

January 25, 1943

2147 - Sixth Street
Bremerton, Washington

Dear Brother

Your letter containing questions on health reform, was received this morning. In this you tell us that there is some perplexity in the Colville church in regard to the use of butter, and you inquire as to the proper attitude toward this question. You point out in your letter that you find some diversity of practice among Adventists, some using it and some refraining from its use.

Let us keep in mind, Brother Figgins, that the principles of health reform as they were presented to Ellen White in vision, were given that we may better enjoy this life and be better prepared for the life to come. We must keep in mind that never did Mrs. White place the use of butter on the same plane as the use of certain harmful articles of diet and certain unwholesome articles of diet. You will recall the statement in "Testimonies," Vol. 7, page 135, that "milk, eggs, and butter should not be classed with flesh meat." We must keep in mind, too, that in earlier days dairy products were not handled in a careful way, that there was no testing of the herds, that refrigeration was not a common thing, that the benefits of pasteurization were not known, and, unquestionably, butter, preserved as it was over a period of time, became an excellent carrier of disease germs. This is intimated in a letter written by Mrs. White in 1903. In speaking of butter, she says:

"As for myself, I have settled the butter question. I do not use it. This question should be easily settled in every place where the purest article cannot be obtained. We have two good milk cows, a Jersey and a Holstein. We use cream, and all are satisfied with this."--"Counsels on Diet and Foods," p. 351.

This indicates to my mind that one of the main reasons why warnings were given in the early years in regard to the use of butter, was its susceptibility to infection and thus constituting a menace to the user. We must remember, too, that all fats were used very freely in the early days of our message, and that butter being a concentrated food, when used too freely undoubtedly had its deleterious effects and would interfere with digestion, and with children perhaps create conditions which were unfavorable. I note this statement written to one of our workers: "Butter should not be placed on the table, for if it is some will use it too freely and it will obstruct digestion, but for yourself you should occasionally use a little butter on cold bread if this will make the food more appetizing."

I think you would read with interest the whole section on the question of Butter, as found in "Counsels on Diet and Foods," presenting the subject in

its fullness. Thinking you may not have the book at hand, I am sending you a copy of this in typewritten form. I think we should guard against making the butter question a test question. I know that many of our families refrain from the use of butter as a regular article of diet, substituting in its place some of the wholesome butter substitutes. We have followed this practice in our family for many years, and yet I have not taken the position that when I was traveling, at points where substitute butter was not available, I would not use butter itself.

You will notice the last statement in the document I am sending you directs our attention to the time when, because of the increase of disease, it will no longer be safe to use milk, cream, butter, or eggs; but we are told that God will reveal this to us when the time comes, and we are cautioned against extremes.

Please study carefully the several statements on the question of butter, and then form your conclusions upon the whole broad presentation rather than upon one isolated sentence or phrase. You will notice that Mrs. White wrote in 1901, that "at present we have no burden on this line. Let your moderation be known unto all men." I think her position would be a good one for all of us to follow, and in this lesser matter of the health reform endeavor to use that which we know to be wholesome and healthful, but not create an issue over the question. Let us keep in mind the broad scope of the health reform, and not bring it into disrepute by pressing overmuch one phase of it. I am anxious to see Seventh-day Adventists generally stand upon a high plane of reform and advancement along the lines of the whole health reform program. I believe it is in the providence of God that there are being made available today many substitute foods which can well take the place of such animal products, other than meat, as milk and butter. Perhaps in the future we shall see developments that will make clear the importance of using less of what comes from animal sources.

With all good wishes, I am

Sincerely your brother,

Arthur L. White, Secretary
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