Health is a Blessing

A Guide to the Scriptural Laws of Good Health

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The Blessing of Health

Health is a blessing. Who would argue with that? To have good health is one of the joys of life. When we are healthy we are better able to serve our fellowman and do the Lord’s work. We all indicate that health is a blessing when we talk of being “blessed” with good health. But if health is really a blessing, then it is not bestowed by the whim of God or by an accident of Nature. Like all blessings, we qualify for it by obedience to Divine law.

There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—and when we obtain any blessing from God it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated. (D&C 130:20-21)

This concept probably seems strange to those of us who have been brought up with the idea that disease is something you “catch.” But if we can believe the testimony of the scriptures, it is clear that health may be gained by learning and obeying the laws upon which it is predicated. In fact, there are several places in the scriptures where the Lord specifically promises health as one of the blessings resulting from obedience to certain laws. Note these promises God gave to His ancient people Israel.

If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that health thee. (Ex. 15:26)

Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto their fathers:

And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land...

Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle.

And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee: but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. (Deut. 7:12-15)

It appears that the Lord promised His ancient people Israel that they would be free from ALL disease if they obeyed His judgments and statutes. Surely He could not have actually meant that, could He? Is freedom from all illness really possible? Did He mean that they would be free from ALL disease, or just that they would be healthier than other people?

It seems too good to be true, and yet it appears the Lord was promising ancient Israel that He would “take away all sickness” if they would obey His laws. Joseph Smith seemed to feel that this was possible for he stated, “If we would be sober and watch in fasting and prayer, God would turn away sickness from our midst.”

Of course, if health is a blessing that is attached to obedience to law, then the reverse must also be true. Disease must be a result of not obeying the law. The Lord warned ancient Israel that this was the case. One of the punishments He attached to not keeping His judgments and statutes was sickness of every kind.

But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:

...The Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee off the land, whither thou goest to possess it.

The Lord shall smite thee with a consumption [tuberculosis], and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with extreme burning...
The Lord shall smite thee with madness [mental illness], and blindness, and astonishment of heart...

...Then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.

Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; they shall cleave unto thee.

And every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the Lord bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed. (Deut. 28:15,21-22,27-28,59-61)

In modern times the Lord has also attached the blessing of good health to obedience to law. In the 89th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, (the “Word of Wisdom”), the Lord gives this promise:

And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint. (D&C 89:18-20)

If we take these blessings at face value, they are marvelous to contemplate. Imagine receiving not only health, but also wisdom, knowledge and great endurance. Yet all of these blessings are promised for obedience to the laws of God!

There Are No Shortcuts

Now, contrast this view of health with that expressed by almost all forms of medical care, orthodox or otherwise. Basically, we have all been taught that disease is something that knocks us down without warning. We “catch” colds, we “get” sick, and we are “stricken” with disease. Even though it is recognized that some habits and life-styles are risk factors in various types of illness, little time is spent in teaching people obedience to good laws of health. Most of the time this “teaching” involves taking some kind of pill or submitting to some kind of treatment.

Consider, for example, advertising over-the-counter medications on T.V. A person has a headache, a sour stomach, or some other ailment and pops a pill, which instantly makes him or her better. Does this mean we don’t have to obey any of God’s laws. Will a pill or an operation get rid of the sickness? Of course not, it defies one of the fundamental laws of the universe expressed by the Apostle Paul, “... whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” (Gal. 6:7)

This law tells us there can be no such thing as a shortcut. That which appears to give results without personal sacrifice, effort, and/or repentance, is a delusion. This applies to everything, including health. If we believe what the scriptures have to teach us, then health can be obtained by no other means than by obedience to the laws upon which it is predicated.

In his book Food is Your Best Medicine Dr. Henry Bieler, M.D. explains that patients go to doctors primarily because they want relief and want it quickly. He says that “Unfortunately, there is no way to give ‘instant relief’ except through stimulation or depression,” which whips or paralyzes the endocrine glands to produce a temporary effect of well-being. This stimulation or depression does not however produce health. In fact, Dr. Bieler warns that using the whip of stimulation on an exhausted and sick individual can actually make him/her worse.

In other words, there are no magic pills, elixirs, potions, drugs, herbs, surgeries, or therapies, which will bestow lasting health on a person who violates the laws upon which health is based. There are no shortcuts. As we sow with our habits and life-styles, we will reap - either to good health or to ill. Dr. Bieler also affirmed this truth in the following words:

The stricken body always seeks to return to a state of health - to be free of the nagging pains, stabbing sensations, feelings of pressure, vague aches, and intestinal disturbances, which many people accept as a normal way of life.

I do not agree that this is normal.

To me, true health is much more. It is achieved by following the laws of nature; when you break them, illness results. Health is not
We Are Commanded to Strive For Health

True health is a blessing we should strive to obtain. Our Father in Heaven, like any loving parent, wants us to be healthy. If we are healthy, we are better able to do His work and serve our fellowman. But there is a deeper reason why health is important, which becomes apparent only when we understand the meaning of health.

Most people will define health only in terms of disease. They will say that health is “the absence of disease.” But what is disease? The word comes from the French and means literally, the “lack of ease.” Essentially, that means disease is the lack of being healthy. So, if we define health as the absence of disease we have a double negative—disease is the lack of the lack of health.

Is there a better definition for health? When one traces the roots of this word, he will find it comes from the same roots as the words whole and holy. Put simply, the word health means to be physically whole, or in other words, physically perfect.

Remember the words of Jesus when he healed people. He often told them, “thy faith hath made thee whole.” (Mark 5:34, Luke 8:48). In other words, Jesus equated restoring health with restoring “wholeness.”

In its ideal sense, health is to the body what holiness is to the spirit. To be healthy is to be physically whole and perfect, while to be holy is to be so spiritually. God has commanded us to be perfect (Matthew 5:48), and we can assume that He meant both physically and spiritually, as the body and spirit joined together constitute the soul of man. (D&C 88:15)

Furthermore, to be healthy is to be filled with the power of life. Disease is always characterized by a loss of that life power. When that power of life is totally lost, we have death.

Jesus said He came that men might have life. (John 10:10) We tend to think of this work as spiritual, but it is clear that Christ was also concerned about men’s temporal lives. He healed their bodies as well as their spirits. Isn’t the battle between health and disease just one more manifestation of the opposition of light and darkness, good and evil, life and death?

Notice the parallel between these things in the following Psalm:

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction... (Psalms 103:2-4)

As further evidence of this parallel, we have only to look at God’s own declaration of his “work and glory.” Did he not say it was to bring to pass the immortality (which is the perfect physical health) and eternal life (the perfect spiritual health) of man? (Moses 1:39)

We need to strive for physical health, because the health of our bodies reflects the health of our spirits. President Ezra Taft Benson has stated:

There is no question that the health of the body affects the spirit, or the Lord would never have revealed the Word of Wisdom. God has never given any temporal commandments; that which affects our stature affects our soul.

Illness Is Not Always the Result of Sin

In considering this great blessing of health, however, we need to remember that it will not be totally realized until we are either translated or resurrected. The fact that we have infirmity and sickness in this life is partly due to the weakness of our mortal flesh. Even when we bring sickness upon ourselves by failure to obey the laws of health, it does not mean that we are basically wicked or sinful. Obviously, there are many righteous people who have been afflicted with illness.

We need to keep in mind that all of us, including the righteous, are imperfect. That is, we do not yet understand all of the laws upon which God has built the universe. This does not make us wicked, but it does not change the laws of nature, either. A child who burns himself on a hot stove is not wick-
ed. The scriptures affirm that children are pure and innocent and without sin. The child simply lacks the knowledge to know that the stove is dangerous. This lack of knowledge, however, does not stop the laws of nature, which God himself ordained, from operating on the child.

In the same way, we may be righteous people, filled with love and faith and desire to keep the commandments of God, but this does not mean we can violate the laws of good health without suffering the consequences. Even if we do not understand the laws upon which health is predicated, they will still operate upon us. Our lack of understanding in this area does not make us wicked, any more than a child's lack of understanding causes him to when burned by a hot stove. Yet, our lack of understanding will not save us from suffering the consequences. We should be glad that this is so, because suffering the consequences of our own wrong choices allows us to learn and grow. Man was cast out of the garden of Eden so that he could learn by his own experience to distinguish good and evil. Hence, our experiences with natural law are designed to teach us. We have only to listen and learn from them.

God wants all of His children to be healthy, just as any loving parent does. He does not delight in seeing us suffer. However, in His love for us He must allow us to suffer the consequences of natural law or we will not grow and learn. Hence, He allows us to make choices which eventually lead to sickness and other problems, because He knows we must learn to be responsible for our own choices.

But, because of His love for us, God has revealed through the scriptures and the teachings of His prophets the laws upon which good health is predicated. If we are wise, we will seek to secure the blessings of good health for ourselves and our posterity through obedience to these principles.

As Brigham Young taught:

Prepare to die, is not the exhortation of this Church and Kingdom; but prepare to live is the word with us, and improve all we can in the life hereafter, wherein we may enjoy a more exalted condition of intelligence, wisdom, light, knowledge, power, glory, and exaltation. Then let us seek to extend the present life to the utmost, by observing every law of health, and by properly balancing labor, study, rest, and recreation, and thus prepare for a better life. Let us teach these principles to our children, that, in the morning of their days, they may be taught to lay the foundation of health and strength and constitution and power of life in their bodies.

With that in mind, let us begin to examine the scriptures and the words of our modern prophets and learn the laws upon which the blessing of health is predicated. Let us also examine the evidence to see if obedience to these laws will actually result in the promised blessings.
Chapter Two

Words of Wisdom

If health is obtained by obedience to law as we have shown, then LDS people should immediately recognize that one of the primary laws which we have been given in regard to health is the Word of Wisdom. Among the blessings this revelation promises for obedience to the commandments is “health in their navel and marrow to their bones.”

“But,” one might think, “I obey the Word of Wisdom and I still get sick.” Obeying the Word of Wisdom to almost all church members is limited to abstaining from tea, coffee, alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs. However, there is much more to this revelation than avoiding these substances. These prohibitions have been accepted as binding upon members of the Church, and abstaining from these substances is considered to be part of the basic standards of worthiness. When a Church member is asked in a temple recommend or other interview, “Do you live the Word of Wisdom?”, the real question being asked is, “Do you abstain from tea, coffee, alcohol, tobacco, and harmful (illegal) drugs?”

Because the requirements of abstinence have been made binding on church members, better than 90% of all talks and books on the Word of Wisdom are focused on these “don’ts.” Whole books have been written about the “don’ts”, but very little has been written about the “do’s.” Yet there is as much information, or even more, substantiating these positive recommendations.

Oddly enough, those “don’ts” of the Word of Wisdom account for only five of the twenty-one verses of that revelation, while eight of those twenty-one verses are devoted to positive things we should do. Even parts of the five verses of “don’ts” contain suggestions on positive things we should do. (The remaining eight verses comprise three verses of introduction, one verse of warning, and four verses of promised blessings).

The Word of Wisdom “Do’s”

To refresh our memories, here are the eight verses of “do’s” found in this revelation.

And again, verily I say unto you, all wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature and use of man—

Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof; all these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving.

Yea, flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air, I, the Lord, have ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving; nevertheless they are to be used sparingly;

And it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used, only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine.

All grain is ordained for the use of man and of beasts, to be the staff of life, not only for man but for the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven, and all wild animals that run or creep on the earth.

And these hath God made for use of man only in times of famine and excess of hunger.

All grain is good for the food of man; as also the fruit of the vine; that which yieldeth fruit, whether in the ground or above the ground—

Nevertheless, wheat for man, and corn for the ox, and oats for the horse, and rye for the fowls and for the swine, and for all the beasts of the field, and barley for all useful animals, and for mild drinks, as also other grain. (D&C 89:10-17)

In addition, here are some of the “do’s” found in the five verses of “don’ts.”

...this should be wine, yea, pure wine of the grape of the vine, of your own make. (verse 6, referring to the wine used for the sacrament.)...strong drinks are...for the washing of your bodies. ...tobacco...is an...
herb to be used for bruises and all sick cattle, to be used with judgment and skill. (verses 7 & 8 referring to positive uses for alcohol and tobacco). (D&C 89)

The fact that these do’s are not obligations of church membership does not mean they are not important. The promised blessings are available only to those who obey all of the principles of the Word of Wisdom, while walking in obedience to the remainder of God’s commandments. Hence, if we want health, we must understand and obey these positive principles as well.

We should especially consider these positive principles in light of the growing evidence that our American diet, heavy with salt, sugar, fat, refined carbohydrates, and processed foods is damaging to our health. We will consider this evidence in our next chapter. Meanwhile, we need to address an important issue about refraining from these substances.

Many times it has been pointed out that the Word of Wisdom does not prohibit the use of salt, sugar, fat, white flour, chocolate or any one of a number of things that many nutritionists feel are not good for us. Church leaders have made it abundantly clear that we should not judge others by our personal dietary standards, nor impose them on others using the Word of Wisdom as our reasoning.

This does not mean, however, that it is a wise and a good thing to eat salt, sugar, fat and white flour. Consider the following. Let’s suppose that you just purchased a new car. Along with that car, you obtain an instruction manual which tells you what type of fuel to use, what type of motor oil, power steering fluid, etc. Now, you know that if you want to get good performance out of this engine, then you should follow the manufacturer’s recommendations. After all, they made the car and they know what you SHOULD put in the engine. By default, all other substances are inferior, and perhaps even harmful.

The Lord Knew What He Was Doing

Doesn't the same thing apply to the Word of Wisdom? The Lord does not have to tell us everything we shouldn't eat because He has told us what we should eat. The following material from a discourse on the Word of Wisdom given in Nauvoo, Ill., by Hyrum Smith should help us understand this point better.

The Lord has told us what is good for us to eat, and to drink, and what is pernicious; but some of our wise philosophers, and some of our elders too, pay no regard to it; for they think it is too little, too foolish, for wise men to regard fools!...Who made the corn, the wheat, the rye, and all the vegetable substances? And who was it that organized man, and constituted him as he is found? Who made his stomach and his digestive organs, and prepared proper nutriment for his system, that the juices of his body might be supplied; and his form be invigorated by that kind of food which the laws of nature, and the laws of God have said would be good for man? And God made his food, and provided it for the use of man; and shall he be ashamed to speak of the work of his hands...

