

Is Eating Meat a Sin?

Reasons for Reform

"Only one lease of life is granted us; and the inquiry with everyone should be, 'How can I invest my powers so that they may yield the greatest profit? How can I do most for the glory of God and the benefit of my fellow men?' For life is valuable only as it is used for the attainment of these ends.

"...We cannot afford to dwarf or cripple any function of body or mind. As surely as we do this, we must suffer the consequence." CH 107

A Question of Obedience

"The obligations we owe to God in presenting to Him clean, pure, healthy bodies are not comprehended." MS 49, 1897

"A failure to care for the living machinery is an insult to the Creator. There are divinely appointed rules which if observed will keep human beings from disease and premature death." CDF 16

"It is as truly a sin to violate the laws of our being as it is to break the Ten Commandments. To do either is to break God's laws. Those who transgress the law of God in their physical organism, will be inclined to violate the laws of God spoken from Sinai." CTBH 53

"Since the laws of nature are the laws of God, it is plainly our duty to give these laws careful study. We should study their requirements in regard to our own bodies, and conform to them. **Ignorance in these things is sin.**" 6T 369,370

Present Truth

"Present truth lies in the work of health reform as verily as in other features of gospel work." 6T 327

"The health reform is an important part of the third angel's message," CH 49

"Health reform...is one of the great branches of the work of preparation for the coming of the Son of man..." 3T 61

"We are to be brought into connection with the masses... We ask them to leave off eating meat... All flesh food should be discarded." CD 358

How can we claim to bear the message to the dying world when we ourselves are digging our graves with our teeth?

Far and Abroad

"In countries where there are fruits, grains, and nuts in abundance, flesh food is not the right food for God's people." 9T 159

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"In some countries, where poverty abounds, flesh is the cheapest food. Under these circumstances the change [to vegetarianism] will be made with greater difficulty; but it can be effected." MH 316-7

When Terry and I have been in the mission field of the South Pacific islands, there have been occasions when the villagers have prepared and served fish. In these circumstances, we did not rebuke them. Of course, we did not eat it, but we did not condemn them for doing so.

In many villages the folks have nothing but casava, taro (mainly starch, very little protein), and fruit (bananas and papayas). If they get any "city" food it is white rice or white bread. The fish is their primary source of protein. Many of these people have never heard of dried beans or tofu. Theirs is a hand to mouth existence and counsel is clear that until these folks can find something better, they are to be left alone on this point.

If they were eating pork, it would be a different matter altogether. They know the difference between the clean and unclean, and they do not eat the unclean.

Not Our Problem

But in America or Australia, theirs is not our experience. We have food in abundance.

"Flesh meat is not the right food for God's people... In a country such as this [the United States], where there are fruits, grains, and nuts in abundance, how can one think that he must eat the flesh of dead animals?" CDF 390

"We have no need to use meat, where there was an abundance of fruit, as in California." CDF 413

Our problem is a perverted appetite.

"There is a class who profess to believe the truth, who do not use tobacco, snuff, tea, or coffee, yet they are guilty of gratifying the appetite in a different manner....

"Many are so devoted to intemperance that they will not change their course of indulging in gluttony under any considerations. They would sooner sacrifice health, and die prematurely, than to restrain their intemperate appetite.

"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, Satan's temptation to indulge appetite will be more powerful and more difficult to overcome. It is only through obedience and continual effort that we shall overcome as Christ overcame." TSDF 36

Leading the Flock

As far as those in the position of leadership, we read:

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"No man should be set apart as a teacher of the people while his own teaching or example contradicts the testimony God has given His servants to bear in regard to diet, for this will bring confusion." 6T 378

"Let our ministers and canvassers step under the banners of strict temperance. Never be ashamed to say, 'No, thank you; I do not eat meat. I have conscientious scruples against eating the flesh of dead animals.'" "Let the members of our churches deny every selfish appetite. Every penny expended for...flesh meat is worse than wasted." CDF 402

In Our Homes

And our families:

"Individually, you will not subsist upon the flesh of dead animals, neither will you put one morsel in the mouths of your children...." CDF 294

"...meat should not be placed before our children...." 2T 352

"...the students in our schools are not be served with flesh foods." CDF 403

A Firm Stand

For those who claim to be God's remnant church:

"It has been clearly presented to me that God's people are to make a firm stand against meat eating." CDF 383

"We bear positive testimony against...flesh meats." 3T21

"Dead carcasses should always be looked upon as not fit to compose the diet of Christians." CDF 414

"Flesh meat is not the right food for God's people." CDF 390

"Not an ounce of flesh meat should enter our stomachs." CDF 380

No One's Looking

What about an occasional backsliding? Although we may think it's no big deal, but God, through His messenger to His last day people, says otherwise.

