiology and course of these diseases . . . . Dietary changes that go further are both feasible and timely, and can potentially save many lives.

The scientific literature clearly supports dietary guidelines which encourage the use of vegetables, fruits, legumes, and grains. In contrast, diets based on meats, dairy products, and added vegetable oils are linked with a variety of chronic degenerative diseases. To the extent that more Americans adopt plant-based diets, a reduction in the prevalence of chronic disease
and of the costs associated with them is likely. Dr. William Castelli, former director of the world-famous Framingham study in Massachusetts, has stated on numerous occasions that for every 100 mg of cholesterol eaten per day, there is an increase in the blood cholesterol by 5 mg%. Cholesterol is only found in animal products and animal by-products. Hypercholesterolemia is also known to be a significant risk factor in the development of atherosclerosis and coronary heart disease. Therefore, it is necessary to examine diet more seriously in order to further reduce cholesterol and thereby reduce the incidence and progression of atherosclerosis.

Researchers observed 11,000 British vegetarians in a seventeen-year study to investigate the association of dietary habits with mortality, especially as relating to heart disease and certain cancers. During the study, the vegetarians died at a rate nearly 50% less than that of the general population.

The American Heart Association recommends reducing fat intake to less than 30% of one's daily calories, mostly by eating lean meats within a balanced diet. A study evaluating the results of this diet discovered that 79% of the people on it developed more atherosclerosis despite reducing their LDL cholesterol. This study, entitled The Lifestyle Heart Trial, was one of the first randomized clinical trials to see if we could stop or reverse coronary atherosclerosis without using lipid-lowering drugs.

Another group in the study, the intensive lifestyle change group, followed a diet of only 10% fat and less than 5 mg of cholesterol. They included aerobic exercise, stress management training, smoking cessation, and group psycho-social support. For comparison, the control group ate a diet of 26% fat and 250 mg of cholesterol. After one year the lifestyle group had a 37.2% reduction in LDL, a 91% reduction in symptoms of angina, and a 2.2% overall regression of atherosclerosis. The control group had a 6% reduction in LDL but a 165% increase in anginal episodes and a significant progression of atherosclerosis.

A 1998 study compared mortality rates of more than 76,000 vegetarians and non-vegetarians over about a decade, adjusting for age, gender, and smoking. Compared to the non-vegetarians, the vegetarians had a 24% reduction in mortality from ischemic heart disease. In addition, the non-vegetarians died significantly younger. The authors concluded that vegetarians have a lower risk of dying from ischemic heart disease than non-vegetarians have.

Blood pressure as well as cholesterol responded well to the vegetarian diet. When non-vegetarians with elevated blood pressure were placed on a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and cereals for only eight weeks, their blood pressure (both systolic and diastolic) declined by 12.2 mmHg. Similar participants on the Standard American Diet (SAD) experienced no change.

The Oxford Vegetarian Study selected 6,000 vegetarians and 5,000 non-vegetarian control subjects in the United Kingdom between 1980 and 1984 and followed them for 12 years. The vegans having no animal products at all had lower total cholesterol and LDL-cholesterol and a lower mortality rate. The most striking results revealed the association between eating animal fats and the risk of dying from ischemic heart disease. Such heart disease was 57% less frequent in life-long vegans than in those who ate meat.

Cancer. In general, populations around the world who eat a very low-fat vegetarian diet have the lowest rates of cancer. Those who live on a diet higher in fat and cholesterol have the highest rates of cancer.

Substantial scientific evidence shows that certain foods can enhance the body’s immune function while other foods can impair it. According to a recent German study, vegetarians have more than twice the natural killer cell activity than is found in those who consume meat. This study suggests that vegetarians may have much more power to kill cancer or to keep it in check. The greater immune strength likely comes from the vegetarians diet with low fat content, higher fiber, and an abundance of phytochemicals, antioxidants, and other nutrients that enhance the immune system.
A study of more than 122,000 American nurses reported that women who ate meat daily were twenty-five times more likely to develop colorectal cancer than those women who ate meat less than once a month.¹