God is the manufacturer of our bodies, and in His infinite wisdom He prepared foods that would properly nourish the body so it might operate at no performance. If we use no less than the fuel the Manufacturer has prepared and recommended, can we blame Him if our bodies do not function as they were created to do?

Daniel and the King’s Meat

The story of Daniel and his friends is often cited as an example of the value of obeying the Word of Wisdom. Yet sometimes we miss the real point of the story.

Daniel and his companions were selected to be advisors to the king. They were to be fed a daily provision of the king’s meat and wine for three years. The Hebrew word here translated as “meat” refers to “delicacies.” That is, they were to be fed the king’s rich foods. Note that Daniel and his companions didn’t just refuse to drink the king’s wine, they also refused the king’s food. The king’s food was likely
the same type of rich fair that we are offered today - plenty of meat and extravagantly prepared dishes.

Daniel and his friends chose to eat pulse instead of this rich food. Various writers have associated pulse with simple food such as legumes (lentils, peas, beans), possibly grains and some vegetables like cabbage. This suggests that Daniel and his friends ate a very simple vegetarian diet. In fact, they probably ate foods recommended by our own Word of Wisdom—fruits, herbs and grains.

We are told that after only ten days on this diet, that “their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat,” and that “God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom...” (Daniel 1:15,17) Doesn’t this sound like the blessings promised for obedience to our own Word of Wisdom?

The point is, Daniel and his companions refused to eat the same type of rich food we are offered in today’s affluent society. This goes far beyond simply not drinking alcoholic beverages (wine).

**The Teachings of Brigham Young**

Brigham Young was outspoken in this regard. He said many things about the need for us to eat plain and simple foods rather than the rich food offered by an affluent society.

> As we got richer and built warm houses, and have lived more richly, indulging in sweet cake, plum pudding, roast beef and so on, we have had more or less disease among us.”

> Go into their houses and you will find beef, pork, apple pie, custard pie, pumpkin pie, and every luxury, and they live so as to shorten their days and the days of their children.”

If Brigham Young complained that the Americans of his day, as a nation, were “killing themselves with their vices and high living.” How much more are Americans doing so today? Are we not doing the same things? Go into our houses and you will find ice cream, pastries, beef and pork, fats and oils, and all kinds of rich food which Brigham Young claimed would shorten our lives and the lives of our children and bring disease upon us. Is this rich food not similar to the king’s “meat” which Daniel and his brethren refused?

We might ask ourselves, are these things important? Here is what Brigham Young said about that subject.

You may think that these things are not of much importance; no more they are, unless they are observed, but let the people observe them and they lay the foundation for longevity, and they will begin to live out their days, not only a hundred years, but, by and by, hundreds of years on the earth. Do you think they will stuff themselves with tea and coffee, and perhaps with a little brandy sling before breakfast and a little before going to bed, and then beef, pork, mutton, sweet meats, and pastry, morning, noon, and night? No; you will find they will live as our first parents did, on fruits and on a little simple food, and they will never overload the stomach.

**We Are Not Commanded, But...**

While we realize that these positive principles are not used as standards of worthiness, we should consider them in the light of these words of Brigham Young.

> I know that some say the revelations upon these points are not given by way of commandment. Very well, but we are commanded to observe every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

And we should also consider this passage from the Doctrine and Covenants.

> For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward. (D&C 58:26)

If we would like to regard ourselves as wise stewards, should we not refrain from any substance which would lessen our health and vitality?

**The Purpose of the Word of Wisdom**

Before we discuss in greater detail the positive aspects of the Word of Wisdom, we should realize that this commandment was given for a greater purpose than just helping to ensure our individual health.
Brigham Young explained some of the purposes for the Word of Wisdom in these words:

It is a piece of good counsel which the Lord desires his people to observe, that they may live on the earth until the measure of their creation is full. This is the object the Lord had in view in giving that Word of Wisdom. To those who observe it He will give great wisdom and understanding, increasing their health, giving strength and endurance to the faculties of their bodies and minds until they shall be full of years upon the earth. This will be their blessing if they will observe His word with a good and willing heart and in faithfulness before the Lord.7

In a discourse on the Word of Wisdom, Hyrum Smith explained that part of the purpose of the Word of Wisdom was to help restore man back to his original state before he became fallen and depraved.

When God first made man upon the earth, he was a different being entirely to what he now is: his body was strong, athletic, robust, and healthy; his days were prolonged upon the earth; he lived nearly one thousand years, his mind was vigorous and active, and his intellectual faculties clear and comprehensive, but he has become degenerated; his life has dwindled to a span; disease preys upon his system; his body is enervated and feeble; and his [mental] and intellectual faculties are impaired, and weakened: and man is not now that dignified, noble, majestic, honorable, and mighty being that he was when he first proceeded from the hands of his maker.

The Lord has in His wise designs revealed unto us His will; He has told us as He did the ancient prophets that the earth shall be redeemed - that the curse shall be removed from it...that man's days shall be as the “days of a tree,” that he shall again live one thousand years on the earth...

Everything has become degenerated from what it was in its primitive state; “God made man pure, but he has found out many inventions!” His tastes have become innumerable, and his diseases multiplied: his taste has become vitiated, and his judgment impaired: he has fallen - fallen - fallen, from that dignified state that he once occupied on the earth; and it needs a restorative that man has not in his possession—wisdom which is beyond the reach of human intellect; and power which human philosophy, talent and ingenuity cannot con-

Thus, the Word of Wisdom is part of the machinery which will help to bring to pass the millennial era of peace when man will again live to “the age of a tree”. These noble goals cannot and will not happen simply by abstaining from the five forbidden substances. Obviously, the rest of the revelation must also be heeded. We must come to understand the meaning of passages which instruct us to eat meat “sparingly” and to use barley for “mild drinks” as well as we understand the injunction to refrain from “hot drinks.”

Now, some might think, “oh, no” here is another thing I’m supposed to be doing. That is not the way this information was sent to us. You will recall these words were “sent as a greeting; not by commandment or constraint, but by revelation and the word of wisdom...” In other words, these things are not harsh threats, with heavy penalties for disobedience, rather they are the counsel of a loving Father in Heaven, who wants us to have good health. He wants us to have the health, clarity of mind, and the abundant energy we need to accomplish the tasks of life. Isn’t the promise that we shall “run and not be weary and walk and not faint?”

Rather than viewing this information as “one more thing we’ve got to do,” we should look upon this information as an invitation, an invitation to learn how to care for our health and strength and avoid unnecessary disease and pain. These positive aspects are principles with promise. Perhaps some
feel overburdened with learning more about gospel requirements because they feel rundown, tired, depressed, overwhelmed and otherwise lacking in strength to fulfill all they know they should be doing. But, as children of God it is our right to enjoy energy, vitality, and power to accomplish all God would have us do. These positive principles, these words of wisdom, have helped many saints to enjoy the physical health and strength and the clarity of mind promised in the 89th section of the Doctrine and Covenants.

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Chapter Two Footnotes

2. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 188
3. Ibid.
4. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 189
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 182
Chapter Three

Nutrition and Health

In recent years, more and more evidence has surfaced implicating poor nutrition as a major factor in many illnesses. While no one should claim that nutrition is the only factor in disease and health, there is ample evidence that it is a major factor in most, if not all, chronic and degenerative diseases.

For example, in 1977 the United States Senate Committee on Human Needs and Nutrition published its findings on hearings held on the link between diet and major diseases. The document was called The Dietary Goals for the United States, and it contained some very interesting statements. For example, page one stated:

The simple fact is that our diets have changed radically within the last 50 years, with great and often very harmful effects on our health. These dietary changes represent as great a threat to public health as smoking. Too much fat, too much sugar or salt, can be and are linked directly to heart disease, cancer, obesity, and stroke, among other killer diseases. In all, six of the ten leading causes of death in the United States have been linked to our diet.¹

If these factors represent “as great a threat to public health as smoking” shouldn’t we seriously consider taking note of them? This document boldly proclaimed that a majority of the leading causes of death in our society had been linked directly to our American diet. Among these were heart disease and cancer, which combined take the lives of seven out of ten Americans.

To help reduce the incidence of these killer diseases, the committee recommended several changes in the American diet. They suggested that Americans should increase consumption of fruits, vegetables and whole grains, while decreasing consumption of salt, sugar, fat and cholesterol. A prime means of reducing fat and cholesterol is to cut down on the consumption of meat.

Do these recommendations sound vaguely familiar? They ought to, as they are almost precisely what is recommended in the Word of Wisdom. Here are some other statements from this document which support the premise we have been building.

As a Nation, we have come to believe that medicine and medical technology can solve our major health problems. The role of such important factors as diet in cancer and heart disease has long been obscured by the emphasis on the conquest of these diseases through the miracles of modern medicine. Treatment, not prevention, has been the order of the day. . . the problems can never be solved by more and more medical care....

There is a widespread and unfounded confidence in the ability of medical science to cure or mitigate the effects of such diseases once they occur. Appropriate public education must emphasize the unfortunate but clear limitations of current medical practice in curing the common killer diseases. Once hypertension, diabetes, arteriosclerosis or heart disease are manifest, there is, in reality, very little that medical science can do to return a patient to normal physiological function. As awareness of this limitation increases, the importance of prevention will become all the more obvious.²

The diet of the American people has become increasingly rich—rich in meat, other sources of saturated fat and cholesterol, and in sugar... We might be better able to tolerate this diet if we were much more active physically, but we are a sedentary people...It should be emphasized that this diet which affluent people generally consume is everywhere associated with a similar disease pattern—high rates of ischemic heart disease, certain forms of cancer, diabetes and obesity...

The over-consumption of fat, generally, and saturated fat in particular, as well as cholesterol, sugar, salt and alcohol have been related to six of the ten leading causes of death: Heart disease, cancer, cerebrovascular disease, diabetes, arteriosclerosis and cirrhosis of the liver.³
...The risks associated with eating this diet are demonstrably large. The question to be asked, therefore, is not why should we change our diet, but why not? What are the risks associated with eating less meat, less fat, less saturated fat, less cholesterol, less sugar, less salt, and more fruits, vegetables, unsaturated fat and cereal products—especially whole grains. There are none that can be identified and important benefits can be expected.  

Why shouldn't we change our diet? For over 150 years, we have accepted the injunctions of the Word of Wisdom to avoid tobacco, alcohol, coffee and tea. Why have we not paid more attention to the other principles taught in this revelation such as reducing our consumption of meat, partaking of whole grains and utilizing the herbs and fruits which God says are for our constitution, nature and use? We obeyed the latter before the scientific evidence was in because God commanded it. Would we not be wise to obey the remainder, even though all the scientific evidence is not in?

There is a great deal more evidence that could be cited to validate the importance of diet in preventing disease in general, but none is more impressive than the work of two doctors, both with excellent credentials. The first was Dr. Weston Price, a distinguished dentist, and the second was Dr. Francis Pottenger, a competent medical doctor and researcher. The work of these men can contribute significantly to our understanding of the Word of Wisdom and the laws of diet and nutrition.

**Dr. Weston Price**

After receiving his dental degree in 1893, Dr. Price began his practice and his research. He became one of the top dentists in his field. His articles brought acclaim and recognition and his textbooks became standards in the dental field.

During his career, Dr. Price noted that the general dental health of his patients was declining. He noted changes in the dental arch, which caused teeth to become crowded and crooked. He also noted an increase in dental decay over what the parents of his younger patients had experienced. He also began to note that the condition of the teeth was a fairly good indicator of overall health.

After some consideration he determined that the problem could be related to some deficiency in modern diets. To test his hypothesis, Dr. Price spent about ten years traveling around the world to study the general and dental health of persons living on a “primitive” diet versus people living on a “civilized” diet. Dr. Price took photographs, measurements, samples of foods which he analyzed for nutritional content and other statistical data. His travels took him to high alpine valleys in Switzerland, the islands of the Outer Hebrides, Alaska, remote areas of Canada and the United States, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Peru and islands of the south Pacific.

Dr. Price published the results of his life’s work in a book called *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration*. Basically, everywhere Price went, he found indigenous peoples were healthy and robust when they ate the natural foods found in their environment. In every case, however, where these people were introduced to white flour, refined sugar, processed oils and other “civilized” food products, they began to experience the health problems common to western man.

**The Effects of Good Nutrition**

Here are a few of Dr. Price’s findings. In the Loetschental Valley in an isolated part of the Swiss Alps, Dr. Price found about 2,000 people living primarily on whole rye bread and raw cow and goat milk from grazing animals. Cheese and butter were made from the summer milk to last the whole year. They also raised salad greens. The people drank water coming off the glaciers. They ate meat about once per week, usually on Sunday. The bones and scraps were used to make soups for the remainder of the week. These people had no physician, dentist, policeman or jail. They produced nearly everything they needed.

In examining the teeth of these people, Dr. Price found them virtually free from dental decay. On the average there was only one cavity per three children examined. Those young people who did have problems with tooth decay were those who had lived away from the valley in the city.
In addition to their healthy teeth, the people were also resistant to other diseases. Tuberculosis, a common killer disease of that day, was essentially unknown.

The health and strength of these people was particularly impressive when compared with the health of people living in the lower valleys and plains country in Switzerland. Only about ten miles away there was another community which had a paved road which was accessible the year round. The people in this community had access to the foods of civilization, pastries, jams, canned goods, etc. Here, Dr. Price found an average of six cavities in each mouth. He found that the jaws were narrower, causing misshapen dental arches, crowding of the teeth and impaction of the wisdom teeth. He also found these people were more susceptible to disease in general.

In other areas of the world, Dr. Price found similar contrasts. In the Isle of Lewis and the Isle of Harris off the northwest coast of Scotland, Dr. Price found healthy people living off seafood, oat grain, fish organs and eggs, and vegetables. Children living on this diet showed less than one tooth out of a hundred with any decay. Tuberculosis, cancer, arthritis and other degenerative diseases were unknown.

In contrast, children in port towns with access to white breads, jams, canned vegetables, vegetable oils, sugar, chocolate and coffee had an average of between 16 and 50 decayed teeth per hundred. Tuberculosis was a great problem, with some populations having been decimated by this disease.