"Those who digress occasionally to gratify the taste in eating a fattened turkey or other flesh meats, pervert their appetites... They are controlled by taste, not by principle." 2T 487 & CDF399

Obviously He thinks it is a matter of concern. When we "digress occasionally to gratify the taste" there is an indication that we are "controlled by taste, not by principle." Clearly we see, being consistent in the "little" things is important. If He cannot trust us in the "little" things, how can He trust us with "big" things? Is that piece of turkey (or hamburger, or whatever it is) really that important?

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It's not the piece of flesh that will keep us out of the kingdom, but our perverted appetite which is in rebellion against God's laws of health.

But, you say, it is clean meat, and there's no commandment against eating meat. Well, read on....

"It is as truly a sin to violate the laws of our being as it is to break the ten commandments," CDF 17

"It is just as much sin to violate the laws of our being as to break one of the Ten Commandments, for we cannot do either without breaking God's law." 2T 70

"The transgression of physical law is the transgression of God's law... And the human being who is careless and reckless of the habits and practices that concern his physical life and health, sins against God." CDF 43

"It is a terrible sin to abuse the health that God has given us." CDF 20

A Strong Hold

"Satan is constantly on the alert to bring the race fully under his control. His strongest hold on man is through the appetite, and this he seeks to stimulate in every possible way." CTBH 16

We can hardly drive to the market, turn on the radio or TV without being deluged by signs promoting Pepsi, McDonalds, Burger King, Baskin Robbins, and on and on. If you're not on guard, the first thing you know, the mouth begins to salivate. Then you parley with the thought. "Just one..."

James 1:14& 15 says: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

"The first great evil was intemperance in eating and drinking. Men and women have made themselves slaves to appetite." CDF 149

"It seemed a small matter to our first parents to transgress the command of God in that one act,-- the eating from a tree that was so beautiful to the sight and so pleasant to the taste,-- but it broke their allegiance to God, and opened the gates to a flood of guilt and woe that has deluged the world." CTBH 44

In our report **"The Time Will Come"** we explore the subject of meat being unfit for consumption, as God began revealing to His people more than 100 years ago.

"The light has come to me for many years that meat eating is not good for health or morals." CDF 413

"Flesh food is injurious to health..." MH 315

"...flesh foods are injurious to the physical well-being,..." 9T156

"...flesh meat...is...hurtful,..." 1T 548

"...flesh food...is harmful..." Ed 203

Good Blood

"Our bodies are built up from the food we eat. There is a constant breaking down of the tissues of the body; every movement of every organ involves waste, and this waste is repaired from our food. Each organ of the body requires its share of nutrition. The brain must be supplied with its portion; the bones, muscles, and nerves, demand theirs. It is a wonderful process that transforms the food into blood and uses this blood to build up the varied parts of the body; but this process is going on continually, supplying with life and strength each nerve, muscle, and tissue.

"Those foods should be chosen that best supply the elements needed for building up the body. In this choice, appetite is not a safe guide. Through wrong habits of eating, the appetite has become perverted." MH 295

We tend to forget that the reason for eating is to make good blood not to appease our appetites. We must eat good food in order to make good blood in order to make right decisions. This is where our decisions reveal whether we live by principle or if we live to indulge our appetite.

"Flesh meats [is]...entirely out of harmony with health reform principles. If we would allow reason to take the place of impulse and love of sensual indulgence, we should not taste of the flesh of dead animals." CDF 401

"...in order to make good blood, the system requires good food...." CDF 263 (MS95, 1901)

"Flesh meats will depreciate the blood. Cook meat with spices, and eat it with rich cakes and pies, and you have a bad quality of blood. The system is too heavily taxed in disposing of this kind of food. The mince pies and the pickles, which should never find a place in any human stomach, will give a miserable quality of blood. And a poor quality of food, cooked in an improper manner, and insufficient in quantity, cannot make good blood. Flesh meats and rich food, and an impoverished diet, will produce the same results." CDF 387