We know that dietary changes are a key factor in reducing total mortality. Current recommendations call for adopting many of the attributes of a vegetarian diet.¹⁴

Research has also linked dairy foods to cancer. There appears to be a direct relationship between the amount of dairy products consumed and the risk of cancer. Consuming two glasses of milk per day increases your risk of cancer by 20%. More than two glasses per day increases a man’s risk of prostate cancer by 400%. A U.S. study compared a state by state use of dairy products with the overall rate of breast cancer. The more dairy products (milk) a state consumed, the greater the risk the people had of dying from breast cancer.¹⁵

Chemicals in the diet are affecting both men and women; research is shifting now to see if the hormones that the cattle industry uses are completely safe for everyone. Hormones seem to stimulate the start of cancer by acting on chemical, physical, or viral agents and promote the growth and metastasis of tumors once they have started.¹⁶

Other Reasons. Beyond health reasons, many choose the vegetarian lifestyle for humane, ecological, and religious concerns. But the vast majority of vegetarians follow this diet out of concern for their health. They are willing to change their diet to prevent medical illnesses. What they do, basically, is eliminate animal products from the diet and reduce the percentage of saturated fat they consume. These people want better health and longer life and they want to feel good.¹⁷

A substantial amount of solid research confirms the power of a vegetarian diet to reduce dietary risk factors. Literally a thousand and more such articles in print, from all segments of study, confirm this information. Dr. David Heber from UCLA Medical School feels this is a wake-up call to all doctors who prescribe a dietary program far too modest to affect the disease process. For doctors to ignore the facts is irresponsible. It is well-known that physicians, physician assistants, and medical personnel can influence patients to adopt a very low-fat vegetarian diet. The reverse of this is also a known fact: patients can be discouraged from following a program if they are not encouraged by their health care providers.

In conclusion, sufficient information in the Bible, Ellen White’s inspired writings, and the scientific literature supports the vegetarian diet as very beneficial in the prevention, regression, and even the reversal of the conditions discussed in this article.

In the context of this discussion, a motto that we health professionals have been taught and think about almost every day of our practice is appropriate: Above all else... do no harm. When we know that a proven practice is beneficial for our patients and we do not recommend it to them, then we are actually doing harm to them. This matter becomes imperative when we realize that the controlling power of appetite will prove the ruin of thousands, when, if they had conquered on this point, they would have had moral power to gain the victory over every other temptation of Satan. But those who are slaves to appetite will fail in perfecting Christian character (Testimonies for the Church, 3:491, 492).

I challenge the readers of this article to study the vegetarian diet. Objectively evaluate how it affects health and wellness, incorporate it into their personal lives, and then recommend it to their church family, friends, family members, and co-workers. It can help us all toward living longer and better.

NOTES


² A Symposium: Summit on Cholesterol and Coronary Disease, The American Journal of...
Cardiology 82/10B (1998): 83T.


5 G. E. Fraser, Association between Ischemic Heart Disease and All-cause Mortality in non-Hispanic White California Seventh-day Adventists, American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 70/3 supp. (1999): 532S-538S.


13 Ibid., p. 21.


A Mandate for Church-based Health Ministries

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Should a local church try to carry on a significant health ministry?

Seventh-day Adventists have been involved in health ministries since the 1860s. Today these ministries range from the large clinical institutions associated with our churches in a few places such as Glendale, California and Hinsdale, Illinois to the simple cooking school or smoking cessation class offered in many local churches. Between these two poles are several options that have proven effective evangelistically. These options include progressively more intense programs such as ongoing lifestyle support classes, health clubs (involving exercise and a supplied diet), food outlets, and medically-supervised lifestyle health centers.

The primary goal of every Seventh-day Adventist health ministry is evangelistic. To my knowledge no Adventist health program proselytizes directly, but it is the goal of all such endeavors to carry on the work of Christ in reducing physical suffering. This opens hearts to the Bible-based Adventist message. While many Christian denominations sponsor charitable work such as hospitals and clinics, the Seventh-day Adventist health ministry is more closely tied to its theology and mission than is that of other denominations.