In Alaska, Dr. Price interviewed a Dr. Josef Romig, a surgeon who has served among the “primitive” and “civilized” Eskimos and Indians for thirty-six years. Dr. Romig stated that cancer was unknown among the truly primitive natives (he had never seen a single case) but developed when they began eating refined foods. Other acute problems common to modernized Indians were rare among their ‘primitive’ brethren. When modernized Indians developed tuberculosis, Dr. Romig sent them back to their primitive conditions and diet, where the majority of them recovered. When given the choice, most of those that preferred the “civilized” diet simply died.

Dr. Price also interviewed the physician directing a hospital at a large Indian reservation in Ontario. This doctor had contact with three generations of Indian mothers. He said that while the grandmothers had given birth without difficulty in wilderness homes, current mothers were often in labor for days and surgical interference was frequently necessary.

In Africa, Dr. Price discovered six entire tribes without a single cavity or malformed dental arch. In thirteen tribes, no irregular teeth were found. Again, when these people moved to the cities and adopted modern foods, tooth decay and crowding of the teeth became rampant. In addition, it was only after the introduction of white man’s foods that the people first became susceptible to infectious diseases such as malaria, dysentery and sleeping sickness. Primitives, on the other hand, not only had immunity to these infectious diseases, they also avoided problems with chronic diseases. A doctor in charge of a government hospital in Kenya told Dr. Price that in his several years of service among primitive people he had seen no cases of appendicitis, gall bladder problems, cystitis, or duodenal ulcer. In more recent years, it has also come to light that these African people (who consume large quantities of fiber rich foods) are virtually free from all colon problems, such as constipation, diverticulitis, hemorrhoids and even cancer of the colon. This fact has led the National Cancer Institute to publicize the fact that a high fiber diet appears to protect the body against certain forms of cancer.

**Pottenger’s Cats**

At the same time Dr. Price was touring the world learning that refined foods contributed not only to dental problems, but low immune response and chronic diseases as well, another doctor, Francis M. Pottenger, was conducting a ten-year study on the effects of cooked versus raw food. Dr. Pottenger’s experiments involved cats kept in pens, which were fed strictly controlled diets. The control group was fed a diet consisting of two thirds raw meat scraps, one-third raw milk. Another group was fed raw milk, but the meat scraps were cooked. Three groups were fed raw meat scraps, but cooked
milk of some type rather than raw; one group received pasteurized milk, another evaporated milk and a third sweetened condensed milk.

The cats fed raw meat and milk thrived generation after generation, and were strikingly uniform in size and skeletal development for each sex. A broad face with wide dental arches and no crowding of teeth was the rule. There was little shedding of fur, and the fur was uniform with a good sheen. The animals were friendly, even-tempered and well-coordinated. Miscarriages were rare. They were resistant to infection, fleas and parasites.

In contrast, all the groups fed cooked food of one sort or another failed to thrive. The most severe deterioration was found in the cats fed sweetened condensed milk (evaporated milk with sugar). These cats became extremely irritable and nervous and developed heavy fat deposits and marked skeletal deformities. Cats fed pasteurized milk or cooked meat showed less severe signs of degeneration, but the degeneration was still serious. The problems also became worse with each generation. Common disorders included vision problems, infections of internal organs and bones, arthritis, heart problems, under activity of the thyroid gland, inflammation of the joints and the nervous system, skin lesions, allergies, intestinal parasites and vermin, loss of coordination, pneumonia and diarrhea.

The personality of the cats also changed. Females fed cooked meat often became irritable and aggressive, while their male counterparts often became docile and unassertive. The males often lost interest in females, developing an interest in other males instead. There was also abnormal sexual activity between females.

Reproductive problems developed among those cats fed cooked foods. Miscarriage rates were high; twenty-five percent for the first generation on the cooked food diet, seventy percent for the second generation. Many cats had difficult deliveries and many died in labor. Many of the kittens were born dead or too frail to nurse. What was most alarming is that no offspring were ever born to the third generation of cats fed the cooked foods. Third generation cats died before reaching six months of age.\(^7\)

Of course, cats have a different metabolism than human beings, so we can’t make too many direct comparisons. However, it is interesting (and important) to note that Dr. Pottenger found the same health problems developing in his cooked-food cats that Dr. Price found in people eating refined foods. These included narrowing of the dental arches with attendant crowding of teeth, underbites, overbites and protruding and crooked teeth. Dr. Price also noted that primitive peoples abandoning their traditional diet developed disease patterns, reproductive problems and behavioral problems, just like the cats in Pottenger’s study.

**Correlations**

It doesn’t take a college education to see that the health problems developed by Pottenger’s cats are rampant in modern civilization. Of course, Dr. Pottenger didn’t use antibiotics, vaccines, surgeries, etc. to try to keep his cats alive. But then, again, Dr. Price’s work suggests that the only reason we need these modern medical “miracles” is because we have abandoned the diet which kept the so-called primitive man in good health.

Most of us, for example, accept tooth decay as a natural and inevitable process, which can only be halted by regularly brushing, flossing and cleaning the teeth. We also routinely submit to orthodontia work and wisdom teeth extraction. However, the “primitive” people Dr. Price studied never brushed their teeth and yet they hardly had any cavities! Also, their wisdom teeth never impacted and they had a perfect bite without braces. Dr. Price felt that all these dental problems were acquired diseases due to poor nutrition.

But, tooth decay is just the tip of the iceberg. Dr. Price regarded dental problems as just one of the signs of physical deterioration. The work of Price and Pottenger suggests that infectious diseases, parasites, arthritis, allergies, heart disease, cancer and so forth also result from poor diet. Furthermore, their work suggests that nutritional deficiency also contributes to moral decay such as sexual deviations like homosexuality, criminal behavior, irritability, aggressiveness and other mental and emotional problems. It also
indicates that the ability to have children naturally, without medical intervention, declines with malnutrition and that infertility, miscarriage and still birth become more and more commonplace the longer a population is kept on a deficient diet.

There will be those diehards who will say this research is inconclusive, but more and more evidence keeps coming forward to verify these facts. Recently, for example, the results of a six-year study of the Chinese diet and disease patterns was published. It was reported to be “the most comprehensive study ever undertaken on diet and health.” This research suggested that “the middle kingdom’s way of eating—rich in whole grains, vegetables and fruits, sparing in animal products—is both extraordinarily nutritious and protective against major chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer.”

However, even as more research comes forth verifying the links between diet and disease, people will probably continue to resist these findings. As Dr. Henry Bieler stated, “...today a search for pure air, pure raw milk, pure water, natural, unprocessed, unpreserved foods, unsprayed vegetables, nourishing whole-grain bread is too simple, too unpretentious to be extolled as a ‘new’ therapy in treating disease.”

However, we as saints need not be so hard-hearted and stiff-necked. We have been given a revelation from God, known as the Word of Wisdom which teaches us that proper diet coupled with obedience to God’s commandments brings “health in the navel and marrow to their bones” together with “wisdom and great treasures of knowledge” and the ability to “run and not be weary.”

Chapter Three Footnotes

1 Dietary Goals for the United States, Prepared by the Staff of the Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs United States Senate, 1977, page 1
2 Ibid. p. 6
3 Ibid. p. 9
4 Ibid. p. 8
6 Pottenger’s Cats: A Study in Nutrition, Dr. Francis M. Pottenger (La Mesa, CA: Price-Pottenger Foundation, Inc., 1983)
7 It makes one think of the scripture which says God will visit the iniquities of the parents onto the heads of the children unto the third and fourth generation.
9 Food Is Your Best Medicine, p. 12
Chapter Four

All Wholesome Herbs

Each kind of creature upon the earth has its own kind of food, that food which God created for it, so that its nature and constitution would be sustained in a constant state of health. The different animals in nature do not eat just any food, as instinct tells them which foods are best suited for their makeup. While some creatures live on grass, others live on seeds. Some eat mostly meat, others eat only fruit. Man must also have those foods which are best suited for his nature and constitution in order to maintain a state of health. And God has revealed that vegetation (plant foods) are the foods which were created from the beginning to sustain the life and strength of man.

In the beginning God said:

Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. (Gen. 1:29-30)

In our own day, God has reaffirmed the value of plant life as the food created to sustain mankind in the following words,

And again, verily I say unto you, all wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature and use of man—Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof; all these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving. (D&C 89:11)

More recently, President Spencer W. Kimball has remarked that “the human body is God-created. It was created for a solemn purpose. It was not to abuse, weaken or destroy. God gave grass, herbs, and fruit trees and seeds of all kinds to give man's body growth, strength and power.”

Thus, from the beginning until the present, God has indicated that fruits, herbs and grass (grain) are man’s natural foods. In Genesis, God refers to these three orders of plant life in connection with the creation.

And the earth brought forth grass, every herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed should be in itself, after his kind, and I, God, saw that all things which I had made were good. (Moses 2:12)

Let’s take a closer look at these three orders of plant foods which God created and pronounced good.

The Fruit of the Trees

If we take the scripture’s literally, it appears that fruit may be man’s ideal food. We are told that when man was placed in the garden of Eden he was told, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat...” (Gen. 2:16) Thus it seems that man’s first food was the fruit of trees. Man’s last food may also be fruit as the scriptures testify that in the Celestial world God will plant the tree of life and other trees for man’s food.

And by the river upon the bank thereof, shall grow all trees for meat, and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine. (Ezek. 47:12)

...on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manners of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of nations. (Rev. 22:2)

Brigham Young appeared to believe this was literal for he declared, “When man lives to the age of a tree, his food will be fruit.”¹ In another place he suggested that when men begin to live hundreds of years upon the earth that they will not stuff themselves with “beef, pork, mutton, sweet meats, and pastry, morning,
noon and night.” Rather he says, “...you will find they will live as our first parents did, on fruits and on a little simple food...”

When most people think of fruit, they think of things like grapes, peaches, strawberries and so forth. But more technically speaking, a fruit is the “herb bearing seed” or, in other words, the edible part of a plant which encases the seeds. The fruit arises from the flower and is part of the reproductive function of the plant. The fruit, therefore, is not necessary for the survival of a particular plant, but rather for continuation of the species.

In contrast, the root of the word vegetable is the word vegetative. The vegetative or vegetable parts of the plant are those parts which are needed for the plants survival. These are the roots, stems and leaves as opposed to the flowers or fruits.

When we realize this difference, we can see that nuts, avocados, tomatoes, cucumbers, string beans, squashes and pumpkins are all fruits because they arise out of the flowers and bear the seeds of the plant. Thus, the term “herb bearing seed” could refer to fruits which do not come from trees.

There are some interesting scriptural metaphors using fruit, which may enlighten us further on this subject. If you think about it, a plant produces roots, stems and leaves for its own survival. Its fruit, however, is a gift, created not for its own benefit, but to bear the seed of its offspring and to provide food for other creatures. To eat the leaves, stems or roots of a plant is to partake of the plant itself, but eating of the fruit is probably no more painful to the plant than we are pained by a plant eating our own waste products.

Hence, Christ speaks of knowing people by their fruits. A person’s fruits are not that which he or she does for his/her own benefit and survival; it is what is done for others. The love of God is also symbolized by the fruit of a tree, which according to the prophet Nephi represents God’s willingness to condescend to perform an infinite atonement for man’s benefit.

It would only make sense that in the eternities, assuming that we eat as we do now, that we will partake only of the fruits of plants. Since all creatures will be eternal, no creature will kill another creature for food, even if that creature is a plant. Thus, only the fruit, that which the plant produces for the benefit of others will be the food of man and beast.

**Fruitarianism**

Many people, thinking along these lines, have determined to become fruitarians. As the name implies, a fruitarian is a person who lives only on fruit. However, as previously noted, these fruits may also be some foods which we think of as vegetables.

One of the first men to promote frutarianism was a man named Sylvester Graham. Graham was a preacher who promoted the eating of whole wheat flour, and vegetables. Whole wheat flour was nicknamed Graham flour because of this man. Hence, we have graham bread and graham crackers, which were originally made with whole wheat flour and honey. Graham is also considered the father of the “health food” movement in the United States.

In this century, a man by the name of Arnold Ehret demonstrated that frutarianism was possible by living off fruit for a period of two years. During this time he was able to perform incredible feats of strength and endurance. For example, he raced a trained bicyclist over 800 miles and won. He also did three hundred deep knee bends in rapid succession without even breathing hard. Other persons following Ehret’s example have also reported achieving this ability to literally “run and not be weary.”

It is interesting to note, however, that many fruitarians eventually return to eating more vegetative matter, such as leaves, roots, stems, grains, and nuts. Others attempting to follow Ehret’s example have become weak and emaciated, possibly by not taking his advice to work towards this very slowly. Rudolf Ballentine, a medical doctor with a strong interest in nutrition, says that Ehret was not very well “grounded” while living on fruit. Apparently, he could not sit still, hold a job, or work in one place, but rather walked all over the countryside contemplating the secrets of the universe.

Still, the scriptures and the prophet Brigham Young’s statements seem to indicate that mankind’s ideal food is fruit. If fruit was man’s food in the Garden
of Eden, and will again be his food when the earth is renewed, then it is obviously a food that is good for man. However, it is inappropriate to think that fruit is all one needs to sustain life in the world we presently live in. We have no tree of life to partake of as we were cut off from the fruit of this tree by the judgment of God. We do not live in a Garden of Eden, either. No one lives in a climate which produces ALL MANNER of fruits spontaneously all year round. The climate in which we live is not one where we can run around comfortably without clothing all year round as Adam and Eve did.

Before man will live again to the age of a tree on fruits as Brigham Young has taught, it is likely that the earth must undergo changes. It must be renewed and receive its paradisaical glory. Only then will it be appropriate to attempt such a drastic change in our diet.

Meanwhile, however, we have the counsel of God to partake of each fruit, in the season thereof. Brigham Young noted that the citizens of Salt Lake “...are tolerably comfortable; a great many of them have an abundance of fruit, and they enjoy it. It is very healthy for them and their children to eat in the season thereof.” So, why not follow this simple counsel. When fresh fruit is available and in season, let us partake freely of this wholesome food, especially in its natural or raw state.

Herbs Bearing Seed

We do not find the word vegetable mentioned in the scriptures, but rather, we find the Lord referring to the use of “wholesome herbs” and every “herb bearing seed”. The term herb was originally applied to non-woody plants which die back to the ground each fall. Today it is also applied to any part of a plant which is used for food, flavoring or medicine. Thus, barks and leaves from trees and shrubs may also be considered herbs by modern definitions. In the scriptures, the term herb seems to be used nearly synonymously with the word vegetables. It seems especially likely that the Lord was referring to vegetables when he spoke about wholesome herbs.

