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Subject: COUNSELS ON THE TWO-MEAL PLAN

Prepared by: Arthur L. White

In most cases, two meals a day are preferable to three. Supper, when taken at an early hour, interferes with the digestion of the previous meal. When taken later, it is not itself digested before bedtime. Thus the stomach fails of securing proper rest. The sleep is disturbed, the brain and nerves are wearied, the appetite for breakfast is impaired, the whole system is unrefreshed, and is unready for the day's duties.--Education, p. 205, (1903).

The practice of eating but two meals a day is generally found a benefit to health; yet under some circumstances, persons may require a third meal. This should, however, if taken at all, be very light, and of food most easily digested. Crackers--the English biscuit--or zwieback, and fruit, or cereal coffee, are the foods best suited for the evening meal.--M.H., p. 321 (1905)

Most people enjoy better health while eating two meals a day than three; others, under their existing circumstances, may require something to eat at suppertime; but this meal should be very light. Let no one think himself a criterion for all,--that everyone must do exactly as he does.

Never cheat the stomach out of that which health demands, and never abuse it by placing upon it a load which it should not bear. Cultivate self-control. Restrain appetite; keep it under the control of reason. Do not feel it necessary to load down your table with unhealthful food when you have visitors. The health of your family and the influence upon your children should be considered, as well as the habits and tastes of your guests.--Counsels on Health, p. 156 (1890) (C.T.B.H., 58)

To some it is a temptation too strong to be resisted to see others eat the third meal, and they imagine they are hungry, when the feeling is not a call of the stomach for food, but a desire of the mind that has not been fortified with firm principle, and disciplined to self-denial.--4T, 574 (1881).

As a Remedy for Irritability

The course of Brother H has not been what it should have been. His likes and dislikes are very strong and he has not kept his own feelings under the control of reason. Brother H, your health is greatly injured by overeating, and eating at improper times. This causes a determination of blood to the brain. The mind becomes confused, and you have not the proper control of yourself. You appear like a man whose mind is unbalanced. You make strong moves, are

Two-meal Plan

easily irritated, and view things in an exaggerated and perverted light. Plenty of exercise in the open air, and an abstemious diet, are essential to your health. You should not eat more than two meals a day. If you feel that you must eat at night, take a drink of cold water, and in the morning you will feel much better for not having eaten.--4T, 501, 502 (1880).

None to Be Forced to Discard Third Meal

With regard to the diet question, this matter must be handled with such wisdom that no overbearing will appear. It should be shown that to eat two meals is far better for the health than to eat three. But there must be no authoritative forcing seen. No one connected with the sanitarium should be compelled to adopt the two-meal system. Persuasion is more appropriate than force. . . .

The days are now growing shorter, and it will be a good time to present this matter. As the days shorten, let dinner be a little later, and then the third meal will not be felt necessary.--Letter 145, 1901. (C.D.F., 177)

In regard to the third meal, do not make eating but two meals compulsory. Some do best healthwise when eating three light meals, and when they are restricted to two, they feel the change severely.--Letter 200, 1902. (C.D.F., 178)

Not to Be a Test

I eat only two meals a day. But I do not think that the number of meals should be made a test. If there are those who are better in health when eating three meals, it is their privilege to have three. I choose two meals. For thirty-five years I have practiced the two-meal system.--Letter 30, 1903. (C.D.F. 178)

Objectionable Results of Enforcing the Two-meal Plan in Training Schools

The impression is upon many minds that the diet question is being carried to extremes. When students combine physical and mental taxation, so largely as they do at this school [Avondale], the objection to the third meal is to a great extent removed. Then no one needs to feel abused. Those who conscientiously eat only two meals need not change in this at all. . . .

The fact that some, teachers and students, have the privilege of eating in their rooms, is not creating a healthful influence. There must be harmonious action in the conducting of meals. If those who only eat two meals have the idea that they must eat enough at the second meal to answer for the third meal also, they will injure their digestive organs. Let the students have the third meal, prepared without vegetables, with simple, wholesome food, such as fruit and bread.--Letter 141, 1899. (C.D.F., 178)

No "Thus Saith the Lord" That It Is Wrong
For Some to Eat Three Meals

The patients are to be provided with an abundance of wholesome, palatable food, prepared and served in so appetizing a way that they will have no temptation to desire flesh meat. The meals may be made the means of an education in health reform. Care is to be shown in regard to the combinations of foods given to the patients. Knowledge in regard to proper food combinations is of great worth, and is to be received as wisdom from God. . . .