End-Time Mission. Adventists see themselves as an end-time community. Their central mission is to restore to the world a right concept of God, leading people to a transforming relationship with Him in preparation for the judgment of the living and the end of the world.

Health ministry is an essential part of Adventists mission, because it reveals Gods character as healing rather than condemning, underscores the Bibles reliability, and demonstrates the value of obedience. As health seekers are led to trust and obey the laws of their physical being as found in Scripture, they may more readily come to understand that all of Gods laws are the indispensable path to life at its best and that obeying them is a gift of restoration to the Divine image.

Chief Proponent. The first and most persuasive proponent of health evangelism among Adventists is Ellen White. She urged, In the preparation of a people for the Lords second coming a great work is to be accomplished through the promulgation of health principles. The people are to be instructed in regard to the needs of the physical organism and the value of healthful living as taught in the Scriptures, that the bodies which God has created may be presented to Him a living sacrifice, fitted to render Him acceptable service. There is a great work to be done for suffering humanity in relieving their sufferings by the use of the natural agencies that God has provided and in teaching them how to prevent sickness by the regulation
of the appetites and passions. The people should be taught that transgression of the laws of nature is transgression of the laws of God. They should be taught the truth in physical as well as in spiritual lines that the fear of the Lord tendeth to life. Proverbs 19:23. If thou wilt enter into life, Christ says, keep the commandments. Matthew 19:17 (Testimonies for the Church, 6:224, 225).

We have yet fully to adopt her vision of the scope and importance of this work. We quote her at length on the specifics of a biblical lifestyle (as featured in Genesis 1 and 2 and in Daniel 1) and on the urgency of offering health education to the public, but we have largely overlooked her concept of a healing ministry's relation to the local church. In every city where we have a church . . . [a] place should be provided where treatment may be given for common ailments. . . . These, skillfully employed, would prove a blessing not only to our people, but to their neighbors, and might be the means of calling the attention of many to health principles (ibid., p. 113).

Local Church's Obligation. Seventh-day Adventists have a unique sense of obligation with regard to community health. This obligation falls more upon the local congregation than upon the denomination. The idea of the local church as the center of the Seventh-day Adventist ministry of healing seems new even though it has been with us for more than a century.

Large, semi-independent institutions near major urban centers are flagships of the Adventist health ministry, but they are not ideally suited to carry out the evangelistic goal of the church's health program. In most cases, their very size makes their service too impersonal to achieve an evangelistic purpose, though thanks to the loving efforts of many Seventh-day Adventist professionals, they do bear some spiritual fruit.

Small, independently-operated rural institutions, while producing some converts, also have difficulty fulfilling the evangelistic component of the Seventh-day Adventist health ministry in that they often seem disconnected from the main body of the church. Wouldn't a local-church-based healing ministry best serve the central purpose?

The obvious reason why connecting health ministry to the local church makes sense is because the local church is the main evangelizing entity. The local congregation preaches, teaches and witnesses about the character of God. The local congregation receives converts into its fellowship and is best equipped to support new believers.

Our History. It should not seem revolutionary to connect health ministry with the local church. Our churches have been sharing health principles with the community for more than a century. As an example of what local churches were doing nearly a hundred years ago, consider this account from Mrs. White:

> During the past few years, the beehive in San Francisco has been indeed a busy one. Many lines of Christian effort have been carried forward by our brethren and sisters there. These included visiting the sick and destitute, finding homes for orphans, and work for the unemployed; nursing the sick, and teaching the truth from house to house; the distribution of literature, and the conducting of classes on healthful living and the care of the sick. A school for the children has been conducted in the basement of the Laguna Street meeting-house. For a time a working men's home and medical mission was maintained. On Market Street, near the city hall, there were treatment rooms, operated as a branch of the St. Helena Sanitarium. In the same locality was a health food store. Nearer the center of the city, not far from the Call building, was conducted a vegetarian café, which was open six days in the week, and entirely closed on the Sabbath. Along the waterfront, ship mission work was carried on. At various times our ministers conducted meetings in large halls in the city. Thus the warning message was given by many (Review and Herald, July 5, 1906).

