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ELLEN WHITE SAYS, PART 2

"For those who choose to believe, no proof is necessary; and for those who choose to disbelieve, no proof is possible." Warren Johns, Chief Legal Counsel of the General Conference, 1981

1. READING ELLEN WHITE

A. It's hard to apply rules of interpretation to what you've never read!

The volumes of *Spirit of Prophecy*, and also the *Testimonies*, should be introduced into every Sabbathkeeping family, and the brethren should know their value and be urged to read them.... They should be in the library of every family and read again and again. Let them be kept where they can be read by many, and let them be worn out in being read by all the neighbors.... Many are going directly contrary to the light which God has given to His people, because they do not read the books which contain the light and knowledge in cautions, reproofs, and warnings.... God will make His people responsible for this neglect. An account must be rendered to Him for every ray of light He has let shine upon our pathway, whether it has been improved to our advancement in divine things or rejected because it was more agreeable to follow inclination." 4T 390-91

- i. Nature and Influence of the Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 654-91.

2. APPLYING WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

A. Review principles of interpretation

- i. Consider the internal context
- ii. Consider the external context
- iii. Differentiate between policy and principle
- iv. Be willing to follow the truth

B. Eggs

- i. In *Testimonies*, vol. 2, Ellen White's letter to a young mother reads –

“Eggs should not be placed upon your table. They are an injury to your children.” 2T 399

- ii. In another testimony, written more generally to the church, she said –

“While warnings have been given regarding the dangers of disease through butter, and the evil of the free use of eggs by small children, yet we should not consider it a violation of principle to use eggs from hens that are well cared for and suitably fed. Eggs contain properties that are remedial agencies in counteracting certain poisons.” 9T 162

- iii. And in yet another place, a letter written to one of our missionary doctors, she counseled –

“Put into your diet something you have left out. It is your duty to do this. Get eggs of healthy fowls. Use these eggs cooked or raw... Do not for a moment suppose that it will not be right to do this...” CD 204

- iv. In each instance, Ellen White was giving counsel by inspiration. It's just that she was addressing three very different situations, so the counsel varied accordingly.

C. Cheese

- i. Ellen White counseled against the free use of butter, eggs and cheese in her day. Some of her statements are very strong, as the following found in the book *Ministry of Healing* –

“Butter is less harmful when eaten on cold bread than when used in cooking; but, as a rule, it is better to dispense with it altogether. Cheese is still more objectionable; it is wholly unfit for food.” MH 302

- a. We need to remember that there was neither refrigeration or pasteurization when this was written. A publisher's note in *Ministry of Healing* tells us “The same chemical constituents and physical properties that recommend milk as a human food make it an excellent food for bacteria.”

- ii. In *Understanding Ellen White*, Jerry Moon and Tim Standish co-authored the chapter entitled “Ellen White in Science.” In the opening paragraph, they state
 - a. “This chapter addresses thirteen statements by Ellen White that some believe are in direct or partial conflict with current understandings in the natural sciences.” *Understanding Ellen White*, p. 181
- iii. The fourth statement is “Dangers of Eating Cheese,” in which the authors state
 - “Legitimate concerns, including unhygienic dairy conditions, lack of pasteurization, and hazardous methods of aging cheese, have been largely alleviated in developed countries. If she were living today, with improved processing, sanitation, and preservation, she might be more moderate in her condemnation.” *Understanding Ellen White*, p. 183
- iv. When *Ministry of Healing* was being translated into German, the publisher, noting that cheese comprised an important part of the diet of many people in Europe, wrote to Ellen White for counsel on how to translate the passage. W. C. White, Ellen’s son and business manager, wrote back, after conferring with his mother, and suggested the following –
 - a. “On page 302, second paragraph, last two lines: 'Strong cheese is still more objectionable.' This leaves off the sentence, 'It is wholly unfit for food,' and gives cheese a qualifying adjective. If strong is not the term you use to designate the ordinary cheese of commerce which is old and full of poison, please designate by the proper term.” *Correspondence from William Fagal, EGW Estate*
 - b. In response to this advice, the statement in the German edition reads, "Strong, sharp cheese should not be eaten."
- v. Regarding the health reform in general, Ellen White gave this counsel –

“The diet reform should be progressive. As disease in animals increases, the use of milk and eggs will become more and more unsafe. An effort should be made to supply their place with other things that are healthful and inexpensive.” *MH 320*

D. Swimming on the Sabbath

- i. I have a humorous list that tells how to know if one’s been raised in the Adventist church. For example, if you were raised SDA,
 - You pronounce "Adventist" as "AD-ventist", not "ad-VEN-tist".
 - Your "Little Friend" wasn't a person.