The term wholesome refers to that which promotes the health of body and spirit. That which is wholesome is uplifting, nourishing and beautiful. Wholesome herbs are nonpoisonous plants, ones which nourish, support and help the natural body function. There are also unwholesome herbs as borne out by the fact that “tobacco is an herb”. Unwholesome herbs would not be good for the body or belly of man because they are poisonous and/or addictive. However, this does not mean that unwholesome herbs have no use. Even tobacco is a useful herb, for the Lord tells us that it is good for bruises and sick cattle. However, the use of unwholesome herbs, like tobacco, requires judgment and skill.

Those herbs which nourish the health and vitality of the body and which do not contain substances which would damage our mental, spiritual or physical health should be considered to be wholesome herbs. God says He has these wholesome herbs “ordained for the constitution, nature and use of man.” There is a great deal to contemplate in this short passage, if one ponders deeply the meaning of the various words therein.

To ordain is to set apart for a holy purpose. God has set apart these wholesome herbs for a holy purpose, to nourish the souls of men. The Bible tells us that the Lord “causeth the herb to grow for the service of man.” (Ps. 104:14) In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord says the good things of the earth are given both to “strengthen the body and to enliven the soul.” According to this scripture, all things were created for the benefit of man, and, hence, were ordained for his use. Let us also not forget that the words holy and healthy have the same roots.

The phrase “for the constitution, nature and use” covers what these herbs have been ordained or set apart to do. Our constitution is our physical makeup, both chemical and structural. Traditionally, this term has indicated what our genetic tendencies are towards health or disease. This suggests that herbs were designed to enhance the structure, function, strength and possibly even the genetic makeup of our bodies.

Herbs are also in harmony with our nature. That means they are in harmony with the manner in which we are constructed—they are natural to our makeup.
Herbs are also ordained for our use. So God intended that man make use of these wholesome plants, not ignore them. Unfortunately, many people say they do not like “vegetables.” Some people even refer to them derogatorily as “rabbit food.”

However, if God ordained these for our constitution, nature and use, why should we avoid or ignore these important sources of nutrition? We should partake of them freely, especially when they are fresh (in season). If we fail to make use of that which God has set apart for our use, we do so at the peril of our own health.

Grain Is Good for Man

One particular plant food the Lord specifically recommends to us is grain. The Lord says, “All grain is ordained for the use of man and beasts, to be the staff of life.” Grains are the seeds of grass plants. Wheat, corn, rye, oats and barley, the grains mentioned specifically in the Word of Wisdom, are all the seeds of members of the grass family.

The Lord also says concerning grain, “All grain is good for the food of man...” (D&C 89) This is absolutely true, since the seeds of all members of the grass family are edible. In fact, grain might be thought of as the fruit of the grass. There is no poisonous species of grass in the world. Furthermore, grass seeds of one type or another form the staple diet of agricultural peoples the world over. Although not specifically mentioned, this list could also include rice, which is a staple grain for a majority of the peoples of the world.

We will devote the next chapter to grains. Here we only wish to note that this is another plant food which God recommends highly for our use.

Time to Take a New Look

Perhaps it is time we took a serious look at these positive aspects—the need for vegetables, fruits, and grains, particularly wheat. In most cases, the closer these can be, when eaten, to their natural state—without overrefinement and processing—the healthier we will be. To a significant degree, we are an overfed and undernourished nation digging an early grave with our teeth, and lacking the energy that could be ours because we overindulge in junk foods. I am grateful to know that on this campus you can get apples from vending machines, that you have in your student center a fine salad bar, and that you produce an excellent loaf of natural whole-grain bread. Keep it up and keep progressing in that direction. We need a generation of young people who, as Daniel, eat in a more healthy manner than to fare on the “king’s meat”—and whose countenances show it.

There is ample evidence that partaking freely of these plant foods will bring greater strength and vitality to our bodies. There was a marked difference in the health of Daniel and his friends after only ten days on a diet of simple plant foods instead of the king’s rich fare. And the scriptures testify that these four earned the promised blessings of the Word of Wisdom, for we read that God “gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom.” (See Dan. Chapter 1)

Perhaps we, like Daniel and his friends, should begin to refuse the modern delicacies and partake of the simple, wholesome plant foods which God has ordained for our constitutions, for our nature, and for our use.

Chapter Four Footnotes

1. Discourses of Brigham Young, p. 189
2. Ibid., p. 188
5. Journal of Discourses 11:141
6. In His Steps, by President Ezra Taft Bensen, Fourteen-Stake Fireside Address, March 4, 1979
Chapter Five

The Staff of Life

The Lord makes special mention of grain in the Word of Wisdom.

All grain is ordained for the use of man and of beasts, to be the staff of life, not only for man but for the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven and all wild animals that run or creep on the earth...

All grain is good for the food of man...

Nevertheless, wheat for man, and corn for the ox, and oats for the horse, and rye for the fowls and for swine, and for all beasts of the field, and barley for all useful animals, and for mild drinks, as also other grain. (D&C 89:14,16-17)

If you look at all the grains mentioned in the Word of Wisdom, you will find they are all seeds of grass plants. There are about 4,700 species of grasses and none are known to be poisonous, so literally, “all grain is good for the food of man.” (D&C 89:16)

Grass is the great blanket over the earth and the foundation of the food chain for most mammals, the class of animals whose physical characteristics most resemble ours. Every land mammal is directly or indirectly dependent on the grass of the field for food. All mammals eat grass, even those who eat mostly meat diets. Those mammals who do eat meat feed on animals who live primarily on grass. Animals whose body structures most closely resemble man such as baboons, gorillas, monkeys and chimpanzees eat grass and large quantities of other dark green vegetation (herbs). Many large and powerful animals such as horses and cows can survive on grass alone. Those animals specified in the Old Testament as “clean” or fit for human consumption are those which chew the cud, such as sheep, goats, deer and cows. These are grass eating animals.

Perhaps this is why the scriptures tell us that “all flesh is grass.” (Isa. 46:40) It also helps explain why the Lord called all grains the “staff of life.” There is another reason why grain is compared to a staff. A staff is something carried to help one over the rough terrain. Grains certainly fit this analogy. All grains are seeds and seeds are the one form of natural food that stores well. While fresh fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy products must all be processed in some way to preserve them for any length of time, grains may be stored for decades in their natural state and still retain their nutritional value. They can then be planted and will grow to produce more food after their kind. This cannot be said for canned or processed foods.

Grains, particularly wheat and rice, are the dietary staple for people all over the world. In fact if the grass should fail to grow for just one year, famine would depopulate the earth. We can see why it would be prudent to make grain of all kinds, and especially wheat, a prominent part of our food storage. Not only will these seeds store their concentrated nutrition for a long period of time, they can be used to grow more food when the difficult times have ended.

Our Daily Bread

Until recent times, these staple foods were eaten in their wholesome (i.e. whole) and natural state. However, in modern times various methods of processing have been invented which have converted our “wholesome” wheat into bleached white flour and the staple brown rice into polished white rice.

We do not need to dwell at length on the fact that processing these grains removes a great deal of their nutritional content. Most people are already aware of this. However, they mistakenly believe that the laws requiring white flour to be enriched are replacing the nutrients lost during processing. While it is true that
a few synthetic vitamins and minerals are added to our white flour, it is not true that this restores all of the nutrients lost during the processing.

"Trace Elements in Wheat Flour" is one study showing the nutrient loss through the processing of wheat flour.¹

Whole wheat also contains sulfur, potassium, iodine, fluorine, chlorine, sodium, silicon, boron, barium and silver as well as the following vitamins: thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, pyridoxine, inositol, folic acid, choline and E. Most of these nutrients are found in the bran and wheat germ and are lost during processing.

There are many who maintain that these and other losses are insignificant, especially when flour has been enriched. However, only a small portion of these nutrients have been replaced in the so-called enriched white flour. Calling white flour enriched is like having a robber take $25 from you and then give you $7, claiming he “enriched” you in the process.

Furthermore, white flour does not contain the fiber necessary to maintain good intestinal health. After twenty years of research in three rural areas of the world, Dr. Dennis P. Burkitt, M.D., one of the greatest surgeons of England said that “Where whole grain, or coarse grain, including the bran, is used in the daily diet, there will be NO: appendicitis, diverticulosis, stomach cancer, intestinal cancer, hemorrhoids, colitis, constipation or hernias.”² He found that these conditions were unknown among rural African, Roumanian and Himalayan natives, but as soon as these people moved to urban areas and began to eat refined grains, they began to develop these diseases.

Let us recall again the words of Hyrum Smith to the Saints in Nauvoo.

Who made the corn, the wheat, the rye, and all the vegetable substances? And who was it that organized man, and constituted him as he is found? Who made his stomach and his digestive organs, and prepared proper nutriment for his system, that the juices of his body might be supplied; and his form be invigorated by that kind of food which the laws of nature, and the laws of God has said would be good for man?³

We need to ask ourselves: if God made wheat for man, does this not suggest that its balance of nutrients is correct for man’s body? If we alter that balance of nutrients through a refining process, is it still the correct balance of nutrients to keep our bodies functioning at optimum health? Obviously, the answer is NO!

White Flour and the Church

Some early church leaders felt that the saints would be better off eating whole grains instead of refined flours. Heber C. Kimball stated:

I am inclined to think...that fine flour is not good, and the finer the flour we eat the shorter will be our lives. It would be better for us to eat coarse bread, such as graham bread.⁴

However, modern church leaders caution us not to judge people by whether they eat white bread or whole wheat. For example, Elder Mark E. Peterson once stated:

I do not believe we should try to establish our personal fads as Church doctrine. I do not believe my eternal salvation will be affected in any way if I eat white bread or white sugar. I do not believe the doctrines of the Church are in any way involved in whether my wheat is stone-ground or steel-cut.⁵

This is absolutely true. As we have indicated in the beginning of this book, the positive aspects of God’s laws of health are “sent forth greeting, not by commandment or constraint.” Hence, we do not have the right to judge a person’s righteousness by whether he/she eats whole wheat or white bread.

However, just because it is not a commandment that we don’t eat white flour doesn’t make white flour healthy for us. The fact it isn’t a commandment of the Church won’t prevent us from getting cancer of the colon, hemorrhoids, colitis, appendicitis and other diseases from the lack of fiber in our diets. The body will thrive better on the whole grain (just as God made it) than it will on denatured grain whether we make it Church doctrine or not. So, the choice is ours; however, we must bear the consequences of that choice.

But why should we resist making the change? If we want the blessing of health, let’s return to the
use of whole grains. After your body adjusts to the change, see if you don't notice the improvement in your health and well-being.

That Which Is Not Bread...

At first, some people might balk at the price of a loaf of whole grain bread versus a loaf of white bread, but one will find that a slice of whole grain bread satisfies the body more thoroughly than five or six slices of the cheaper white bread. This is because the whole grain bread contains numerous minerals, vitamins and other substances which the body requires. White flour and sugar have been referred to as “empty calories” because they do not contain the other nutrients needed by the body to properly digest, assimilate and utilize the food energy they contain. Thus, after eating them the body craves more food because it is still searching for the other nutrients it needs. Whole grains have greater “nutritional density” meaning they contain more of the other nutrients the body requires and, hence, are more satisfying.

Perhaps it was this state of affairs that the prophet Hosea was referring to when he said: “For they shall eat, and not have enough.” (Hosea 4:10) Maybe the prophet Isaiah also foresaw this problem when he stated, “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?” (Isa. 55:2)

Here is another scripture which may be applied to this empty refined food we are eating.

Now therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.

Ye have sown much, and bring in little;
Ye eat, but ye have not enough;
Ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink;
Ye clothe you, but there is none warm;
And he that earneth wages earneth wages
to put into a bag with holes.

Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.7

In commenting on the above passage, Elder L. Tom Perry said:

I have read this great scripture and continue to be impressed with how clearly the Old Testament prophet describes the conditions of today. Almost daily we read of those who invest for little return. We eat food so refined that the nourishment is lacking. We witness the drink that can never satisfy the thirst for those who drink; the dressing for style rather than for warmth, comfort, and modesty; the high wages of the wage earner today which still do not satisfy or supply his needs.7

Perhaps it is time that we “considered our ways” and started investing our money into nutritious whole grains, the bread and staff of our physical life, instead of eating refined white flour and rice (that which is not bread).

Wheat Grass

We are accustomed to thinking of eating grain in its seed form as bread. However, there is evidence that we could derive tremendous benefits from consuming grain in its grass form. In this form it is an herb, and fits into the category of “all wholesome herbs” which God has specified as being ordained for our “constitution, nature and use.”

Ann Wigmore has done considerable research on the subject of grass as food. In her book, Wheatgrass, God’s Manna, she tells how she was involved in an accident as a child which caused her to develop gangrene in her feet. The doctors wished to amputate her feet, but she refused. Her grandmother, who raised her in Eastern Lithuania, had used herbs for healing, but now that she was in America she did not know any herbs to use.

She asked her uncle, who had come to America with her, to find her some herbs, but he was afraid to do so, because he thought he might accidentally bring her some poisonous ones. So instead, he placed her in the yard each day before he left for work. In the yard she filled her belly with grass, flowers and leaves. Much to the surprise of the doctors, her gangrene completely healed. This sent Ann Wigmore on a quest to learn more about healing and grass in particular.

She read a passage in Daniel chapter 4, which told how King Nebuchadnezzar, losing his mentality and his physical well-being, was instructed by a voice from heaven to go into the fields and “eat grass as did the oxen.” The monarch followed this advice and in time regained his throne, his spirituality and his physical health. Investigating, she discovered that there are no poisonous grasses. She was told by an expert on grasses, “that grass is the only vegetation
on the face of the earth that will healthfully support an animal from birth to old age.” This same expert commented that “I am surprised that more attention has not been given to this kind of vegetation as a food for human beings. There is an attorney in Kansas who, with his wife and three small children, lived for over three years exclusively on grass.”

After some study to determine which grasses were most nutritious, she narrowed them down to a few major species: wheat, oats, rye, etc. She then let animals decide which of the grasses to consume and found that they picked wheat. Wheat, she concluded, was the most nutritious of all grasses.