Healing Centers. The vision of Ellen White in this regard, while not new, does seem revolutionary because in recent memory we have seen so little of it implemented. Following her counsel would make our churches into healing centers where members of the community would naturally turn for help with the most common diseases.
Note this description from The Ministry of Healing, which encourages training in both evangelistic and health work for the local church: Every church should be a training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible readings, how to conduct and teach Sabbath-school classes, how best to help the poor and to care for the sick, how to work for the unconverted. There should be schools of health, cooking schools, and classes in various lines of Christian help work. There should not only be teaching, but actual work under experienced instructors. Let the teachers lead the way in working among the people, and others, uniting with them, will learn from their example. One example is worth more than many precepts (p. 149).

While diagnosis and specific treatment may not legally be carried out without medical supervision, Ellen White recommended that churches be involved in both preventing disease and healing it through the intensive application of the biblical lifestyle. For example, she wrote, In the cities this work of instruction may be carried forward on a much larger scale than in smaller places. But in every place where there is a church, instruction should be given in regard to the preparation of simple, wholesome foods for the use of those who wish to live in accordance with the principles of health. And the church-members should impart to the people of their neighborhoods the light they receive on this subject (Gospel Workers, p. 362).

Door Openers. Mrs. White also counseled that churches with trained physicians on hand should set up treatment centers: Sanitariums and treatment-rooms should be established in many places. These will open doors for the entrance of Bible truth (Review and Herald, September 10, 1908). In all of this work she insisted that churches follow a lifestyle approach to healing rather than the traditional medical approach, since only the lifestyle approach can impress the patient with the unique Adventist adherence to biblical principle. Listen to her call to do a Christ-like ministry:

Christ is no longer in this world in person, to go through our cities and towns and villages healing the sick. He has commissioned us to carry forward the medical missionary work that He began; and in this work we are to do our very best. Institutions for the care of the sick are to be established, where men and women may be placed under the care of God-fearing medical missionaries, and be treated without drugs. To these institutions will come those who have brought disease on themselves by improper habits of eating and drinking. These are to be taught the principles of healthful living. They are to be taught the value of self-denial and self-restraint. They are to be provided with a simple, wholesome, palatable diet, and are to be cared for by wise physicians and nurses (ibid.).

In these institutions the sick may be taught to commit their cases to the Great Physician, who will co-operate with their earnest efforts to regain health, bringing to them healing of soul as well as healing of body (Testimonies for the Church, 9:167, 168).

This fidelity to Bible principles that Mrs. White called for is what establishes the authority of the Seventh-day Adventist message and makes evangelism effective.

Current Experiments. Several churches in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists are presently experimenting with this expanded vision of church-based health ministry. The main intent is to establish the church as a healing center as much as possible. The degree to which these churches can become institutions for healing will depend on the facilities and personnel available to the congregation.

Prominent features of this concept are:

- The establishment of an identifiable, permanent health ministry by the local church that will become well known in the community.
- The operation of a facility for health-related services that is either physically connected to the local Seventh-day Adventist church or easily identified with it.
- The offering of both preventive care and restored health through immune-system-enhancing lifestyle education and support. Clients and patients will understand that the effective therapy is a biblical lifestyle.
- Operation of the ministry on a fee-for-service basis so that workers can be hired.
The direct involvement of the pastor or other qualified church members with the clients/patients in lifestyle instruction and in making the holistic connection with spiritual/emotional factors.

The gentle but systematic invitation to health clients to acquaint themselves with additional life-giving Bible truth.

According to this model, the local church's objective is to go as far toward establishing and institutionalizing its health ministry as it can with the resources and personnel it has. In ministering to such genuine human needs, the church's goal for health outreach is to become well known in the community as a center of good health and overall well-being. So it is helpful to achieve the highest profile possible for its ministries. Four possible levels of community health service are represented by the pyramidal chart on the next page.

Motivation. Why would any given church be motivated to invest so heavily in health ministries? Speaking from experience, I would offer the following reasons.