- You had an Uncle Arthur, Uncle Dan, and Aunt Sue and were amazed to find out that all your friends in Sabbath School did too.
- You think of kids instead of cars when you hear the term Pathfinder.
- You have a board somewhere in the attic with a bunch of knots glued to it.
- You can stack 3000 calories on a plate at a church potluck.

ii. And, of course,

- On Saturdays you catch yourself telling your children, "You can wade, but don't swim."

iii. Ellen White had written a letter to former GC president O. A. Olsen and his wife in 1906 in which she had said

Pleasure seeking, ball playing, swimming, was not a necessity, but a sinful neglect of the sacred day sanctified by Jehovah. ^{21MR 139}

a. The further context reveals important principles at play in this statement.

Every working of Christ in miracles was essential, and **to reveal to the world** that there was **a great work** to be done **on the Sabbath day** for the relief of suffering humanity, but **common work** was not to be done.

Pleasure-seeking, ball-playing, swimming was not a necessity, but a sinful **neglect** of the sacred day sanctified by Jehovah. ^{21MR 139}

E. "The Bicycle Craze"

i. In a May 10, 1896 letter to the teachers at the Battle Creek College, Ellen White wrote

"The **exhibitions** in the bicycle craze are an offense to God. His wrath is kindled against those who do such things." ^{CT 367}

a. This statement has been taken by some through the years to mean that Adventists should not own bicycles. The very first thing we should note is the internal context. Ellen White does NOT say "**Bicycles** are an offense to God." She says, "The **exhibitions** in the bicycle **craze** are an offense to God." In the broader context, she speaks of the influence of the worldly associations connected with these "exhibitions" and the "permanent effect" upon the character.

- b. Another issue was the cost of the bicycle –

“Instead of investing **one hundred dollars** in a bicycle, you would consider the matter well, lest it might be at the price of souls for whom Christ died, and for whom he has made you responsible.” RH 8.21.1894

- c. The average annual wage in 1890 was \$445 (see Clarence Long, *Wages and Earnings in the United States, 1860-1890*, p. 42). The Average income in 2016 was \$59,039 (see Wikipedia, art. “Household Income in the United States”). That would make **today’s cost equivalent \$13,266**.

- F. Avondale, theater, applause, dresses or pants, chess and checkers, etc.

“But before proceeding to these extreme measures, we must exert all our wisdom and subtlety to deceive and ensnare those who honor the true Sabbath. We can separate many from Christ by worldliness, lust, and pride. They may think themselves safe because they believe the truth, but indulgence of appetite or the lower passions, which will confuse judgment and destroy discrimination, will cause their fall.... Through those that have a form of godliness but know not the power, we can gain many who would otherwise do us harm. Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God will be our most effective helpers. Those of this class who are apt and intelligent will serve as decoys to draw others into our snares. Many will not fear their influence, because they profess the same faith. We will thus lead them to conclude that the requirements of Christ are less strict than they once believed, and that by conformity to the world they would exert a greater influence with worldlings. Thus they will separate from Christ; then they will have no strength to resist our power, and ere long they will be ready to ridicule their former zeal and devotion.” TM 473-4

3. WHY I BELIEVE IN ELLEN WHITE

- i. My conversion
 - a. Some people say Ellen White is a false prophet. If a CEO hires a manager, and that manager keeps sending all the clients to the competition, that manager is going to be looking for a new job! And if Ellen White is a false prophet, the devil would have fired her a long time ago! She keeps sending people to the other side!
- ii. Greeting the dog

4. STEPHEN SMITH TESTIMONY

A. A brief synopsis

- i. Stephen Smith got caught up in date-setting movements.
- ii. Ellen White counseled him, but he didn't like a woman telling him what to do.
- iii. He received testimony, threw it into trunk and forgot about it – for 28 years.
- iv. He had just recently started reading articles by Ellen White in the *Review*.
- v. Eugene Farnsworth, a family friend, came to preach, and Stephen Smith went to hear him.
- vi. At the message close, he gave this testimony –
 - a. “I haven't come to criticize you - I've quit that kind of business... Facts are stubborn things, but the facts are that those who have opposed this work have come to nothing, while those who have united with it have prospered; they've grown better, more devoted, and more God-like. Those who have opposed it have only learned to fight and debate, and they've lost all their religion.”
- vii. On his way home, he remembered the letter...
 - a. “I received a testimony myself twenty-eight years ago, took it home, locked it up in my trunk, and never read it until last Thursday... I didn't read it because I was afraid it would make me mad, but I ended up being mad all the time anyway... Every word of that testimony is true, and I accept it. I have come to the place where I finally believe that the Testimonies are all from God. If I had only followed the one that God sent me, as well as the rest, **it would have changed the whole course of my life and I would have been a very different man...**”