"It is a mistake to suppose that muscular strength depends on the use of animal food. The needs of the system can be better supplied, and more vigorous health can be enjoyed, without its use. The grains, with fruits, nuts, and vegetables, contain all the nutritive properties necessary to make good blood. These elements are not so well or so fully supplied by a flesh diet. Had the use of flesh been essential to health and strength, animal food would have been included in the diet appointed man in the beginning." CDF 396

"God has written His law upon every nerve and muscle, every fiber and function of the human body. The indulgence of unnatural appetite, whether for tea, coffee, tobacco, or liquor, is intemperance, and is at war with the laws of life and health. By using these forbidden articles a condition of things is created in the system which the Creator never designed. This indulgence in any of the members of the human family is sin. . . . the eating of food that does not make good blood is working against the laws of our physical organism, and is a violation of the law of God. The cause produces the effect. Suffering, disease, and death are the sure penalty of indulgence." EV 265-266

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"The simple grains, fruits of the trees, vegetables, have all the nutritive properties necessary to make good blood. This a flesh diet **cannot** do." CDF 322

"No man can become a successful workman in spiritual things until he observes strict temperance in his dietetic habits. God cannot let His Holy Spirit rest upon those who, while they know how they should eat for health, persist in a course that will enfeeble mind and body." CDF 55

"The eating of food that does not make good blood is working against the laws of our physical organism, and is a violation of the law of God." EV 266

"Flesh of dead animals... contaminates the blood in their veins." CDF 384

"The eating of flesh meats has made a poor quality of blood and flesh... Flesh meats will depreciate the blood." 2T 61, 368

"Flesh meat...is...corrupting to the lifeblood coursing through the veins." MM 310

Blood & Fat

"...all the fat is the Lords. It shall be a perpetual statute...that ye eat neither fat nor blood." Lev 3:16,17

"Of the meats permitted, the eating of the fat and the blood was strictly forbidden.

"Only such animals could be used for food as were in good condition. No creature that was torn, that had died of itself, or from which the blood had not been carefully drained, could be used as food." MH 312

So much for buying a steak at the local market. There were strict laws about how the animal must be killed, how it had to be prepared, the blood drained, etc. Certainly today's butchers and meat handlers fall far from meeting this requirement.

Since those laws are still very much in effect (having been restated under the direction of God in the counsels to His last day people), today if a Christian were to eat meat, according to Biblical standards, the blood and fat would have to be removed.

Is Eating Meat a Sin?

We'll leave that between you and God. Consider these quotes:

"...if they could see the animals when living and know the quality of the meat they eat, they would turn from it with loathing. People are continually eating flesh that is filled with tuberculous and cancerous germs. Tuberculosis, cancer, and other fatal diseases are thus communicated." MH 313

"When men take any course which needlessly expends their vitality or beclouds their intellect, they sin against God..." CDF 118

"...meat eating deranges the system, beclouds the intellect, and blunts the moral sensibilities." 2T 64

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"Meat eating...has always been a curse to the human family..., and our only safety now is in leaving meat entirely alone." CDF 412

"Concerning flesh meat we can all say, Let it alone." CDF 430

"Those who believe present truth...should refuse to eat flesh meat." EV 265

"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." CDF 382

"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17

The Revelation

1864 "Since the Lord presented before me, in June, 1863, the subject of meat eating in relation to health, I have left the use of meat... We have no meat... upon our table." CDF 482-3

1867 "Flesh meats...is...hurtful..." 1T 548

1868 The meat-eating question was presented before me 5 years ago [1863], showing how little the people knew what they were eating for food in the shape of flesh meats." 2T 153

1868 "A plain diet, free from... flesh meats...would prove a blessing to you.... Meat eating deranges the system, beclouds the intellect, and blunts the moral sensibilities. We say to you, dear brother and sister, your safest course is to let meat alone."

1870 "I broke away from...meat... I was a great meat eater.... Flesh meats...are not the most healthful and nourishing diet.... Those who digress occasionally to gratify the taste in eating a fattened turkey or other flesh meats, pervert their appetites... They are controlled by taste, not by principle.... No...flesh meats of any kind come on my table." 2T 371, 400, 487

1872 "We bear positive testimony against...flesh meats." 3T 21

1884 "Flesh meats [is]...entirely out of harmony with health reform principles. If we would allow reason to take the place of impulse and love of sensual indulgence, we should not taste of the flesh of dead animals." CDF 401

1894 "I have already consecrated my table. I have freed it from all flesh meats... From henceforth my table shall be free from the flesh of dead animals." CDF 488

1895 "Since the camp meeting at Brighton [January 1894] I have absolutely banished meat from my table. It is an understanding that whether I am at home or abroad, nothing of this kind is to be used in my family, or come upon my table."