Ann Wigmore, began growing wheatgrass and juicing it. She found that drinking wheatgrass juice helped many people to recover their health and vitality. She claims that wheatgrass is the “King of Grasses” and contains every one of the 103 minerals, vitamins, trace elements and other nutrients needed by the human body. The chlorophyll found in wheatgrass (and other green, leafy vegetables) has been called the “blood” of plants and has many healing qualities. Among other things, it is a natural blood builder, deodorant and disinfectant.

To grow wheatgrass, she suggests that you soak the wheat seeds for about fifteen hours, then drain off the water and let them sprout for an additional fifteen hours. Prepare a pan or tray of some kind by filling it at least one inch deep with soil. Adding some soaked peat moss to the soil will make it more porous. Spread the seeds over the soil so they are barely touching each other and cover them with about eight layers of wet paper. Cover the whole tray or pan with plastic to hold the moisture in. At the end of three days remove the coverings and place the tray in a sunny area. Water the tray as needed and harvest the grass when it is about seven inches tall.

Cut the grass and eat it in salads or juice it with a hand juicer (available at many health food stores). You can also blend it up in the blender with some fruit juice or water, then strain and drink, but this oxidizes and destroys some of its nutritional value. Go easy with wheatgrass at first, because it is a very potent source of nutrition and can precipitate what natural healers call a “cleansing crisis.”

Wheat is not the only grass which has been used as a food by man. Research done in Japan revealed that barley grass is an extremely nutritious food as well. We’ll discuss more about barley shortly.

**Sprouted Wheat**

Besides growing wheat and other grains for grass, wheat can be sprouted. Sprouting wheat causes the starches to convert to sugars. It activates the enzymes found in the seeds and the plant begins to produce vitamins, such as vitamin C, which it needs for its own growth. Sprouted wheat, and other grains, are wholesome herbs—they are no longer in the grain state. Hence, they are one source of fresh vegetables that are always “in season.”

To sprout wheat simply soak it in a jar or other container overnight. Drain off the water the next day and rinse the wheat berries once or twice each day. In a couple of days you’ll have sprouts. They are best eaten when the root hairs are about 1-1/2 times as long as the seeds themselves. At this stage, the starches in the wheat have been converted to easily digested sugars and the enzymes have activated to increase the vitamin content in the plant.

Sprouted wheat can even be made into a “living” bread, called Essene bread. The recipe comes from a book called *The Essene Gospel of Peace*, which claims to be the teachings of Jesus to a group of Essenes. Whether the book is all that it claims to be, the recipe is interesting.

To make essene bread, sprout the wheat as described above. The sprouts should be sweet to the taste and the root hairs are about one and a half times as long as the wheat berries themselves. When the sprouts reach this stage, crush or grind them (a meat grinder works well for this purpose). Then shape resulting “dough” into patties about one inch thick. This “bread” is then baked in a very low oven (about 100-120 degrees) for 3-4 hours until the crust hardens somewhat because the excess moisture has evaporated.

This “bread” is very sweet and cake-like. It is also very nutritionally dense and most people can eat only a small amount when they first try it. It can also be made from other whole grains, like rye. Adding nuts
which have been soaked overnight or dried fruit like raisins or dates is very delicious.

Knowing how to make Essene bread may come in handy for emergencies. It can even be baked by placing it in the hot sun. So, this is one way to prepare bread that would not require a wheat grinder or an oven. In addition, it would also have a higher vitamin content because the sprouting process and the low heat used leave more of the vitamins intact.

Wheat may be “cooked” without destroying its ability to grow by pouring boiling water over grain in a thermos bottle and leaving it overnight. This makes a wholesome grain cereal that still contains the natural vitamins, enzymes and other nutrients of the whole wheat.

Barley for Mild Drinks

We can see that when the Lord said wheat was for man, he may have been referring to more than wheat flour. But we need not limit our grain intake to wheat alone. The Lord says that all grains are good for man. One grain specifically mentioned is barley—which is said to be useful for mild drinks.

Beer is a “strong drink” which is made from fermented barley water. So, when the Lord said that barley was good for mild drinks, He may have been referring to unfermented barley water. This is made by soaking the barley seed in water and drinking the water. It can also be made by simmering the barley in water and drinking the liquid. Wheat and other grains can also be made into mild drinks in this manner. In fact, some people claim that drinking the water their wheat sprouts have soaked in is very nutritious and healthful.

A number of herb books have recommended barley waters as an aid to people who are feeble or sick. Barley water is nourishing to invalids and people with poor appetites. It also helps to relieve diarrhea, especially in infants.

This, however, is not the only way to make a mild drink from barley and other grains. The Japanese have also dried and powdered the juice from fresh young barley grass as a “health tonic.” This powder is then combined with water or juice for consumption.

The juice of young barley grass is extremely nutritious. It is reported to contain 16 vitamins, 23 minerals, 18 amino acids and hundreds of active enzymes. It contains 30 times more vitamin B-1 than milk, 6.5 times more carotene (a vitamin A precursor) than spinach, 11 times the calcium of cows milk, nearly 5 times the iron of spinach, 15 times the protein as an equivalent amount of milk and nearly 7 times the vitamin C in oranges. It also contains 80 micrograms of vitamin B-12 per 100 grams, a vitamin nearly impossible to obtain from plant sources.

Barley grass is one of the richest sources of an enzyme called superoxide dismutase (SOD for short). SOD is a free radical scavenger. Free radicals are chemicals which destroy components of the cell causing mutation and aging. Many researchers believe that these free radicals are what cause our bodies to age. They are also implicated in hardening of the arteries, arthritis and even cancer. According to the best selling book Life Extension by Durk Pearson and Sandy Shaw, a study done by Dr. Richard Cutlar, a biophysicist at the National Institute of Aging shows that the life spans of many mammals, including man, were found to be in direct proportion to the levels of SOD in their bodies. Some studies even suggest that SOD may help protect the body from radiation damage.

Dr. Howard Lutz, Director of the Institute for Preventative Medicine in Washington, D.C., recommends that everyone drink a teaspoon of barley juice powder in 8 ounces of water daily, as part of his suggested program for looking 10 years younger. Ann Wigmore has found similar youth-restoring qualities in the use of wheat grass juice. So, the use of juice from young grass shoots may be another form of mild drink which can be made from grains.

Another mild drink that can be made from grains is grain “coffee”. The great statesman of India, Ghandi, made his “coffee” from roasted wheat kernels. Similar drinks have been made from barley and rye. These are often combined with roasted chicory root or dandelion root. These could also be considered “mild drinks” made from grain.
With its fantastic storage capability, its non-poisonous and highly nutritious nature, its versatility and ability to support life, we can see why the Lord called grain (grass) the “staff of life.” We can also see that grains are far more versatile than many of us believe. While it is doubtful that we could sustain our health on bread alone for any great length of time, even if it were whole wheat bread—it does appear that we could temporarily sustain our lives on wheat alone if we ate it in all its forms: grain, grass, sprouts and mild drinks. The time to learn to use our grain in this manner, however, is not after problems arise. The time is now. Especially when leaning on this “staff” of God will give us greater health and strength to meet with the challenges we face today.

Chapter Five Footnotes


4 *Journal of Discourses* 12:191. It may have been this statement which prompted an LDS baker in Utah to use the slogan “the whiter the bread, the sooner you’re dead.” The FDA made him quit, saying the slogan was false advertising.

5 *Conference Reports*, April 5, 1953, p. 84.

6 Haggai 1:5-7


9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., p. 155-156.

11 Ibid., p. 211.


Chapter Six

Flesh of Beasts

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the Lord highly commends the various types of wholesome plant foods for our use, including vegetables (herbs), fruits and grains. The Lord also speaks of meat in the Word of Wisdom in these words:

> Yea, flesh also of beasts, and of the fowls of the air, I, the Lord, have ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving; nevertheless they are to be used sparingly;

> And it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used, only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine.

(D&C 89)

In these verses, the Lord indicates that He permits us to take the lives of animals for food, but with a restriction: “nevertheless they are to be used sparingly.” Note that this is not a suggestion; this is a statement. Animal life is to be used sparingly as a source of food.

Different people, of course, are going to interpret the word sparingly in a different manner. Some might feel that once a day is sparingly, others once a week or once a month, so we need a little more information to properly assess what the Lord means by sparingly.

Winter, Cold and Famine

Fortunately, we have other sources which help to clarify what is meant by sparingly. For starters, verse 13 gives us a clue. In this passage, the Lord informs us that it pleases Him when meat is used for food only in times of winter, cold or famine. In a discourse on the Word of Wisdom given in Nauvoo, Hyrum Smith commented on this passage as follows:

> Let men attend to these instructions, let them use the things ordained of God; let them be sparing of the life of animals; 'it is pleasing saith the Lord that flesh be used only in times of winter, or of famine'-and why to be used in famine? Because all domesticated animals would naturally die, and may as well be made use of by man, as not.  

1

It appears it would be pleasing to the Lord if we restricted our intake of meat only to times when other foods are not available, i.e., winter, cold and famine. Along these lines, President George Albert Smith once stated.

> ...we are told that flesh of any kind is not suitable to man [in] the summer time, and ought to be eaten sparingly in the winter.  

2

Brigham Young interpreted this passage in the same manner:

> Flesh should be used sparingly, in famine and in cold.  

3

The Inspired Version of the Holy Bible provides further support for this interpretation. Through inspiration, Joseph Smith altered the verses in Genesis chapter 9 to read as follows:

> Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.  

> But, the blood of all flesh which I have given you for meat, shall be shed upon the ground, which taketh life thereof, and the blood ye shall not eat.  

> And surely, blood shall not be shed, only for meat, to save your lives; and the blood of every beast will I require at your hands. [emphasis added] (Gen. 9:9-11 inspired version)

One of the key phrases added to this passage is the phrase “to save your lives.” In other words, the Lord permits the eating of meat to preserve (save) our lives. Does this also suggest that if we do not require meat
to sustain our lives (i.e., when there is an abundance of other foods) it would be pleasing to the Lord if we would not shed the blood of animals?

Some scripturians have noted that there is no mention in the scriptures of the Lord approving of meat eating prior to the flood. They have suggested that perhaps the Lord allowed men to add meat to their diets because the climate of the earth was changed after the flood. Perhaps there was not winter or famine prior to that time. President Joseph Fielding Smith intimated that something of this nature may have been the case when he wrote the following:

There is no statement in the scriptures indicating that the flesh of animals and birds and other living creatures was used as food before the days of Noah. It was after the landing of the ark that the Lord gave his commandment concerning the eating of flesh. ¹⁴

Orson Pratt also felt this was the case.

For it will be remembered that animals did not devour one another until after the fall, neither was there any death, until after the fall. What did they eat, then? The Lord said, “To every beast of the field, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat.” The grass, and the herbs, and every green thing were their food. And Adam and Eve ate fruits and vegetables, not animal flesh. ⁵

This hypothesis is strengthened when we realize that there will be no eating of meat during the Millennial after the earth has been renewed to receive its paradisaical glory. After all, if the wolf and the lamb dwell in peace and the lion eats straw like an ox, what makes us think we’ll be enjoying steak? President Joseph Fielding Smith felt this was the case. He stated “in my judgment when the Millennium reaches us, we will live above the need of killing dumb, innocent animals and eating them.” ⁶

**Restrictions on the Shedding of Blood**

Whether such an interpretation is justified or not, it is very clear from the passage in Genesis 9 (Inspired Version) that the Lord does not condone the wanton killing of animals. Rather, He states in plain terms, “And surely, blood shall not be shed, only for meat, to save your lives; and the blood of every beast will I require at your hands.” (Gen. 9:9-11 inspired version)

President Joseph Fielding Smith comments on this passage as follows:

The inference in this interpretation is that the use of the flesh of living creatures should be indulged in sparingly although there is no sin in the shedding of their blood when required for food. There is no inference in the scriptures that it is the privilege of men to slay birds or beasts or catch fish wantonly...

I do not believe any man should kill animals or birds unless he needs them for food, and then he should not kill innocent little birds that are not intended for food for man. I think it is wicked for men to thirst in their souls to kill almost everything which possesses animal life... ⁷

An incident in Church history illustrates the Prophet Joseph Smith’s feelings on this point.

In pitching my tent we found three massasaugas or prairie rattlesnakes, which the brethren were about to kill, but I said, ‘Let them alone—don’t hurt them! How will the serpent ever lose its venom, while the servants of God possess the same disposition, and continue to make war upon it? Men must become harmless before the brute creation, and when men lose their vicious disposition and cease to destroy the animal race, the lion and the lamb can dwell together, and the suckling child can play with the serpent in safety.’ The brethren took the serpents carefully on sticks and carried them across the creek. I exhorted the brethren not to kill a serpent, bird, or any animal during our journey unless it became necessary in order to preserve ourselves from hunger. [emphasis added] ⁸

In the 1978 April conference, President Spencer W. Kimball referred to his own sparing use of meat and in October conference delivered a strong denouncement of killing animals for sport. We need to remember that the Lord has told us “…And wo be unto man that sheddeth blood or that wasteth flesh and hath no need.” (D&C 49:21)

**Eat Meat Sparingly**

Here are some more quotations, which show us how various prophets and presidents of the Church have interpreted the injunction to eat meat sparingly.
President Brigham Young instructed the Sisters in the church to quit feeding their children meat.

Sisters, will you take notice, and instruct those who are not here today, to adopt this rule—stop your children from eating meat, and especially fat meat...⁹

In response to a Church members inquiry about this statement by Brigham Young, President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

This is my answer to you in relation to President Brigham Young’s statement that mothers should not feed their small children meat. Yes! Small children do not need the flesh of animals. May I add also that adults would be better if they would refrain from too much eating of meat. As far as I am concerned the eating of meat should be very sparingly. In fact I will be contented if the Millennium was to be ushered in next week. When it is, we will learn that the eating of meat is not good for us. Why do we feel that we do not have a square meal unless it is based largely on meat. Let the dumb animals live. They enjoy life as well as we do.