1. Giving new life to the sick complements the gospel presentation theologically and practically.
2. The counsel of Ellen White mandates health education and a healing ministry as an essential partner with the three angels messages.
3. Churches which offer need-based health ministries as part of a well-rounded church growth program do grow (see Christian Schwarz, Natural Church Development).
4. Churches which offer health ministries are themselves healthier physically and spiritually (providing they avoid the pitfall of fanaticism).
5. There is no better way to overcome the view of our church as a cult than to draw near to sick people in Christ-like concern for their health, pointing them to the Bible as the source of all truth and life.

The human family is suffering because of transgression of the laws of God. The Lord desires that men shall be led to understand the cause of their suffering and the only way to find relief. He desires them to see that their well-being physical, mental, and moral depends upon their obedience to His law. It is His purpose that our institutions shall be as object lessons showing the results of obedience to right principles (Testimonies for the Church, 6:224).

Christ co-operates with those who engage in medical missionary work. . . . Those who visit these institutions [sanitariums and treatment rooms] will be benefited physically, mentally, and spiritually the weary will be refreshed, the sick restored to health, the sin-burdened relieved. . . . From those whose hearts are by these agencies turned from the service of sin unto righteousness, will be heard thanksgiving and the voice of melody. By their songs of grateful praise a testimony will be borne that will win others to allegiance to and fellowship with Christ (ibid., 7:50, 51).

Wouldn't you like to have such an experience in your church?

NOTES

1 There is not room here to discuss the faith healing and mind healing alternatives practiced in some Christian communities. Adventists accept the reality of miraculous healing as a divine alternative but believe that God's end-time preference is to teach people the benefits of adherence to His word by giving health to those who try to identify and follow the laws of health.
Early in June, 2000, I received the news. I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but you have cancer, the doctor said as he tried to soften the blow. He proceeded to inform me of my choices. I saw his lips moving but I did not hear anything else he said. I wondered if I had heard him right. This could not be happening. I turned and looked at my husband who was sitting beside me. He clutched the arms of the chair, ashen-faced. His expression was of someone who had just been kicked in the stomach. I knew that I had heard correctly!

Exodus 15:26 came to my mind: If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee. . . .

I questioned the Lord: I run two miles a day, do light weight training, eat a vegan diet, spend time in the Word and in prayer. What else could I have done, Lord? I could easily have become discouraged and questioned my faith in Jesus, but I found hope in His Word, Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him (Jas 1:12).

After the initial shock wore off, I also found comfort in Mrs. Whites writings. We are too quickly discouraged, and earnestly cry for the trial to be removed from us, when we should plead for patience to endure and grace to overcome. Those who turn to God with heart and soul and mind will find in Him peaceful security. . . . He knows just what we need, just what we can bear, and He will give us grace to endure every trial and test that He brings upon us (Gods Amazing Grace, p. 114).

Jesus reminded me that He had been preparing me for this time since 1991 even though I was not a Christian then. He introduced me to a wonderful cancer surgeon through a friend at work. I liked his honesty and ethics. His staff and patients respected him highly. I could tell that he was a Christian man. I kept his name tucked in the recesses of my mind should I ever need him, but I took it for granted that I would not. After all, cancer is nowhere to be found in my family lineage.

His Teaching. In the summer of 1995, I was taking a walk in nature and communing with my Lord. I clearly heard His voice, so gentle and soothing, teaching me through His second book. He used the shadows that were being cast by the sun to explain how sin blocks the light of the Son from penetrating the heart and mind. As we continued our journey, He clearly pleaded
with me to take care of your body. When I returned home, I related my experience to my family and informed them that I would be taking some time for myself to exercise daily. I joined a lady's health club and was quite diligent with my workouts.

Now, as I reflected on how the Lord had protected me through His instructions, I praised Him for His mercy and grace. Wanting a second opinion, my husband and I traveled several hours to see the cancer surgeon that Jesus had led me to nine years earlier. He was now the Director of the Cancer Institute and did not take new patients, but he made an exception for me.

