

# “Healthy For God’s Sake”

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## Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

The last four ENDTIME ISSUES newsletters dealt with recent attacks against the Sabbath. The many responses I have received from subscribers living in different parts of the world, have made me forcefully aware of the global scope of the Sabbath/Sunday controversy. Many of you have emailed me articles and references to recent publications negating the continuity and validity of the Sabbath for today.

Truly we can say that the Sabbath has had no rest in Christian history. Over 3000 treatises disputing the Sabbath have been published since the Reformation. About 1000 of them during our lifetime. It would seem that the controversy over the Sabbath is intensifying today. One wonders, why? Most likely because the Sabbath commandment touches us in our intimacy more than the other nine commandments. It calls upon us to consecrate the time of the seventh day to the Lord and most people are very touchy about their time. They want to use it to seek for personal pleasure or profit, not to cultivate the awareness of God’s presence and peace in their lives.

The problem is not new. Sabbathkeeping has been a problem throughout human history. This was true in OT times and is still true today. In the OT Ezekiel equates the profanation of the Sabbath with the apostasy of the children of Israel. He says: “The children rebelled against me; they did not walk in my statutes, . . . they profaned my Sabbaths.” The same problem prevails today as God’s *Holy Day* has become for many a *holiday*. Sabbath profanation can lead to apostasy is because the essence of the Biblical faith is a relationship with God. And the Sabbath provides the times and the reasons for cultivating our relationship with the Lord.

## A THANK YOU NOTE

A special thanks to those of you who have printed out the recent newsletters about the Sabbath and shared them with your church members and friends. Some Bible teachers have informed me that they shared this material with their students. Some non-SDA subscribers have circulated these studies among their church members. A Presbyterian subscriber wrote: “I wanted to acknowledge your message and tone in your last letter to Dr. Kennedy. It was very clear, helpful, and gracious. I shared it with a member in my study class at the Central Presbyterian Church.”

Your efforts to encourage your friends to subscribe to this newsletter is greatly appreciated. As a result of your endeavors we receive an average of 200 new subscriptions a week. About 20,000 people in many parts of the world are now receiving this newsletter. All what your friends need to do to subscribe is to email us a request at <sbacchiocchi@qtm.net>

## **UPDATE ON THE OPEN LETTER TO DR. JAMES KENNEDY**

Several subscribers have contacted me by email and phone to find out if Dr. James Kennedy has replied to my "Open Letter." The answer is that I have not yet received a personal letter or a call from Dr. Kennedy. I did receive a letter from his office informing me that they have received both the letter and the four books on the Sabbath.

I did call Dr. Kennedy's office to find out if he had a chance to read the "Open Letter." His private secretary, MaryAnne, informed me that both the "Open Letter" and the books are on his desk. She thought that Dr. Kennedy would examine them upon his return to his office in a couple of days. I suggested the possibility of visiting Dr. Kennedy during one of my forthcoming seminars in Miami. She thought that this might be possible and would get back to me.

It is unrealistic to expect a busy man like Dr. Kennedy to read immediately the 30 pages "Open Letter" and books I mailed him. I have on my desk a pile of manuscripts and books people have mailed me in recent months for evaluation. Unfortunately I have not had the time to look at them. No doubt Dr. Kennedy is facing the same pressure of time. I believe that sometime in the near future I will hear from him.

Frankly I doubt that Dr. Kennedy will ever accept the validity of the seventh-day Sabbath. The best we can hope for is that after reading the "Open Letter" and the books, he may come to recognize that the Adventist belief in the permanence of the seventh-day Sabbath is based on solid Biblical and historical foundations. I have reasons to hope that in a future sermon on the Sabbath, he will be less critical of the Adventist understanding of the changed from Sabbath to Sunday and avoid misquoting documents to legitimize an apostolic origin of Sunday. I will keep you updated about future developments. For the time being let us pray for him and his ministry.

## **A SABBATH OR ADVENT SEMINAR AT YOUR CHURCH?**

During the past few weeks I have received numerous inquiries from pastors and members about the possibility of presenting my SABBATH or ADVENT ENRICHMENT SEMINARS at their church. They wanted to know if I had any open weekend this year and what it would take for them to invite me. Since your church may have the same interest to invite me, let me explain my present situation.