We must remember that while there are some who are better for eating only two meals, there are others who eat lightly at each meal, and who feel that they need something in the evening. Food enough is to be eaten to give strength to sinew and muscle. And we are to remember that it is from the food eaten that the mind gains strength. Part of the medical missionary work that our sanitarium workers are to do is to show the value of wholesome food.

It is right that no tea, coffee, or flesh meat be served in our sanitariums. To many, this is a great change and a severe deprivation. To enforce other changes, such as a change in the number of meals a day, is likely, in the cases of some, to do more harm than good.

There are many to whom the supper hour has been the most cheerful hour of the day. Then it is that all the family, the day's work done, have gathered round the table for social intercourse.

It is plain that two meals a day are better than three. I believe and practice this, but I have no "Thus saith the Lord" that it is wrong for some to eat the third meal. We are not to be as the Pharisees, bound about by set rules and regulations. God's Word has not specified any set hours when food should be eaten. We are to be careful not to make laws like the laws of the Pharisees, or to teach for doctrines the commandments of men.--Letter 213, 1902. (M+M+, 283-284)

The Outworking of the Plan in the White Home

E. G. White Reports in 1877

For more than twelve years we have taken only two meals each day, of plain, unstimulating food. During that time, we have had almost constantly the care of children, varying in age from three to thirteen years. We worked gradually and carefully to change their habit of eating three times a day to two; we also worked cautiously to change their diet from stimulating food, as meat, rich gravies, pies, cakes, butter, spices, etc., to simple wholesome fruits, vegetables, and grains. The consequence has been that our children have not been troubled with the various maladies to which children are more or less subject. They occasionally take cold by reason of carelessness, but this seldom makes them sick.

We have, as an occasional experiment, changed the number of their daily meals from two to three; but the result was not good. In the morning their breath was offensive; and after testing the matter for a few weeks, we were thoroughly convinced that the children were better upon two meals a day than

upon three; and we therefore returned to our former system, with marked improvement in the health of the children as a result. If tempted with the sight of food prepared for others, they incline to think they are hungry, but usually they do not miss or think about the third meal. Children reared in this way are much more easily controlled than those who are indulged in eating everything their appetite craves, and at all times. They are usually cheerful, contented, and healthy. Even the most stubborn, passionate, and wayward, have become submissive, patient, and possessed of self-control by persistently following up this order of diet, united with a firm but kind management in regard to other matters.--Health Reformer, May, 1877.

Simple Supper not Prohibited

We have neither meat nor butter on our table, and we have but two meals a day. If any of my workers desire a simple meal in the evening, I do not have anything to say against it.--Letter 363, 1907.

W. C. White in 1930 Looks Back

You will observe as you read these statements [concerning two meals a day], that they are given as advice, not as commands, I find among Seventh-day Adventists a willingness to listen to this advice and to put it into practice where it is most helpful.

I am very confident that when these things were written about the two-meal system, that they were written especially for elderly people, for invalids, for people of sedentary habits, and for those having slow digestion.

There are very many of our people who are following the two-meal system with great benefit and especially those who live under circumstances where they can have a late breakfast and a dinner in the middle of the afternoon. But most of our people who are engaged in employments where they must eat an early breakfast and a 12:00 o'clock dinner, find it is for the benefit of their health to eat three light meals rather than two heavy ones. For children, the three light meals are much better than the two heavy meals.

In my own experience, I know the sufferings of a healthy boy if obliged to go from 12:00 o'clock until 7:00 the next morning with nothing to eat. As my children were growing up, we undertook to follow the two-meal system, but findint we could not time the meals as they ought to be timed, we adopted the plan of giving a light lunch at night. On this program they have grown up healthy and hearty. Their grandmother, Sister E. G. White, knew of the plan we were following with our children and did not reprove us for it. I remember distinctly what Sister White used to say when the counsels in her writings were being enforced in an inappropriate way. She said, "Time and circumstances must always be taken into account."--W. C. White Letter to R. W. Barnhurst, May 12, 1930.

An Appeal for an Adequate Diet

Because it is wrong to eat merely to gratify perverted taste, it does not follow that we should be indifferent in regard to our food. It is a matter of the highest importance. No one should adopt an impoverished diet. Many are

debilitated from disease, and need nourishing, well-cooked food. Health reformers, above all others, should be careful to avoid extremes. The body must have sufficient nourishment. The God who gives His beloved sleep has furnished them also suitable food to sustain the physical system in a healthy condition.