1897 "Shall human beings live on the flesh of dead animals? The answer, from the light that God has given is, No, decidedly No." CDF 388

1898 "The light has come to me for many years that meat eating is not good for health or morals...; for dead carcasses should always be looked upon as not fit to compose the diet of Christians." CDF 413-4

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1900 "In your association with unbelievers do not allow yourselves to be swerved from right principles. If you sit at their tables, eat temperately and only of food that will not confuse the mind." 6T 336

1901 "Let our ministers and canvassers step under the banner of strict temperance. Never be ashamed to say, 'No, thank you; I do not eat meat. I have conscientious scruples against eating the flesh of dead animals.'" CDF 402

1902 "It has been clearly presented to me that God's people are to take a firm stand against meat eating." CDF 383

1902 "Those who believe present truth...should refuse to eat flesh meat." EV 265

1902 "Let not any of our ministers set an evil example in the eating of flesh meat." CDF 399

1903 "Not an ounce of flesh meat should enter our stomachs." CDF 380

1904 "We do say that flesh meat is not the right food for God's people... In a country such as this [United States], where there are fruits, grains, and nuts in abundance, how can one think that he must eat the flesh of dead animals?" CDF 390

1909 "Flesh foods are injurious to the physical well-being." CDF 403

1905 "Flesh food is injurious to health, and whatever affects the body has a corresponding effect on the mind." CDF 383

The King's Table

We are on the borders of the Promised Land. Will we, as did the Israelites in the wilderness, continue to lust after the flesh pots of Egypt?

"The Lord intends to bring His people back to live upon simple fruits, vegetables, and grains. He led the children of Israel into the wilderness where they could not get a flesh diet; and He gave them bread from heaven. Man did eat angel's food. But they craved the flesh pots of Egypt, and mourned and cried for flesh, notwithstanding that the Lord had proposed that if they would submit to His will, He would carry them into the land of Canaan, and establish them there, a pure, holy, happy people, and there would not be a feeble one in all their habitations, for He would take away all sickness from among them. But although they had a plain 'thus saith the Lord,' they mourned, and wept, and murmured, and complained, it displeased the Lord;..." SpM45-46

Do we find ourselves moaning and whining that we can't have this or can't eat that? Will we not be content with the bounty presented before us on the Kings Table, but rather, as did they, prefer to endure slavery and even death rather than to be deprived of some tasty morsel?

The Right Arm

"When the Third Angel's message is received in its fullness, health reform will be given its place in the councils of the conference, in the work of the church, in the home, at the table, and in all the household arrangement. Then the right arm will serve and protect the body." 6T 327

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The right arm is a part of the entire body. It is not the head. It is not the toe. It represents strength, activity. If you have ever broken your arm, or for some reason have not been able to use it, you know how awkward it is. It is nearly impossible to get anything done efficiently. Without regular use, the muscles of the arm will begin to atrophy or die.

Thus it is with God's principles of health. In many places through out the Spirit of Prophecy, we're told that the health reform is as closely connected with the third angel's message as the right arm is with the body, (see CH 20-1; 1T 486; 3T 62; 3T 161; 6T 327) and that the body of truth should be constantly active and constantly at work (see 6T 288; CH 513).

The right arm is to serve and protect the body (see 6T 327). It is not a bionic arm that beats people over the head with a book of rules.

Extremes

"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...

"Those who understand the laws of health and who are governed by principle, will shun the extremes, both of indulgence and of restriction... 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.

[Notice, they are not described as those who people hate to see coming...]

"There is real common sense in dietetic reform... 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..." MH 319-320

Ellen White said that beans were poison to her. That does not mean that we should not eat beans. We must reason from cause to effect.