For the next five months I am solidly booked for every weekend, but I do have a dozen of openings in the latter half of this year. Rest assured that I do accept invitation from smaller churches, when a rally of several local churches can be organized. For example, last Sabbath, February 9, 2002, at the Burleson SDA Church in Dallas, we had about 600 people attending, 400 of whom were visitors from other churches. The same was true two weeks ago in Kelowna, British Columbia. Seven churches rallied together and filled the 750 chairs that had been set up at the gymnasium of the local Adventist Academy. The place was packed with about 100 people standing.

The fact that your church has a small congregation is not a problem. It is simply a question of inviting the other churches in your district to co-sponsor the seminar. It takes some efforts to organize a district rally of several churches, but the results are very gratifying. Your church members will be greatly blessed by fellowshiping and worshipping together with fellow believers of other churches during a spiritually enriching seminar.

If your district churches are interested to participate in a rally, feel free to contact me at (616) 471-2915. I will be glad to reserve a weekend for your district. You will see that the newly prepared PowerPoint presentations on the Sabbath and Second Advent, will be enthusiastically received. I have spent over a 1000 hours preparing these PowerPoint presentations which are designed to enrich the understanding and experience of our timely message. Each lecture consists of about 100 slides which help people to visualize and conceptualize these timely truths.

## A PROPOSED VISIT TO AUSTRALIA FOR NOVEMBER 2002

During the past two years several churches in New Zealand and Australia have attempted to invite me to present my Sabbath and Advent seminars. Eventually they had to cancel their invitation because the South Pacific Division decided not to approve any further request for me to speak in their territory. The decision largely stemmed largely from a stand I took against some of the rock music played at a campmeeting where I was invited to speak. This was an isolated and sad incident which I deeply regret. It was the first time in my life that I was confronted with a rock band playing inappropriate music at an Adventist religious gathering and undoubtedly I overreacted.

I have appealed to the brethren to reconsider their decision, reassuring them that in any future visit I will be more pastoral in my approach to any perceived problem. Especially I will avoid discussing divisive issues from the pulpit. Elder Laurie J. Evans, the President of the South Pacific Division, has informed me that the Presidents' Council that convened on November 7, 2001, agreed to allow the processing of official requests for my services under certain conditions.

A major requirement is that the invitations are to be processed through the regular church channels and approved by the Division Secretariat. This is a fair condition by which I shall abide. This means that I need to know as soon as possible the name of the churches interested to organize a rally in their district this coming November 2002. This will give us enough time to submit a request for approval to the Division Secretariat. Tentatively I am planning for an 18 days speaking tour from November 1 to 17, 2002. This would make it possible to have major rallies in places such as Auckland, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, and Hobart. Let me know as soon as possible if your district churches wish to sponsor my visit.

I have also been asked to apologize for "inaccurate or exaggerated comments" I made about the problems that I encountered in Australia. I did apologize already over two years ago for the tensions caused, especially by my stand against the use of rock music at a campmeeting I attended. I apologize again for the method I used to show my disapproval. This does not mean that I have come to accept the use of beat music for the worship service. Rather, it means that I recognize that the way I expressed my disapproval was too confrontational.

Since my last visit to Australia I have preached in several Adventist churches in North America where the loud beat music hurt my eardrums and deeply offended my Biblical convictions. Yet, in none of these churches I have used the pulpit to denounce the inappropriateness of the music. I have come to realize that we do not solve these problems through public denunciations, but through gradual education.

We need to educate our people on the Biblical teachings regarding the distinction between sacred music for worship and secular music for entertainment. We cannot blame our fellow-believers for playing what is wrong, if we do not help them to understand what music is right for worship. The Bible has far more to say on the subject of worship music than many realize. This educational task can best be accomplished in study groups where the Biblical teachings can be examined and discussed.

You will find a most informative presentation of the Biblical teachings on church music in chapters 6 and 7 of the symposium *THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC*. I spent several months researching and writing these two chapters. The other chapters were written by six professional musicians who are actively involved in enriching the worship service of their congregations.