In the beginning the Lord granted man the use of the flesh of certain animals. See Genesis 9:1-6, but with so many fruits of the soil and from the trees of the earth, why cannot man be content? Naturally in times of famine the flesh of animals was perhaps a necessity, but in my judgment when the Millennium reaches us, we will live above the need of killing dumb innocent animals and eating them. If we will take this stand in my judgment we may live longer.¹⁰

President Heber J. Grant stated:

I think that another reason why I have very splendid strength for an old man is that during the years we have had a cafeteria in the Utah Hotel I have not, with the exception of not more than a dozen times, ordered meat of any kind. On these special occasions I have mentioned I have perhaps had a small tender lamb chop. I have endeavored to live the Word of Wisdom, and that, in my opinion, is one reason for my good health.¹¹

Vegetarianism

The question might arise, should we be vegetarians. If it pleases the Lord that we refrain from eating meat when there are other foods in abundance, is there any need to eat meat at all when we have an abundance of wholesome plant foods? Many Church members feel that this is not a justifiable position, because of the passages which warn us not to forbid others to eat meat.

And whoso forbiddeth to abstain from meats, that man should not eat the same, is not ordained of God:

For, behold, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which cometh of the earth, is ordained for the use of man for food and for raiment, and that he might have in abundance. (D&C 49:18-19)

In the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron: forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. (1 Tim. 4:1-4)

We might also note that the Lord has assured the saints that if they keep His commandments they are blessed to possess all good things on the earth.

...the fullness of the earth is yours, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which climbeth upon trees and walketh upon the earth;

Yea, and the herb, and the good things which come of the earth, whether for food or for raiment, or for houses, or for barns, or for orchards, or for gardens, or for vineyards;

Yea, all good things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart;

Yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul.

...for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortton. (D&C 59:16-20)

It is clear from these passages that we are not justified in commanding others to abstain from eating meat. On the contrary, it is very clear that the Lord justifies the taking of animal life when it is used for food. However, this does not mean that we have to eat meat. On the contrary, a careful examination of the scriptures will show that no where does the Lord
say that meat is good for the use of man. He says that all wholesome herbs are for our constitution, nature and use. He says that all grain is good for the food of man. He also assures us that all “fruits” whether formed in the ground or above the ground are good for the food of man, but *He never says that meat is good for the food of man.*

Hence, it is entirely possible for an LDS person to be a vegetarian if he/she so chooses. There are quite a few people in the Church who have adopted this stance. It appears that perhaps even a few general authorities have become vegetarians. The author has read reports that Joseph Fielding Smith and John A. Widtsoe were both vegetarians in their latter years. Still, the Lord does not require us to be vegetarians or not to be vegetarians. This matter is left entirely up to us as individuals to decide.

In fact, as a matter of practicality, some persons seem to thrive on a meatless diet, while others grow weak and thin if they do not include some animal protein in their diet. It may partially be a matter of a person’s constitution as to what kinds of foods are required to keep them in good health.

Apparently, this controversy also existed in the early church and the Apostle Paul counseled the Saints in his day as follows:

> Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.
>
> For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.
>
> Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. (Rom. 14:1-3)

At first glance, it appears that Paul felt that vegetarians were “weak in the faith.” However, we have noted that some of our own general authorities have been vegetarians in there later years and it hardly seems appropriate to judge them as weak in the faith. This may have simply been Paul’s opinion, reflecting his own dietary preferences. There is also another interpretation. Many people who are physically weak (ill or sickly) have adopted a vegetarian diet for health reasons.

Whichever is the case, Paul wisely observed that meat-eaters often despise (or ridicule) the “herb-eating” vegetarians. Vegetarian fare is often referred to as “rabbit-food” and the vegetarian him/herself is labeled a crank or a faddist. On the other hand, vegetarians often judge (or condemn) the meat-eaters. They feel that the meat-eater is not spiritual enough or righteous enough because he fails to recognize the “higher” principle of vegetarianism. Paul wisely notes that these things ought not to be in the Lord’s Church. Whether we eat or don’t eat meat, God has received us into His kingdom. So, should we not receive each other in the spirit of tolerance and love, just as Christ has received us? “For”, as Paul says, “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” He continues by saying that the person who serves Christ in this manner “is acceptable to God” whether he eats meat or not. (Rom. 14:17-18)

Meat eating is not a sin; the scriptures indicate that the resurrected Christ ate a piece of broiled fish.

> They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.
>
> “And he took it, and did eat before them.” (Luke 24:42-43)

So, whether we eat meat or not does not appear to have an impact on our eternal salvation. However, we are commanded not to shed blood if we have no need, and we are also commanded to receive all our food with thankfulness to God. As long as we adhere to these restrictions, it appears that God will justify us in using the flesh of beasts and fowls for food.

Still, if we want to have the promised blessings of good health, we must follow the admonition to eat meat sparingly. Perhaps we would all be better off if we followed the example of Alma in the Book of Mormon.

> And it came to pass that the man received Alma into his house; and the man was called Amulek; and he brought forth bread and meat and set before Alma.
>
> And it came to pass that Alma ate bread and was filled; and he blessed Amulek and his house, and he gave thanks unto God. (Alma 8:21-22)
Chapter Six Footnotes

4. Joseph Fielding Smith, President of the Council of the Twelve, "Is it a Sin to Kill Animals Wantonly?", *Your Question Answered*, The Improvement Era, August 1951.
7. Joseph Fielding Smith, "Is it a Sin to Kill Animals Wantonly?"
8. *History of the Church* 2:71
10. President Joseph Fielding Smith, Personal Letter
Chapter Seven

Clean and Unclean

In our previous chapter we discussed the fact that the Lord has instructed us to eat meat sparingly. However, not all meats nor all parts of an animal are healthful to eat. In addition, there are ways in which meat may be prepared which make it more or less healthful for human consumption.

The Lord revealed many of these principles to His prophet Moses, who recorded them for our benefit. Many people feel that we no longer need to give heed to these principles, because we are no longer required to live the law of Moses. However, many of these laws are as applicable to us today as they were then. Let us not forget that the Lord promised His people would be free of all disease if they obeyed these laws. Since we are not free of all disease yet, maybe we still have something to learn from these laws.

Clean and Unclean

Through Moses, the Lord told the children of Israel that some beasts were clean (fit for human consumption) while other beasts were unclean (not fit for human consumption). (Lev. 11, Deut. 14:3-21)

Among beasts (mammals) only animals which part the hoof (or in other words were cloven footed) and which also chewed the cud were considered clean. Hence, oxen, sheep, goats and deer were considered clean, while camels, rabbits and swine were considered unclean.

In the realm of seafood, only those creatures which had both fins and scales were clean. This made all forms of shellfish, including shrimp, crab, lobster, oysters and clam, unclean.

Birds of prey were unclean such as eagles, vultures, owls, pelicans, storks and bats. Also forbidden were birds with webbed feet such as ducks and geese. Other forbidden animals were weasels, mice, turtles, lizards, snails and moles. Certain insects were permitted, however.

The Lord instructed His people that they were to observe the difference between these clean and unclean beasts because he wanted them to be a holy (whole and healthy) people.

Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean.

And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine. (Lev. 20:25-26)

The idea of clean and unclean animals predates the law of Moses. The Lord recognized that there were clean and unclean beasts when He gave the following commandment to Noah.

Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. (Gen. 7:2)

Writings of the Apostle Paul in the New Testament seem to suggest that these restrictions were symbolic.

I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. (Rom. 14:14)

For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. (I Tim. 4:1-5)

This raises an interesting question. Were these laws arbitrary or did God have valid reasons for commanding His children to avoid certain types of meat? If we examine the differences between the animals considered clean and animals labeled unclean, we will find that there were good reasons for these restrictions.
The unclean animals are primarily scavengers which will eat dead animals or decaying matter. Those animals which “chew the cud” are grass feeders primarily. They are lower on the food chain. Animals which feed on other animals or on petrified matter are more likely to be carriers of harmful parasites and diseases.

Just because we are not required to keep the law of Moses, doesn’t mean that we can go out and eat dogs, cats, bats, vultures and other similar animals and expect to remain healthy. Some meats are better for our bodies than others. Even today, we often hear nutritionists recommending fish or poultry over red meat because they feel it is “healthier” to eat. Is it possible that the Lord was doing a similar thing in differentiating between clean and unclean beasts?

Furthermore, it is a scientific fact that pesticide residues and environmental poisons concentrate in animal tissue the higher up the food chain one goes. This is why birds of prey such as eagles and falcons have been some of the first animals to suffer damage from pesticide and herbicide residues. Being lower down the food chain, the clean animals of the law of Moses are likely to have less of these contaminants in their tissues.

Let’s examine closely two types of meat we commonly consume today which were forbidden by the law of Moses: pork and shellfish.

**Swine’s Flesh**

Abstaining from pork is not a commandment for Church members, but this does not mean that pork is healthful to eat. Many people have felt that pork is not a healthful meat since pigs are very prone to parasites. Brigham Young was one who felt that pork was not a healthful meat to eat.

A thorough reformation is needed in regard to our eating and drinking, and on this point I will freely express myself; and shall be glad if the people will hear, believe and obey. *If the people were willing to receive the true knowledge from heaven in regard to their diet they would cease eating swine’s flesh.* I know this as well as Moses knew it, and without putting it in a code of commandments. When I tell you that it is the will of the Lord to cease eating swine’s flesh, very likely one will tell you that it is the will of the Lord to stop eating beef and mutton, and another that it is the will of the Lord to stop eating fowl and fish until the minds of the people become bewildered, so that they know not how to decide between right and wrong, truth and error. [emphasis added.]

Apparently we are not willing to receive true knowledge from heaven, for we continue to eat pork and assume it is good for us. However, Brigham Young did not want to put this into a code of commandments because people tend to become Pharisaical about such things, which leads to confusion. President Young was not alone in these admonitions. George Albert Smith also felt that swine’s flesh was not good to eat.

There is another subject under consideration, which weighs very heavily upon the minds of the Saints. The Word of Wisdom recommends us to use the flesh of animals sparingly. The law of Moses prohibited Israel the use of swine’s flesh; but in the Gentile world at the present day it is considered superior, as food, to almost every other kind of flesh. And even among us, with the education and training that we have received, there is a great deal of it used. It seems to be a pretty general idea among the people that swine’s flesh can be more easily raised than any other; but there is no doubt that, with proper care and attention, other kinds of meat might be produced with equal facility. For some reason God, by special law, prohibited its use to the children of Israel; and it certainly seems desirable that we should also discontinue its use, as within the past few years in some countries where a great amount of pork has been consumed the people have been afflicted with a kind of pestilence—a disease which is considered incurable. It is therefore wise and prudent for us to adopt plans to procure supplies from other sources.

We are told that swine’s flesh is not good, and that we should dispense with it...

Heber C. Kimball also expressed his concern over the eating of pork.

Let us be faithful and humble and keep the commandments; and if we will eat meat, let us eat that which is mild. I am inclined to think that pig meat is not good...

Avoiding partaking of pork and other unclean meats may not simply be part of an outdated Mo-
It is wise counsel for the latter-days as well. Isaiah prophesied that those who defiled themselves with unclean foods would be consumed by the glory of the second coming of the Lord.

They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine’s flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord. (Isa. 66:17)

Shellfish

Not all sea creatures are healthful to eat, either. Only those creatures with fins and scales were permitted by the law of Moses. Sea foods like oysters, clams, mussels, shrimp, lobster and crab were forbidden. Like the scavengers on the land, these creatures are unclean feeders. They are the vultures and hawks of the sea, living off of the refuse of that ecosystem.

Shellfish, like birds of prey, concentrate environmental pollutants in their bodies. Because of this, those who gather these shellfish must be extremely careful not to collect them from polluted waters. The Food & Drug Administration has published warnings about this. Mercury, lead and pesticide residues get concentrated in these foods and considering the polluted nature of today’s world, it may be wise for us to refrain from these foods just as they did in the days of Moses.

Healthier Meats

Like many modern nutritionists, Brigham Young felt some meats were more healthful than others.

The beef fed upon our mountain grasses is as healthy food as we need at present. Beef, so fattened, is as good as wild meat, and is quite different in its nature from stall-fed meat. But we can eat fish; and I ask the people of this community, Who hinders you from raising fowls for their eggs? ...Fish is as healthy a food as we can eat, if we except vegetables and fruit, and with them will become a very wholesome diet.5

Note that Brigham Young felt that beef fed on grass was better than beef raised in the stall and recommended fish and eggs over beef. George Albert Smith also felt that fish and poultry were more healthful meats to eat. Persons have also been employed to re-stock the rivers, and in this way many choice varieties of fish have been again successfully introduced. The real fact is, they are as easily raised as hogs, if the proper attention is paid to them. Our beautiful lakes—such as Utah Lake and Bear Lake,—our rivers, and even our springs can, with a very little trouble and expense, be made to yield an immense quantity of this healthful food.

You can feed fish as well as hogs, and they will eat a great many things you are little aware of, and with a little trouble you can procure that which will furnish an agreeable and healthy change in our diet.

I also wish to advise our brethren,—the Bishops especially, to consider the propriety of taking proper measures for the production of poultry. Their flesh is agreeable and much more healthful as food than using great quantities of pork, as we are compelled to do in many instances.6

George Albert Smith may have taken some of these ideas from Joseph Smith, for he recorded the following in his journal.

We passed through Greencastle, and Joseph here directed us to get a supply of dried codfish. He said fish was healthier to eat than meat, and the use of fish in warm weather was not prohibited in the Word of Wisdom.7

It would appear that if we wish to have a high level of health, we should give preference to eggs, fish and poultry over red meat. Many nutritionists would concur that eating more poultry and fish in place of red meat, especially fatty red meat, would be of benefit to us. There is also growing evidence that animals that are raised on pasture are much healthier than those raised in feed lots (what Brigham Young referred to as "stall-fed"). Good quality grass-fed milk, eggs and meat has less cholesterol, more of the good kinds of fats our body needs and a better over-all nutritional profile.

Blood and Fat

The Lord also gave explicit warnings that the children of Israel were not to partake of the blood or fat of animals forever.
It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings that ye eat neither fat nor blood. (Lev. 3:17)

In this era of rampant heart disease, we can readily see the Lord’s wisdom in having the children of Israel avoid partaking of animal fat. Animal fat is a saturated fat, rich in cholesterol. It tends to promote the build-up of fatty deposits in the body and greatly increases our risk of heart disease, cancer and obesity.

Instead of eating the fat of the animal, the children of Israel were commanded to burn it upon the alter or to seethe the meat in liquid until the fat was boiled off.