In order to have good health, we must have good blood; for the blood is the current of life. It repairs waste, and nourishes the body. When supplied with the proper food elements and when cleansed and vitalized by contact with pure air, it carries life and vigor to every part of the system. The more perfect the circulation, the better will this work be accomplished.--C-D-F., p. 91.

The Impoverished Diet Discredits Health Reform

Some of our people conscientiously abstain from eating improper food, and at the same time neglect to eat the food that would supply the elements necessary for the proper sustenance of the body. Let us never bear testimony against health reform by failing to use wholesome, palatable food in place of the harmful articles of diet that we have discarded. Much tact and discretion should be employed in preparing nourishing food to take the place of that which has constituted the diet of many families. This effort requires faith in God, earnestness of purpose, and a willingness to help one another. A diet lacking in the proper elements of nutrition brings reproach upon the cause of health reform. We are mortal, and must supply ourselves with food that will give proper sustenance to the body.

Investigate your habits of diet. Study from cause to effect, but do not bear false witness against health reform by ignorantly pursuing a course which militates against it. Do not neglect or abuse the body, and thus unfit it to render to God that service which is His due. To my certain knowledge, some of the most useful workers in our cause have died through such neglect. To care for the body by providing for it food which is relishable and strengthening, is one of the first duties of the householder. Better by far have less expensive clothing and furniture, than to scrimp the supply of necessary articles for the table.--C-D-F., 92, 93.

True Health Reforms Commends Itself

Not all who profess to believe in dietetic reform are really reformers. With many persons the reform consists merely in discarding certain unwholesome foods. They do not understand clearly the principles of health, and their tables, still loaded with harmful dainties, are far from being an example of Christian temperance and moderation.

Another class, in their desire to set a right example, go to the opposite extreme. Some are unable to obtain the most desirable foods, and instead of using such things as would best supply the lack, they adopt an impoverished diet. Their food does not supply the elements needed to make good blood. Their health suffers, their usefulness is impaired, and their example tells against rather than in favor of reform in diet.

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. The effect of their mistaken reforms, as seen in their own ill-health, and their efforts to force their views upon others, give many a false idea of dietetic reform, and lead them to reject it altogether.

Those who understand the laws of health and who are governed by principle, will shun the extremes, both of indulgence and of restriction. Their diet is chosen, not for the mere gratification of appetite, but for the upbuilding of the body. They seek to preserve every power in the best condition for highest service to God and man. The appetite is under the control of reason and conscience, and they are rewarded with health of body and mind. 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.

There is real common sense in dietetic reform. The subject should be studied broadly and deeply, and no one should criticize others because their practice is not, in all things, in harmony with his own. It is impossible to make an unvarying rule to regulate everyone's habits, and no one should think himself a criterion for all. . . .

The practice of eating but two meals a day is generally found a benefit to health, yet under some circumstances persons may require a third meal. This should, however, if taken at all, be very light, and of food most easily digested. "Crackers"--the English biscuit--or zweiback, and fruit, or cereal coffee, are the foods best suited for the evening meal.

Some are continually anxious lest their food, however simple and healthful, may hurt them. To these let me say, Do not think that your food will injure you; do not think about it at all. Eat according to your best judgment; and when you have asked the Lord to bless the food for the strengthening of your body, believe that He hears your prayer, and be at rest.

Because principle requires us to discard those things that irritate the stomach and impair health, we should remember that an impoverished diet produces poverty of the blood. Cases of disease most difficult to cure result from this cause. The system is not sufficiently nourished, and dyspepsia and general debility are the result. . . .

Carefully consider your diet. Study from cause to effect. Cultivate self-control. Keep appetite **under** the control of reason. Never abuse the stomach by overeating, but do not deprive yourself of the wholesome, palatable food that health demands.

The narrow ideas of some would-be health reformers have been a great injury to the cause of hygiene. Hygienists should remember that dietetic reform will be judged, to a great degree, by the provision they make for their tables; and instead of taking a course that will bring discredit upon it, they should so exemplify its principles as to command them to candid minds. . . .

When those who advocate hygienic reform go to extremes, it is no wonder that many who regard these persons as representing health principles, reject the reform altogether. These extremes frequently do more harm in a short time than could be undone by a lifetime of consistent living.

Hygienic reform is based upon principles that are broad and far-reaching, and we should not belittle it by narrow views and practices. But no one should permit opposition or ridicule, or a desire to please or influence others, to turn him from true principles, or cause him lightly to regard them. Those who are governed by principle will be firm and decided in standing for the right; yet in all their associations they will manifest a generous, Christ-like spirit and true moderation.--M. H., pp. 318-324.