This book has been a real blessing to many Adventist churches. Many pastors and church members have informed me that the book has caused them to reconsider their position on church music. They were surprised to discover that percussion instruments associated with entertainment were never allowed in the worship service of the Temple, synagogue, and early church. Feel free to request your personal copy of this timely book

by calling us at (616) 471-2915. We will be glad to mail you a case of 26 copies for your church members and friends for only \$170.00, postpaid, that is \$6.50 per copy, instead of the regular price of \$20.00.

## **UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS**

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the upcoming seminars for the months of February and March 2002. Every Sabbath it is a great pleasure for me to meet our subscribers who travel considerable distances to attend the seminars. Feel free to contact me at (616) 471-2915 for a special seminar in your area sometimes during 2002. I still have a few openings for the latter part of 2002. Each of the three seminars on the Sabbath, Second Advent, and Christian Life-style is now presented with PowerPoint slides which add a visual dimension to our message.

### **FEBRUARY 22-23: MIAMI, FL: BETHANY SDA CHURCH**

Location: 2500 N. W. 50th Street, Miami, FL 33142

For information call Pastor S. J. Jackson at (954) 442-8258 or (305) 634-2993. This is a special rally for the regional churches in the Miami area.

### **MARCH 1-2: PASCO, WA: KENNEWICK & RIVERVIEW SDA CHURCHES**

The Kennewick SDA Church is located at 7105 W. 10th Avenue, Kennewick, WA 99336.

I will present there the ADVENT SEMINAR on Friday evening, March 1, at 7:30 p. m, and Sabbath morning, March 2, at 9:30 a. m.

The Riverview SDA Church is located at 605 N. Road 36, Pasco, WA 99301. I will present there the SABBATH SEMINAR on Sabbath morning, March 2, at 11:00 a.m., and Sabbath afternoon at 4:00 p. m.

This is a unique opportunity to hear both seminars on the same weekend. For information about the two seminars call the respective church offices at (509) 783-8731 or (509) 547-4998.

### **MARCH 8-9: ST. HELENA, CA: ST. HELENA SDA CHURCH (NEAR PUC)**

Location: 1777 Main Street, St. Helena, CA 9574

The Religion Department of Pacific Union College is encouraging its students to attend this seminar. All the churches in the valley are invited to attend this special rally. For information call Pastor Pete Geli at (707) 963-4461.

### **MARCH 15-17: FORT WORTH, TEXAS: FIRST FT. WORTH SDA CHURCH**

This will be a special weekend during which the Texas Media Center will video-record six one-hour Sabbath lectures. The recording will begin on Friday evening, March 15, will continue Sabbath morning and afternoon, March 16, and will terminate on Sunday morning, March 17. Don't miss this unique opportunity to hear the complete version of the Sabbath seminar with twice the number of lectures I give in a regular seminar.

Location: 7051 McCart Avenue, Ft. Worth, Texas 76133-7201

For information call Pastor Paul Boling at (817) 294-5729 or (817) 313-1391

### **MARCH 22-23: ANDREWS UNIVERSITY**

The meetings are sponsored by the "ADVENT HOPE" club of the SDA Theological seminary. The organizers are in the process of finding an adequate location. I will give you an update in the next newsletter. For information about the time and place, call Jonathan Rosengren at 471-7996.

### **MARCH 29-30: SOUTH LANCASTER, MA: VILLAGE SDA CHURCH**

Location: 75 Sawyer Street, South Lancaster, MA 01561

This rally is sponsored by the Village Church of Atlantic Union College. All the district churches are invited to attend. For information call Pastor Robert Sierra at (978) 368-8420

## **ENDTIME ISSUES 80: "HEALTHY FOR GOD'S SAKE: SOME INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS"**

**Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.,  
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After devoting the last four newsletters to the recent attacks against the Sabbath, I thought it might be helpful to address another current issue, namely, what is known in Adventist circles as "The Health Message." After all Adventists have been best known for two distinguishing characteristics: The Sabbath and Healthful living.

This newsletter is divided into two parts. In the first part I will present some introductory reflections on the theological foundation of the Adventist Health Message and its relationship to the Sabbath. In the second part, Gerard Damsteegt, Ph. D., Church History Professor from Andrews University SDA Theological Seminary, will help us understand how Adventist pioneers developed the Health Message.