One of the sins of the sons of Eli was that they took the meat offered for sacrifices before the fat had been burned away. They were told “Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth.” (1 Sam. 2:12-17) However the young men continued to take the meat before it had been properly seethed according to the law of Moses. The Lord rebuked Eli for allowing his sons to do this thing as follows: “Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honorest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people.” (1 Sam. 2:29)

It appears that Eli may have partaken of the forbidden fat himself, for we read that when Eli died from falling off his seat backwards and breaking his neck, that “he was an old man and heavy.” (1 Sam. 4:18)

Today, even the most conservative of nutritionists know that lean meat is better for our health than fatty meat. Isn’t it good to know that the Lord warned us that we should not eat animal fat long before modern nutritionists were around?

The Lord also strongly forbade the eating of blood, as the following passages of scripture testify:

Only be sure that thou eat not the blood for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh. Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water. Thou shalt not eat it that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the Lord. (Deut. 12:23-25)

Moreover ye shall eat no manner of blood, whether it be of fowl or of beast, in any of your dwellings.

Whatsoever soul it be that eateth any manner of blood, even that soul shall be cut off from his people. (Lev. 7:26-27)

And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people.

For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, no soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood.

And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust.

For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof; therefore I said unto the children of Israel, ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off. (Lev. 17:10-14)

This commandment was never withdrawn. Even though the apostles determined not to lay the heavy yoke of obedience to the many laws of Moses on the gentile converts to Christianity, they still warned them: “Abstain from blood and things strangled. (Acts 15:29)

The Lord here instructs that when an animal is slain its blood should be drained upon the ground. Although most of us are not likely to eat or drink animal blood, we do need to be aware of the fact that much of today’s meat is not processed correctly. Many animals are shocked or electrocuted and the blood is not thoroughly drained from them before slaughter. In fact, retaining the blood makes the meat heavier, darker and redder and hence more appealing in the marketplace. So, animals are usually slaughtered deliberately in a manner that retains more of the blood in the tissues. This may be one reason
why it would be wise to avoid eating very much red meat in our modern world, especially when we do not know if the animal was properly slain.

Perhaps we also need to consider carefully what the Lord meant when he said that those who partake of these things would be “cut off” from among the people. This sounds like they were to be separated or excommunicated from the congregation. However, the Lord’s blessings and cursings for obedience and disobedience to law are not limited to the actions of man. It is at least probable that these passages refer to people dying due to the effects of eating these things. In other words, people who disobey the commandments of God are “cut off” from his people by disease and premature death. Also, their ability to produce healthy generations of offspring (remember Pottenger’s cats) may also be impaired, so their names may be “cut off” from Israel because they have no children to receive their inheritance.

The Meat Industry

Far more important than how an animal is slaughtered, is how it was treated while it lived. There were laws in the Old Testament forbidding cruel treatment of animals. Today’s meat industry seems to specialize in animal cruelty. Animals are packed into tight cages with little room to move. They are fed food packed with hormones, antibiotics and chemicals designed to plump up the meat faster and make a bigger profit. All this is done to supply the heavy demand for meat among modern people. Is this cruel treatment of animals to satisfy our desire for animal flesh justifiable in the eyes of God? I doubt it.

We are also continually reassured that these methods do not affect the nutritional content of the meat, but is this really the case? The two-time Nobel prize winner, Dr. Alexis Carrol, who headed up the Rockefeller Research Institute did not think so. He warned that our agricultural practices were changing the nutritional value of our foods.

The staple foods may not contain the same nutritive substances as in former times... Hens have been compelled, by artificial diet and mode of living, to enter the ranks of mass producers. Has not the quality of their eggs been modified? The same question may be asked about milk, because cows are now confined to the stable all the year round, and are fed on manufactured provender. Hygienists have not paid sufficient attention to the genesis of diseases. Their studies of conditions of life and diet, and of their effects on the physiological and mental state of modern man, are superficial, incomplete, and of too short duration. They have, thus, contributed to the weakening of our bodies and our souls. And they leave us without protection against the degenerative diseases, the diseases resulting from civilization.

Even if the quality of meat is not affected by the way these animals are raised, the moral issue still exists. God created all things that they might have joy in their proper sphere and element. That may be why he is pleased when we refrain from eating animal flesh when it is not necessary for food. Do we really believe that God is pleased when he sees animals being treated like machines on an assembly line. Visit a modern egg “factory” or other commercial animal farming production and ask yourself if God would be pleased with the way we are treating these animals, which he created.

Raw Meat

There is one final consideration to be made concerning the eating of meat. The proteins in meat are readily denatured and rendered unusable by heat. This is one of the truths that Pottenger learned in his experiments with cats. (See chapter 3.) This is explained by Dr. Henry Bieler, M.D. in his book, Food Is Your Best Medicine. According to Dr. Bieler. When meat is eaten in its raw, natural state it does not produce as much putrefactive waste in the body. Cooking meat re-arranges its protein structure making it more difficult to digest and assimilate.

This helps explain a very interesting passage in the Book of Mormon. Lehi and his family were forced to eat raw meat in the wilderness because the Lord did not wish them to build fires. They said he made the meat taste sweet to them and that their women were strong and able to nurse properly. Commenting on this, Nephi said:

...And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide
means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them... (1 Ne. 17:3)

In *Food Is Your Best Medicine*, Dr. Bieler further states that many people have lived on raw meat and remained perfectly healthy, provided the meat was “clean” and free from parasites. However, many people today do get parasitic infections from consuming raw meat and these can make a person very ill. Hence, it is not advisable to consume raw meat. Even Dr. Bieler and Dr. Pottenger felt that this was the case. However, it is important to not overcook meat as this makes the protein therein difficult to digest and assimilate. Both Dr. Bieler and Dr. Pottenger felt that the best way to eat meat was rare, that is, only lightly cooked.

Actually, the best ways to cook meat are the methods mentioned in the Old Testament. The first is roasting or cooking the meat over a flame. This allows the fat to drain from the meat and be burned in the fire. Broiling accomplishes the same thing in our modern ovens. Many modern nutritionists feel that broiled (especially flame broiled) meat is healthier than fried meat.

The second method used in Old Testament times was seething or slow cooking the meat in water. This is equivalent to cooking the meat in a crock pot or slow cooker until it is tender and juicy. However, the fat which is seethed off from the meat should not be eaten (i.e., made into broth and gravy) but should be discarded. Remember the experience of Eli and his sons cited above.

Bieler and others have also found that eating generous portions of raw and cooked non-starchy vegetables helped the body get rid of any waste material created by eating this meat. Maybe this is why God commanded the children of Israel to eat “bitter herbs” with their Passover lamb. These bitter herbs (non-starchy) vegetables may have helped the body digest the meat properly by stimulating the flow of bile and other digestive secretions. They may also have helped the body remove the acidic wastes produced in protein metabolism since bitter plants tend to be highly alkalizing in the body. Try eating your meat with lots of salad and notice how quickly it digests.

Maybe we have been too quick to judge some of the Mosaic laws as being of no worth to us in modern times. Dr. Robert Mendelsohn, an outspoken advocate of nutrition and alternative medicine, believed that in their “zeal to reject the Old Testament dietary laws, some of the early Christian leaders moved too far in the opposite direction” and lost sight of the connection between diet and health. Maybe we have done the same thing. Perhaps it is time to take a second look at these Old Testament dietary laws and see if we can’t benefit from them in our modern world.

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**Chapter Seven Footnotes**

1. *Journal of Discourses*, 12:54-55
5. *Journal of Discourses*, 12:54-55
8. Such as Deuteronomy, 25:4
10. *Food Is Your Best Medicine*, pp.190-191
11. *Food Is Your Best Medicine*, p. 191
Chapter Eight

Prudence and Thanksgiving

God has promised us the “fullness of the earth” if we obey his laws, but he expects us to use all the things he has given us wisely.

Verily I say, that inasmuch as ye do this, the fullness of the earth is yours...

Yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and use of man...

And it pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion. [emphasis added.] (D&C 59:16-20)

The Word of Wisdom uses similar wording. It indicates that all wholesome fruits and herbs (vegetables) were made to be used with “prudence and thanksgiving.” Although God has created food for our benefit, He expects us to use judgment and prudence in partaking of it. He expects us to use all the things He has created in this manner, including our own bodies.

To aid us in this task, God has provided our bodies with instincts which help us to recognize what is pleasing, useful and good. These instincts are part of something we call “common sense” and should be heeded if we are to enjoy good health. For example, our bodies will tell us when they are tired and require rest. If we are exercising judgment and prudence, then we will give it rest. Our bodies have also been provided with an appestat, which tells us when the body requires food and when it has received enough food. This should also be given some attention.

In this chapter, we will examine some of these laws of common sense. We can learn by listening to the messages our own bodies are trying to give us. These are some of the hardest of all health laws to live, but they also reap some marvelous blessings when they are obeyed.

Not to Excess

Brigham Young once stated “Work less, wear less, eat less, and we shall be a great deal wiser, healthier, and wealthier people than by taking the course we now do.”1 He also said that “Excessive eating, drinking, or exercise all tend to the grave.”2

We often tend to overdo things, especially when it comes to food. Overeating is a common problem in our affluent society. Overeating is a sin against our own bodies. It is the sin called gluttony and many of us could repent of this indulgence.

The body can only handle a certain amount of food at one time. Taking in more food than the body can comfortably digest places stress on our digestive organs. As a result, our bodies become overtaxed and weakened. This leads to sickness and disease. Brigham Young understood this principle very well:

Satisfying the appetite brings to an end the pleasure of eating; and where food is partaken of chiefly to gratify the pleasurable sensation derived from eating, disease is engendered, and true misery springs out of this unwise gratification. Some healthy persons with strong constitutions can eat large quantities of food with apparent impunity; but, in so doing, the tax they place upon their systems will ultimately bring disease and death.3

Studies suggest that eating less may actually prolong life. Laboratory animals whose food intake was deliberately reduced actually increased in life span. Research has shown that the restriction of calories (20-70% less than the animals would eat if given food freely) consistently prolongs survival by 30-40%, provided that the diet remains properly balanced.4
Little children will naturally avoid overeating when provided with plenty of wholesome, natural foods. In fact, as soon as their appetite is satiated, they will immediately start playing with their food or want to leave the table. Unfortunately, as we grow older, we become socialized to eat what is on our plates and ignore our appestats. We have been taught not to let that food on our plates go to waste. Unfortunately, when we eat beyond the point where the appetite is satiated, the food often goes to “waist” anyway in the form of body fat.

Seriously, if you will pay close attention to your body, you will find that your body will signal you when it has had enough food. It will do this in a couple of ways.

First, you will no longer feel hungry. You will feel physically satisfied. You will no longer feel a need to eat. You may still have a psychological want to eat, but you will no longer physically crave food. When this state is reached, you may notice that your body will give a little sigh of satisfaction and relief. When your body gives that little sigh of satisfaction, the appetite has been satiated. Push yourself back from the table and do not eat another bite.

Secondly, you will notice a subtle change in the taste and smell of the food. It will begin to lose some of its flavor. This is a signal that the body has received a sufficient amount of that food. This signal is much stronger with raw food than with cooked food. As an experiment sometime, sit down and try to stuff yourself full of raw apples. You will find that long before you ever get full, you will reach a point where the apples no longer even taste good. In fact, you may find it impossible to force yourself to even eat one more bite. Although it is not as noticeable with cooked food, this instinct is still present if you pay close attention to it. Brigham Young alluded to this phenomenon in the above quote when he stated, “satisfying the appetite brings to an end the pleasure of eating.” It is true. Pay attention to your body and you will discover it for yourself.

**The Body Needs Regular Nourishment**

Of course, this does not mean we should starve. It is important that we eat on a regular basis as the body needs constant nourishment. Brigham Young understood this well.

I do not mean to go without food and go to fasting. This is the other extreme. A sufficient amount of food that will agree with the stomach is healthy, and should be partaken of. Aged or middle aged, youth or children, never should go without food until their stomachs are faint, demanding something to sustain their systems, and continue to undergo this; for this lays the foundation of weakness, and this weakness will tempt disease. But keep the stomach in a perfectly healthy condition. Now I do not mean fasting, but eating moderately; and if my sisters will go home and commence to adopt this rule, you will find that you begin to get better, your children and neighbors will get better.

The wisest rule for eating is to eat only when we are genuinely hungry and then eat only enough to satisfy that hunger and no more. This is expressed in this statement by a modern naturopath, Hakim Chishti.

The most important law concerning diet is this: never eat unless there is a true hunger. When a true and ready appetite appears, the meal should be taken soon afterward and not delayed...

Waiting to eat until we are have true hunger and then eating only enough to satisfy that hunger is listening to the laws God has built into our bodies. It is one way of using food with prudence and not to excess.

**In the Season Thereof**

Both D&C 89 and D&C 59 contain the phrase “in the season thereof.” Some interpreters of the Word of Wisdom have felt that this counsel applied only in the days before modern canning and preserving methods. However, canned and preserved fruits and vegetables are not the nutritional equivalents of fresh, raw, fully ripened foods. The research of Price and Pottenger as discussed in chapter three shows that cooked and processed foods cannot sustain life in the same manner that whole, unprocessed foods can.

Furthermore, as an all-wise creator, wouldn’t God have caused various plants to mature in the season of the year when it was most beneficial to eat them? For
example, the Word of Wisdom suggests that meat is primarily a cold-weather food. Is it not possible that many fruits and vegetables are hot-weather foods? Is it really good for our bodies to eat tropical fruits in the dead of winter in cold, northern climates? Many modern health writers don’t feel that this is the case.

Dorothy Hall, an Australian naturopath, has this to say about eating fruits and vegetables “in the season thereof.”

…stone-fruits and grapes appear in late summer and early autumn in whichever country they are grown; squash, marrow and pumpkin is ready to eat during the cold months of winter; cabbage sees early winter through, too, but sweet melons ripen in the last days of the scorching heat of summer.

We’re supposed to eat things when the time and season is right, and our bodies have been imprinted with this genetic pattern for thousands of years. Man has become clever, though, and it is now possible to eat imported grapes when snow is on the ground, watermelons in icy, windy weather, and fresh berries in spring instead of autumn. ‘Eat natural’ is to eat fruits and vegetables in season, realizing that human tides go in and out as do nature.

Hakim Chishti, has similar advice.