"There is a wide difference in constitutions and temperaments, and the demands of the system differ greatly in different persons. What would be food for one, might be poison for another; so precise rules cannot be laid down to fit every case. I cannot eat beans, for they are poison to me; but for me to say that for this reason no one must eat them would be simply ridiculous. I cannot eat a spoonful of milk gravy, or milk toast, without suffering in consequence; but other members of my family can eat these things, and realize no such effect; therefore I take that which suits my stomach best, and they do the same. We have no words, no contention; all moves along harmoniously in my large family, for I do not attempt to dictate what they shall or shall not eat." CDF 474

"One person cannot lay down an exact rule for another. Everyone should exercise reason and self-control, and should act from principle." MH 310

"I consider that one reason why I have been able to do so much work both in speaking and in writing, is because I am strictly temperate in my eating. If several varieties of food are placed before me, I endeavor to choose only those that I know will agree. Thus I am enabled to

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preserve clear mental faculties. I refuse to place in my stomach knowingly anything that will set up fermentation. This is the duty of all health reformers. We must reason from cause to effect. It is our duty to be temperate in all things." CDF 493

We must be allowed to make our own decisions in regard to what best works for our individual system.

For years, Terry and I lived under the scrutiny of someone who watched our every move. If we were to choose to do something outside the strict rules this other person had chosen for himself, we were looked upon with disdain and severe disapproval. (I'm talking about mixing lettuce with tomatoes -- not eating cheese or meat!)

The health reform message was held in the light of a rigid set of rules in the hand of a god who sat on a big white throne with a whip, just waiting to zap you every time you step outside of counsel. That is NOT the true health reform!

On the other hand, God has given principles that are to be lived within, and we will receive a blessing if we do. And we will suffer the consequence if we go our own way.

The Original Diet

In Genesis (1:29) we find God's original diet for man.

"Again and again I have been shown that God is bringing His people back to His original design, that is, not to subsist upon the flesh of dead animals. He would have us teach people a better way...

"If meat is discarded, if the taste is not educated in that direction, if a liking for fruits and grains is encouraged, it will soon be as God in the beginning designed it should be. No meat will be used by His people." Letter 3, 1884

"God gave our first parents the food He designed that the race should eat. It was contrary to His plan to have the life of any creature taken. There was to be no death in Eden...." CDF 81

Pure Vegetarianism

1868 "Cheese should never be introduced into the stomach." 2T 68

1883 "All the elements of nutrition are contained in the fruits, vegetables, and grains." HL 96

1889 "Years ago I had a testimony of reproof for the managers in our campmeetings bringing upon the ground and selling to our people cheese and other hurtful things." CD 329

1890 "The effect of cheese is deleterious." CH 114

1896 "The simple grains, fruits of the trees, and vegetables have all the nutritive properties necessary to make good blood." HL 98

1898 "In a short time the milk of the cows will also be excluded from the diet of God's commandment-keeping people in a short time it will not be safe to use anything that comes from the animal creation." CD 411

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1899 "The light given me is that it will not be very long before we shall have to give up using any animal food. Even milk will have to be discarded." CD 384

1901 "The time may come when it will not be safe to use milk.... The time will come when we may have to discard some of the articles of diet we now use, such as milk and cream and eggs.... The time will come when milk cannot be used as freely as it is now used.... But I wish to say that when the time comes that it is no longer safe to use milk, cream, butter, and eggs, God will reveal this.... We see that cattle are becoming greatly diseased, the earth itself is corrupted, and we know that the time will come when it will not be best to use milk and eggs." CD 357-9 [see our *tract "The Time Will Come"*]

1902 "Let the diet reform be progressive. Let the people be taught how to prepare food without the use of milk or butter. Tell them that the time will soon come when there will be no safety in using eggs, milk, cream, or butter, because disease in animals is increasing in proportion to the increase of wickedness among men." 7T135

1903 "Vegetables, fruits, and grains should compose our diet. Not an ounce of flesh meat should enter our stomachs." CD 380

1905 "Cheese is... objectionable; it is wholly unfit for food." MH 302

1905 "Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables constitute the diet chosen for us by our Creator.... The grains, with fruits, nuts, and vegetables, contain ALL the nutritive properties necessary to make good blood.... The diet reform should be progressive. As disease in animals increases, the use of milk and eggs will become more and more unsafe... The people everywhere should be taught how to cook without milk and eggs, so far as possible, and yet have their food wholesome and palatable." MH 296, 316, 320-1

1906 "In grains, fruits, vegetables, and nuts are to be found ALL the food elements that we need." CDF 92, 310, 313

1909 "The time will come when we may have to discard some of the articles of diet we now use, such as milk and cream and eggs..." 9T162

The last few words in the Counsels of Diet and Foods appendix, are those of James White regarding the counsels on health given to his wife: "...all changes in diet should be made carefully, one at a time. And while she [his wife, Ellen White] would say this to those who are in danger of making changes too rapidly, she would also say to the tardy, Be sure and not forget to change."