My plan is to devote the next three or four newsletters to a study of various aspects of our health message. For example, Does the Bible teach moderation or abstinence in the use of alcoholic beverages? Should Adventists promote abstinence on the basis of Biblical or medical reasons? I spent two years researching this question and I look forward to share with you the highlights of my research.

Another question several subscribers have asked me in recent weeks has to do with clean and clean meat. Is this distinction based on ceremonial concerns related to the sacrificial system or upon health considerations? Two Adventist scholars have examined this question. One of them has written a doctoral dissertation on this topic. I thought you might be interested to read the results of their research.

I trust that you will find these studies on health from a Biblical perspective of interest, especially in view of the explosive interest in healthful living today. The marketing of health products and programs, has become a multi-billion dollars industry. What Adventists have taught for the past 150 years regarding the benefits of fresh air, water, exercise, and a plain vegetarian diet, today it is promoted by nutritionists and all sorts of health organizations.

Does this mean that Adventists no longer need to teach and preach the Health Message? The answer is "NO!" because the Adventist health message has a unique orientation. Its goal is to promote healthful living, not merely for health sake, but primarily for God's sake. It is the spiritual dimension of healthful living that is missing in today's popular teachings on healthful living.

### **THE SABBATH MESSAGE AND THE HEALTH MESSAGE**

The same is true with the Sabbath. There is today an unprecedented interest for a rediscovery of the Sabbath rest for the physical, mental, and social renewal of our tension-filled and stressful lives. It is incredible how many articles and books promoting the benefits of the Sabbath have recently appeared. But a reading of this literature reveals the lack of a spiritual dimension.

People are encouraged to rest on the Sabbath for the sake of the physical, mental, social, economic, and ecological benefits. These are important benefits that Sabbathkeeping provides, but from a Biblical perspective the Sabbath rest is THEOCENTRIC, not EGOCENTRIC. In other words, the Bible summons us to "rest unto the Lord," not unto ourselves. It is this spiritual dimension that makes the Sabbath rest unique. As Hebrews 4:10 explains, we cease from our work on the seventh day in order to enter into God's rest.

Our Adventist theology of the Sabbath is closely related to our theology of health. After all Sabbathkeeping is part of healthful living. Both the Sabbath Message and the Health Message have a common denominator: Both call us to honor the Lord through the

use of our time and body. We rest on the Sabbath and live clean, healthy lifestyle because we serve an Holy God who calls us to be a Holy People, not only on His Holy Day, but everyday. Holy Day for a Holy People.

A study of how Adventist developed the Health Message, is very revealing. To guide us in this investigation, I have chosen for the second part of this ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER the article "Health as a Bible Teaching: How Adventists Developed It." I have taken the liberty to slightly change the title of the article, which is written by Gerard Damsteedt, Ph. D., currently serving as Professor of Church History at Andrews University SDA Theological Seminary. The article appeared in the Summer 2001 issue of *ADVENTISTS AFFIRM*. The whole issue is devoted to the Health Message. It has some very perceptive articles. If you wish to receive a copy, feel free to call the *ADVENTIST AFFIRM* office at (616) 471-2300. You can also request it by email at [info@AdventistsAffirm.org](mailto:info@AdventistsAffirm.org) or at the website: [www.AdventistsAffirm.org](http://www.AdventistsAffirm.org).

Damsteegt's article shows that contrary to the various health reform movements of the nineteenth century, the Adventist health message grew out of theological considerations, not just a medical understanding of health. Adventists pioneers early recognized the relationship between health and spirituality. They recognized that the way we treat our body, is not just our business, but is God's business. It shows whether or not we respect the body-temple God has entrusted to us. Indeed, Adventists early discovered in the Scripture that a clean and temperate lifestyle constitutes an essential preparation for Christ's Return.

To my knowledge there is no other church that makes healthful living an essential part of the religious experience of their members. For most people healthful living has nothing to do with spirituality, because they treat the body and the soul as being two separate component. They believe that what you do to their body does not affect their soul.

## **THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL LIFE**

I was made forcefully aware of this dualistic mentality during the five years I spent at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy. About 5000 priests and monks from over 90 countries attended the Gregoriana in those days. It was inspiring for me to see these men performing their spiritual exercises. Some of them would stop for a prayer or brief meditation in a little chapel even during a class break. What puzzled me, however, was the fact that some of these same men after their brief devotion would invite me to go with them to the bar at the end of the hallway to drink a glass of wine.