Later, after the surgery, he asked me how I had detected the tumor. I explained to him that I had felt it, the size of a large marble, and that it had been painful. Impossible! he insisted. The tumor that was removed was the size of a small pea, and it was located so deep in your body that you could not have felt it. Also, cancer tumors are usually not painful. He then informed us that had I accepted the treatment offered by my primary physician, I would be at death's door within two years, and that the evidence showed the cancer had started in 1995!

Another Look. When I took yet another look at God's promise in Exodus 15:26, I realized that I was reading that verse as, if thou wilt eat right and exercise, I will put none of these diseases upon thee. But that is not what the Lord said. He expects me to listen diligently (be constant in application or attention), learn, and apply to my life what He has taught me through His Word and the writings of Ellen White. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort they must be conquerors in the battle with evil (The Great Controversy, p. 425, emphasis mine).

I was obviously not being temperate in all things as I should have been. I did not get enough sleep and was quite stressed in 1995. I take full responsibility for the consequences of my actions. Nevertheless, the Lord was merciful to me in my ignorance. Because I heeded the instructions the Lord gave me in the summer of 1995 to take care of my body temple, I do not need chemotherapy, radiation, or medication. He has seen fit to spare the life that He purchased at Calvary.

Disciplined Lifestyle. Those of us who are waiting patiently for the Lord's return must live a disciplined lifestyle, taking care of the body that our Creator blessed us with. Some of us take better care of our cars, changing the oil, filling the gas tank, making sure the tires have enough air. But surely we must treat our bodies with greater care, for we are to offer them to the Lord (Rom 12:1).

In places where other foods are available in abundance, we must abstain from flesh foods, for many who are now only half converted on the question of meat eating will go from God's people to walk no more with them (Counsels on Diet and Foods, p. 382, emphasis mine). We must also give our bodies rest, fresh air, exercise, and clean water. Daily we must feed our minds spiritually. If we cannot be disciplined here on earth, how can we assure our Lord that we will be disciplined in heaven?

Why Disasters? But what about those who by no fault of their own meet with health disasters? A dear gentleman I know, recently baptized into the church, fell and broke his back. He is now paralyzed from the chest down. For many years he has taken care of his wife, an Alzheimer's patient. When he became hospitalized, his wife had to be placed in a nursing home. This dear Christian man lies in his bed worrying about his beloved's care. His loyalty and his faith in Jesus remain solid, but he too wonders, Why?

We are still living in a sinful world and are still a part of the Great Controversy. We must remember the Lord's words to Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job? (Job 1:8). How we react to trials will be a witness of our faith in Jesus and His promises to those around us.

Refining. Trials indicate that we are being placed in the Refiner's fire. The refining furnace is to remove the dross. When the Refiner sees His image reflected in you perfectly, he will remove you from the furnace. You will not be left to be consumed or to endure the fiery ordeal any longer than is necessary for your purification. But it is necessary for you, in order to reflect the divine image, to submit to the process the Refiner chooses for you, that you may be cleansed, purified, and every spot and blemish removed—not even a wrinkle left in your Christian.
character (Our High Calling, p. 312, emphasis mine). Our words and actions in times of trial must always be to glorify Him.

When Mrs. Whites sixteen-year-old son became ill, he called his mother and father to his bedside and said, Father, Mother, . . . If the Lord sees fit to spare my life, for your sake I will be pleased. If it is for my good and His names glory for my life to close now, I will say, It is well with my soul (Selected Messages, 2:258). He died, putting his full trust in Jesus his Savior. Sister White felt the pain of losing a child to death, but she continued in her work for the Lord with the same fervency as prior to her childs death. She knew in whom she believed.

Ellen White wrote, Look up! Jesus lives. Jesus loves. Jesus pities, and He will receive you with all your burden of care and trouble if you will come to Him and lay your burden upon Him. He has promised He will never leave or forsake those who put their trust in Him (Our High Calling, p. 312).

We cannot recognize it when we are going through the trials and afflictions, but they are our greatest blessings. It is through these tumultuous times that we draw very, very close to our Creator. And He draws very, very close to us. His promise is sure: Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Mt 28:20, NKJV).