I recall asking them: "Can't you stay dry at least during class-time?" Some of them would respond: "Sam, we have given up women, and you do not expect us to give up wine as well." I soon detected that for them drinking and smoking served as an outlet for their repressed sexual urges. None of them believed that intoxicating their bodies with alcohol and tobacco affected their spiritual life, because their soul is not contaminated by their body.

This dualistic view that the spiritual life of the soul is not affected by the physical treatment of the body, is widely accepted among Christians today. Its origin can be found in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. The emphasis of these philosophies is on the distinction between the material and spiritual components of human nature. In Platonic thought, human nature has both a material and a spiritual component. The material component is the body, which is temporary and essentially evil; and the spiritual component is the soul (*psyche*) or the mind (*nous*), which are eternal and good. The human body is transient and mortal while the human soul is permanent and immortal. At death, the soul is released from the prison house of the body where it was entombed for a time.

Historically, popular Christian thought has been deeply influenced by this dualistic, un-Biblical understanding of human nature. The far-reaching implications of the

dualistic view of human nature for Christian beliefs and practices is inestimable. Doctrinally, a host of heresies derive from or are largely dependent upon the dualistic view of human nature. Popular beliefs about paradise, purgatory, hell, the intercessory role of Mary and the saints, all rest on the belief of the survival of the soul at the death of the body.

## **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF DUALISM**

At a more practical level, the dualistic view of human nature has historically fostered the cultivation of the soul in detachment from the body. This has resulted in two extremes: ascetism and liberalism. Some have sought to save their souls by mortifying their bodies. Others have indulged in the carnal pleasures of the body, believing that their soul would not be affected by their intemperate lifestyle.

The dichotomy between body and soul, the physical and the spiritual, is still present in the thinking of many Christians today. Many still associate redemption with the human soul rather than the human body. We describe the missionary work of the church as that of “saving souls.” The implication seems to be that the souls are more important than the bodies.

Conrad Bergendoff rightly notes that “The Gospels give no basis for a theory of redemption which saves souls apart from the bodies to which they belong. What God has joined together, philosophers and theologians should not put apart. But they have been guilty of divorcing the bodies and souls of men which God made one at creation, and their guilt is not diminished by their plea that thus salvation would be facilitated. Until we have a theory of redemption which meets the whole need of man we have failed to understand the purpose of Him who became incarnate that He might be able to save humanity.”<sup>1</sup>

## **BIBLICAL WHOLISM**

The Biblical view of human nature is predicated on the belief that the material creation of this world, including that of the human body, is “very good” (Gen 1:31). There is no dualism or contradiction between the material and the spiritual, the body and the soul, the flesh and the spirit, because they are all part of God’s good creation. Redemption is the restoration of the whole person, body and soul, and not the salvation of the soul apart from the body.

The Adventist pioneers, as indicated by Damsteegt article, understood the Biblical wholistic view of human nature, according to which our body and soul are an indissoluble unit, created and redeemed by God. The soul is not a separate component, but the animating principle of the body. This fundamental Biblical truth became the basis for developing the Health Message. They taught that we honor God not only with our mind but also with our body, because our body is “a temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 6:19). They recognized that the way we treat our bodies reflects the spiritual condition of our souls. If we pollute our bodies with tobacco, drugs, or unhealthy food, we cause not only the *physical pollution* of our bodies, but also the *spiritual pollution* of our souls.

The acceptance of the Biblical wholistic view of human nature influenced Adventists to develop a *wholistic* approach in our evangelistic and missionary endeavors. This approach consists not only in saving the “souls” of people but also in improving their health, diet, and lifestyle.

Over the years Adventist developed a number of successful health evangelism programs. In the 1960s Dr. J. Wayne McFarland and Elder E. J. Folkenberg worked together as a very successful doctor-minister team. Eventually their efforts resulted in the development of the internationally acclaimed Five-Day Stop Smoking Plan. Since then, several health oriented programs have been developed and become part of Adventist evangelistic outreach.

## A WEAKENING OF THE HEALTH MESSAGE

In recent years, however, there has been a weakening of the Adventist commitment to promote healthful living as a Biblical imperative. The tendency is to promote healthful living *medically* rather than *Biblically*. A good example is the new Adventist orientation toward the use of alcoholic beverages. Adventists still advocate total abstinence, but the new tendency is to promote it *medically* rather than *biblically*.

An increasing number of Adventists have come to believe that it is advisable to abstain from the use of alcoholic beverages, but not because it is Biblically and morally wrong, but because of their harmful effects upon both personal and public health. The new orientation may be called *biological ethics* rather than *Biblical ethics*, that is, by the concern over the threat of alcohol to human life (*bio-logy*=study of life), rather than by their conviction of Biblical disapproval of alcoholic beverages.

An example of this new orientation is the series of five articles on chemical dependency published in the *Adventist Review* on October 29 and November 5, 12, 19, and 26, 1987. Its authors discuss the problem of alcohol dependency primarily as a *sickness* rather than as a *sin* problem. The underlying assumption seems to be that the Adventist church should move away from viewing the drinking of alcoholic beverages as essentially "a deliberate sin." Instead it should view alcoholism more as a medical than as a moral problem.

This new orientation has influenced the merging in the early 1980s of the Temperance Department with the Health Department of the General Conference. Over the years the Temperance Department had been a strong promoter of the Biblical imperative of total abstinence, I remember as a college student at Newbold College in England, participating in the annual "Temperance Speech Contest." On two occasions I won the first prize. It was fun to challenge fellow students and community people to abstain from alcohol and tobacco. Such efforts have long disappeared. The result has been a growing uncertainty among Adventists on the Biblical basis for total abstinence. For example, a 1982 special temperance issue of *Adventist Review* affirms: "Total abstinence is but one of a number of areas where the Bible gives no explicit directive."<sup>2</sup>

The sense of uncertainty on the Biblical basis for total abstinence has led Adventists to adopt a more permissive attitude toward the use of alcoholic beverages. I have been made forcibly aware of this trend by such things as: frequent pleas for help from pastors and members facing drinking problems in their own congregations; published surveys in our church paper, *Adventist Review*, indicating that 58 percent of Adventist youth are experimenting with alcohol and 17 percent of Adventist College students are habitual drinkers;<sup>3</sup> lectures given on our college campuses on alcohol recovery by visiting non-SDA experts;<sup>4</sup> classes on substance abuse taught on our campuses; counseling centers set up on our campuses specifically to help students with drinking problems; the establishment by our General Conference of two organizations to meet the challenge of the steadily rising drinking of alcohol within the church: (1) a Study Commission on Chemical Dependency and the Church, and (2) the Institute of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency, besides a series of articles in our church paper on chemical dependency and ways to cope with it.<sup>5</sup>

## THE NEED FOR BIBLICAL CONVICTIONS

The various educational programs established by our Adventist church to inform our members about the harmful effect of alcoholic beverages to their health, self-image, family, and society, are urgently needed. But will these programs provide a compelling motivation to remain or become abstinent? Will the simple knowledge of the harmful effects of alcohol adequately convince and convict Christians to be teetotalers? In my view education alone is not enough. It takes more. It takes not merely *biological ethics* but primarily *Biblical ethics*. *It is only when a Christian recognizes that drinking is not only a bad habit that can harm one's health, but also a transgression of a God-given principle*

*to ensure our health and holiness, that he or she will feel compelled to abstain from intoxicating substances.*

The massive national education on the danger of cigarette smoking has not so radically reduced the number of smokers. There are still about 40 million Americans who would rather smoke their health away than quit the habit. This shows that biological ethics alone is not enough. Similarly, educating people regarding the physio-social effects of alcohol will not substantially reduce the drinking problem either in the church or in the society as a whole.

The reason for this is the fallen human nature described by Paul with these words: "For I do not do what I want but I do the very thing I hate. . . . Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:15, 24). The long and sad experience of the human race teaches us that for the sake of immediate pleasure, human beings will persist in doing what they know will eventually destroy not only their well-being but also that of society.

## **THE CHRISTIAN WAY TO FREEDOM**

The Christian way of freedom is found in seeking to *serve God* rather than *to serve self*, in seeking to know and to do the will of God rather than to gratify and preserve our life style. Our present life is a meaningless and unfulfilling existence until it finds its meaning and fulfillment in God. The good news of Scripture is that God has provided us with a way to find meaning and fulfillment in Him, by accepting His forgiveness for our past sins and His power to live in the present according to the principles of His Word. This was, as Paul explains, the purpose of Christ's coming into this world "in the likeness of sinful flesh . . . in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:3, 4).

All of this means that our Christian position on healthful living must be formulated not merely on the basis of *biological ethics*, but primarily on the basis of *Biblical ethics*. Our conviction must be rooted not only in the negative effects of an intemperate lifestyle on the physio-social aspects of life, but also in the positive principles and admonitions regarding healthful living given in Scripture. The definition of our Christian position on healthful living must begin by listening first to what God has to say about it in His Word, and then to what scientific research tells us regarding the harmful effects of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, unclean meat, and unhealthy diet in general.

In the next few newsletters I will attempt to share with you a Biblical perspective on healthful living. The essays will be drawn both from the research done by some Adventists scholars and from my own research, which was published especially in *WINE IN THE BIBLE: A BIBLICAL STUDY ON THE USE OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES*.

## **SPECIAL OFFER ON WINE IN THE BIBLE!!!**

In conjunction with the forthcoming newsletters on healthful living, I wish to offer my book *WINE IN THE BIBLE* at a special price. The book provides valuable Biblical research for those interested to deepen their understanding of this timely subject. The new and nicer reprint that came off the press few days ago, regularly sell for \$20.00 per copy. I am pleased to offer you a package of **TWO COPIES OF THE BOOK** and **TWO CASSETTES ON TEMPERANCE** summarizing the book, for **ONLY \$30.00, POSTAGE PAID**, instead of their regular price of \$50.00.

If you or your church wishes to order a case of 30 copies of this much needed book, we are glad to mail you a case for only \$200.00, postage paid, that is, less than \$7.00 per copy, instead of the regular price of \$20.00. Feel free to call us at (616) 471-2915 to order the small package or a complete case. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

This timely book has been favorably received by scholars and church leaders of different persuasions. Recently the Indiana Council on Alcoholism, which I presume to be an ecumenical organization, requested a supply of this book to distribute to some of the ministers and educational organizations.

Bishop Jack M. Tuell, President of the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church, states in his review that "*WINE IN THE BIBLE* offers the most convincing case that I have seen for the principle of abstinence from alcoholic beverages. It explodes the commonly held assumption that all references to wine refer to the fermented product."

I have received several favorable reviews even from presidents of theological seminaries. For example, John F. Walvoord, Ph. D., Chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary (which is the largest seminary in America), wrote: "*WINE IN THE BIBLE* offers a fresh Biblical approach to the whole subject of drinking wine . . . No study of this subject will be complete without examining the careful research of this book." The scholarly journal *BIBLIOTHECA SACRA* states in its review: "*WINE IN THE BIBLE* presents a compelling case that the Biblical position is total abstinence."

Your personal effort to promote and distribute this timely study, is greatly appreciated. Your local ministers, schools, and libraries would greatly benefit from learning some of the Biblical teachings on healthful living. Feel free to call us at (616) 471-2915 for further information.

## NOTES

1. Conrad Bergendoff, "Body and Spirit in Christian Thought," *The Lutheran Quarterly* 6 (August 1954), pp. 188-189.
2. James Coffin, "Does the Bible Condemn 'Moderate' Drinking?" *Adventist Review* (February 22, 1982):4.
3. Carlos Medley, "GC Wages Combat Against Chemical Dependency," *Adventist Review* (October 29, 1987):6-7. A new survey of 5,500 readers of *Adventist Review*, sponsored by the Health and Temperance department of the General Conference of SDA, confirms the previous study done on youth. The preliminary report based on 2200 respondents indicates that 15 percent of Adventists between the ages of 30 and 40 find it acceptable to drink alcohol on social occasions. The final report is scheduled to be published sometime in 1989.
4. See, for example, my reflections on the lecture of Father Joseph Martin delivered to the students and faculty of Andrews University on March 30, 1986 (*Student Movement* [April 6, 1986]:3-4).
5. The articles appeared in the November 5, 12, 19, and 26 issues of *Adventist Review*.

## **ENDTIME ISSUES 80: “Healthy for God’s Sake: How Adventists Developed the Health Message”**

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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.

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.<sup>1</sup> 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 people’s failure to follow the laws of nature.<sup>2</sup>

**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.”<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> These powerful influences led to the establishment of the American Temperance Society in 1826; ten years later the American Temperance Union was established.<sup>5</sup>

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).<sup>6</sup> Others who played a significant role in the health reform movement were Drs. Trall and Jackson, Dio Lewis, and Horace Mann.

**Wholism, 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. White's Influence.** Early Sabbath-keeping Adventist publications reveal a growing emphasis on the relation between health and one's 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 group's 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 unhealthy 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.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

**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 "man's organic structure," our pioneers noted, which implies that "God's 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.<sup>10</sup>

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."<sup>11</sup>

Sabbath-keeping Adventists developed a growing appreciation of how significant the human body is for the believer's religious experience. They recognized that the physical body was not insignificant to spiritual life, as most other Christians believed, but

was the habitat of God's 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.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup>

Our pioneers saw health as also associated with Christian growth. 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."<sup>14</sup> For them, living to God's 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 God's" (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).<sup>15</sup>

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."<sup>16</sup>

**2. Eschatology and Health.** Our Adventist pioneers related health to Christ's return. They saw healthful living as an indispensable facet of the believer's 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).<sup>17</sup>

Ellen G. White saw that using unhealthful substances would prevent a person's 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).<sup>18</sup> 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. If you 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]."<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup>

**3. God's 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.<sup>21</sup> 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 Christ's 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 God's light.

## NOTES

1. John B. Blake, "Health Reform," in Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 46.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
3. He also opposed the use of snuff and tobacco, unless prescribed by a physician, and objected to the drinking of tea. L. Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., Founder of the Methodists* (London: Hodder and Stoughton) I, 1870, pp. 464, 521-23; II, 1880, p. 390; III, 1872, pp. 44, 133; Henry Wheeler, *Methodism and the Temperance Reformation* (Cincinnati: Walden and Stowe, 1882), pp. 11-110.
4. Benjamin Rush, *An Inquiry into the Effects of Spiritous Liquors on the Human Body* (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790); Lyman Beecher, *Six Sermons on the Nature, Occasions, Signs, Evils, and Remedy of Intemperance* (Boston: T. R. Marvin, 1828).
5. P. G. Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 1977), p. 221.
6. Blake, "Health Reform," pp. 36-44.
7. J. M. McLellan, "The Temple of God Is No Place for Idols," *Review and Herald*, Oct. 9, 1856, p. 182.
8. Joseph H. Waggoner, "Tobacco," *Review and Herald*, Nov. 19, 1857, p. 13.
9. "Tobacco," *Review and Herald*, Dec. 13, 1853, p. 178.
10. George Trask, "Popular Poisons," *Review and Herald*, Oct. 16, 1855, pp. 62, 63.
11. D. T. Bourdeau, "Tobacco and Tea," *Review and Herald*, March 17, 1863, p. 125.
12. J. N. Andrews, "The Use of Tobacco a Sin Against God," *Review and Herald*, April 10, 1856, p. 5; McLellan, "Temple of God," p. 182; J. F. Case, "Tobacco," *Review and Herald*, Sept. 24, 1857, p. 166; M. E. Cornell, "Tobacco Abomination," *Review and Herald*, May 20, 1857, p. 1.
13. James White, "The Office," *Review and Herald*, July 24, 1855, p. 13.
14. [James White], "Faith of Jesus," *Review and Herald*, March 14, 1854, p. 60.
15. See, for instance, Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 7:370 (Ms. 3, 1854).
16. McLellan, "Temple of God," p. 182.
17. Joseph Bates, *A Seal of the Living God* (New Bedford, Mass.: Press of Benjamin Lindsey, 1849), p. 68.
18. Quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Years 1827-1862* (Hagers-town, 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."
19. Andrews, "Tobacco," p. 5.
20. McLellan, "Temple of God," p. 182.
21. Quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Years 1827-1862*, pp. 291, 292.

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