Another important consideration is to eat foods in season. You may be able to obtain all manner of foods throughout the year, but your body will accommodate these foods best if they are eaten mainly in the season when they are harvested. It upsets the temperaments to eat strawberries in winter, for example, for it is an early summer fruit. Likewise, cucumbers—a cooling vegetable—should be avoided in winter. The natural cycles of the region in which we live support the biolife that is suitable for people living there. Eskimos seldom, if ever, eat bananas.

Hakim Chisti lived for a time in Afghanistan, where one had to eat what was “in season” because nothing else was available. He observed that eating foods in their proper season made people healthier and more robust. I have noted similar benefits in my own life. As a side benefit, foods are lowest in cost when they are in season. So, eating foods in season can help save on one’s grocery budget.

**Eat Simple Meals**

Brigham Young thought that the Americans of his day ate too many kinds of food and ate too quickly.

The Americans, as a nation, are killing themselves with their vices and high living. As much as a man ought to eat in half an hour they swallow in three minutes, gulping down their food like the canine quadruped under the table, which, when a chunk of meat is thrown down to it, swallows it before you can say “twice.” If you want a reform, carry out the advice I have just given you. Dispense with your multitudinous dishes, and depend upon it, you will do much towards preserving your families from sickness, disease and death.

If this method were adopted in this community, I will venture to say that it would add ten years to the lives of our children. That is worth a great deal.

George Q. Cannon also felt we ate too many kinds of food at one meal as well.

But whilst I speak in this strain about a variety of food, I am opposed in my own feelings, to a great variety of food at one meal. I believe that we enslave our women; we crush out their lives by following the pernicious habits of our forefathers in this respect. We sit down to table, and especially if we have friends, our tables are covered with every delicacy and variety that we can think of. I believe in variety at different meals, but not at one meal. I do not believe in mixing up our food. This is hurtful. It destroys the stomach by overtaxing the digestive powers; and in addition to that it almost wears out the lives of our females by keeping them so closely confined over cooking stoves. A variety of food is not incompatible with simplicity of cooking; they can go hand in hand. We can have a variety in diet, and yet have simplicity. We can have a diet that will be easily prepared, and yet have it healthful. We can have a diet, that will be tasteful, nutritious and delightful to us, and easy to digest...

Numerous modern health writers have addressed the subject of food combining. They have indicated that eating too many types of food at one meal taxes the digestive powers and leads to problems such as acid stomach, heartburn, burping, belching, gas, bloating and other digestive system disturbances. Generally, they recommend that fruits should be eaten alone on
an empty stomach and that one should avoid heavy starches and proteins at the same meal.

One does not have to follow a rigid system of food combining rules to be healthy, but prudence would dictate that we should avoid any combination of foods which causes digestive disturbances. Eating simple meals is a wise thing to do. Not only will it improve our health, it also saves time and energy in the kitchen.

**Agricultural Concerns**

The laws God gave to Moses contained guidelines for practices such as “land Sabbaths” where every seven years the land was to lie fallow and be allowed to rest. Every 49 years, the land was to lie fallow for two years. The Lord also forbade the sowing of “mingled” or hybrid seed.

There was good reason for these practices. The health of the plants depends on the health of the soil in which they are grown. If we do not take good care of the land, then it will erode away and deteriorate in quality. We are not taking care of the land in this country. Agricultural practices are allowing our precious topsoil to erode at an alarming rate. One estimate is that about 30 billion tons of topsoil are washed away each year. Deterioration of the land leads to a deterioration of the food supply, which causes our own health to degenerate.

While traditional peoples returned plant and animal waste to the soil, thus replenishing the supply of minerals, our modern agriculture focuses only on replacing major plant nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus. Normally, farmers make no attempt to replace or add minerals like zinc, iodine and selenium to the soil. Hence, each generation of plants removes minerals from the soil which are never replaced.

Furthermore, our modern chemical farming methods “sterilize” the soil with chemicals: artificial fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides and pesticides. These chemicals destroy the microscopic life of the soil that breaks down the organic matter into natural fertilizer. It is the microorganisms in the soil which help the plants absorb minerals from the soil. As these microbes are destroyed by chemicals, plants are unable to absorb the minerals they need to be healthy and strong. They become less resistant to insect damage and disease and require larger doses of chemicals to protect them.

Because of this problem we are losing twice as much of our crops to insects as we were prior to World War II—14% as compared to 7%! In that same period of time insecticide use has increased ten-fold. This shows that the natural immunity of the plants is weakening and that weakness is being passed up the food chain to us. The primary problem here is lack of minerals.

If you wish to read more about this problem, an excellent book was recently published called *Empty Harvest*. It was co-authored by Dr. Bernard Jensen and Mark Anderson. This book will help anyone understand why the health of the soil and the environment are essential for our own health and well-being.

The result of our agricultural practices is a dramatic decline in the mineral content of our foods. This fact is borne out by a four-year study cited in *World Health and Ecology* in 1976 involving 4000 grain samples from 10 midwestern states. These samples were analyzed for their mineral content. It was discovered that the mineral content of corn samples dropped significantly over the four-year period. The calcium content dropped 41%, the copper content 68%, iron 26%, sodium 55%, magnesium 22%, potassium 28%, zinc, 10% and manganese 8%. Even phosphorus (which is added in commercial fertilizers) was down 8%. This demonstrates that we are destroying the plant’s ability to absorb even the minerals we apply in commercial fertilizers.

A more recent study compared the mineral content of organically grown snap beans, cabbage, tomatoes, lettuce and spinach with their commercially grown counterparts. The results clearly indicated that organically grown produce was superior in mineral content to commercially grown produce. Organically grown spinach, for example, had nearly twice the phosphorus content, twice the calcium content, five times the magnesium content and three times the potassium content of its commercially grown counterparts.
counterpart. Even more amazing, organically grown spinach contained nearly 100 times more iron than commercially grown spinach.

Many highly intelligent and well-respected scientists have recognized that our agricultural practices make a difference in the nutritional value of our foods. In the 1930’s Dr. Alexis Carrol, head of the Rockefeller Research Institute, warned that “the staple foods may not contain the same nutritive substances as in former times.” He recognized that “Chemical fertilizers, by increasing the abundance of the crops without replacing all the exhausted elements of the soil, have indirectly contributed to a change in the nutritive value of cereal grains and of vegetables.” 11

Brigham Young could see that the wickedness of the people in his day was causing agricultural problems.

Right in the very land where the Book of Mormon came forth, and was translated by Joseph, there has not been an apple grown for this dozen years without a worm in the center, as I have been told by men who live there. The worm is in the center of all there is there, and it will canker and eat them until they are consumed. Wherever this work has been, and the powers of darkness have succeeded in driving the Priesthood, I can tell you that desolation and ruin, the abomination of desolation will follow. But where the Saints cultivate the soil, the Lord will bless it and cause it to bring forth.12

How much greater is the problem in our day? I have personally noticed a decline in the quality of the produce available from the supermarket. Peaches, grapes, carrots and other vegetables do not have the same rich flavor they once had. Maybe this is one of the reasons we have been counseled to grow our own vegetable gardens. Anyone who has eaten a tomato from their own garden knows that produce from their own garden can be far superior in flavor to commercially grown produce from the store. If we are using proper gardening techniques, it appears it will also be superior in nutritional value.

We are not dealing with the letter of the law in the matters we have been discussing. God expects us to take good care of the tabernacles He has provided for us. They are the temples of the Spirit. Hence, we need to pay attention to the signals which our bodies give us. Pains, aches, discomfort, dulled thinking and other minor discomforts are not without cause. They are signals that we have violated the laws of our nature—just as the pain we feel when we touch a hot stove tells us we have violated the laws of our nature. These disturbances are teachers. If we will pay attention to the subtle clues of the laws which God has written into our instincts, we can gradually come to avoid all harmful influences and cleave only to those influences which are positive and wholesome.

That is real wisdom.

Chapter Eight Footnotes
1 Discourses of Brigham Young, p. 187
2 Ibid., p. 182
3 Ibid., p.182
5 Discourses of Brigham Young, p. 188
8 The Traditional Healer, p. 50.
9 Journal of Discourses 13: 154
10 Ibid., 12: 223
11 Man The Unknown p. 116
12 Journal of Discourses 12:54
Chapter Nine

Walking in Obedience

The Word of Wisdom promises its blessings to “all Saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments...” In other words, obeying the Word of Wisdom is not the only commandment we have to obey to obtain the complete blessing of health. That blessing is promised to those who obey the Word of Wisdom in addition to the rest of God’s commandments.

Spiritual sin has an affect on our physical well-being as is evidenced by the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson.

Sin debilitates; it affects not only the soul but the body. The scriptures are replete with examples of the physical power that can attend the righteous. On the other hand, unrepented sin can diffuse energy and lead to both mental and physical sickness. Disease, fevers, and unexpected deaths are some of the things that have been directly related to disobedience. Jesus healed a man of a physical malady and then told him in John, chapter 5, verse 14, to “sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.” Galahad said that his strength was as the strength of ten because his heart was pure.1

We won’t discuss all of God’s commandments here, but all of them will have some effect on our health and well-being, since the body and spirit are joined together. In this chapter, however, we will point out some of the commandments and advice from the scriptures and prophets which is directly related to matters of physical health.

Exercise

In the beginning, God commanded man that he should earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. The scriptures don’t talk much about exercise because people of the past had to labor physically to survive. They had to clear fields, plow, plant and harvest, build and mend fences, homes and barns, tend flocks and herds. Hence, physical labor was a part of their everyday life.

Today, however, many of us sit at desks all day. We are a sedentary people. Truthfully, we are a lazy people. We spend much of our time and effort trying to earn the money to buy more labor-saving devices. We go out of our way to avoid having to walk or climb stairs. Hence, we become overweight and out of shape. If we had to pull a handcart across the plains as some of the early Mormon pioneers did, we’d probably never make it.

Regular physical activity is vital to a healthy flow of blood and lymph. It burns calories and improves our outlook on life. That is why our modern prophet President Benson has counseled us to obtain some exercise.

The body needs the toning up that comes from exercise. Walking in the fresh air can be exhilarating and refreshing. Properly directed running can have some beneficial effects. Simple sit-ups or sporting activity can be helpful.2

This exercise need not be exhausting and strenuous; it just needs to be regular. There are many books you can read which will give your more information on the benefits of regular exercise, so we need not discuss it further here.

Adequate Rest

Brigham Young cautioned us to “be wise in our work and not labor beyond our strength.”3 He also warned us that many of us try to push our bodies beyond our natural strength by means of stimulants.
Instead of doing two days’ work in one day, wisdom would dictate to our sisters, and to every other person, that if they desire long life and good health, they must, after sufficient exertion, allow the body to rest before it is entirely exhausted. When exhausted, some argue that they need stimulants in the shape of tea, coffee, spirituous liquors, tobacco, or some to those narcotic substances which are often taken to goad on the lagging powers to greater exertions. But instead of these kind of stimulants they should recruit by rest.

In modern times, President Benson has reaffirmed the need for us to obtain proper rest in these words:

Adequate early rest is best. In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 88, verse 124, the Lord commands: “Cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated.” There are too many enticements to late evening activities. Not only can this weary the body, but a wearied body may be more susceptible to improper activities in the darkness and lateness of the night. Early to bed and early to rise is still good counsel, and a brief nap during the day can be recuperative.

Many of us work too hard in these modern times. This is often due to our desire to acquire more “creature comforts” rather than out of a real need to supply our actual needs for food, clothing and shelter. When our bodies are tired and need rest, many of us today reach for a cola drink, a candy bar or some other sugar “fix” to stimulate our bodies to keep going beyond their natural strength. We need to consider what good it will do to acquire comforts and possessions if we drop dead of a heart attack or stroke or suffer a nervous breakdown because we have pushed ourselves too hard for too long.

Let us not forget the counsel of the wise king Benjamin in this matter and the counsel of the Lord to the Prophet Joseph Smith.

And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. (Mosiah 4:27)

Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength and means provided... (D&C 10:4)

**Environmental Concerns**

Our environment plays an important role in our health. Air and water pollution undermine our health and may be important factors in the chronic and degenerative diseases such as cancer. We need to be concerned about the quality of our environment. Brigham Young was concerned and counseled the saints of his day to “Keep your valley pure...” He also said, “The Lord blesses the land, the air and the water where the Saints are permitted to live.” Here are more of his teachings on this subject.

The soil, the air, the water are all pure and healthy. Do not suffer them to become polluted with wickedness. Strive to preserve the elements from being contaminated by the filthy wickedness. Strive to preserve the elements from being contaminated by the filthy conduct and sayings of those who pervert the intelligence God has bestowed upon the human family.

With this knowledge, this is his counsel:

We should breathe the pure mountain air in our bedrooms. We should have lofty rooms, high above the ground, for though this earth is pure, compared with the miasmatic places, the air that is above the ground is preferable to that close to it. We should have plenty of pure, fresh air. If children are kept in closed bedrooms, they become puny and weakly. Let them sleep where they can have abundance of pure air, in well ventilated rooms, or out of doors, in the summer time, in a safe place; it will be most beneficial for their health.

Some regular exposure to sunshine is important for our health, but not excessive exposure. Brigham Young was ahead of his times when he counseled:

Ask your husbands to furnish you some straw for hats and bonnets, and when you get it put more than three straws over your head, and make a hat that will shade you from the scorching sun.

Cease to send out your children to herd sheep with their skins exposed to the hot sun, until their hands and faces appear as though they lived in an ash heap.

Today we know that excessive exposure to sun can prematurely wrinkle the skin and contribute to skin cancers. So, while sunlight is beneficial in moderation, we should not join the sun worshippers if we want optimal health.
Stress

There is a great deal of modern research linking stress with disease. Stress has been implicated as a factor in high blood pressure, heart disease, blood vessel disorders, diseases of the kidney, arthritis, infections, allergies, sexual derangements, digestive troubles and even cancer. The gospel provides us with tools that help us to deal with stress in a positive manner. Prayer and meditation can help reduce stress levels. Feelings of faith, trust in God and self-reliance can displace feelings of worry, care and concern when we cast our burdens on the Lord as he has commanded.

I learned a great lesson about stress as a teenager, which I have tried to incorporate into my adult life. Around age 14, I started to develop a great love for camping. At every opportunity I'd pack my gear and escape into the wilds. I also liked to camp “in style” taking all of the civilized comforts I could. I liked to cook elaborate feasts to satisfy my teenage appetite. I successfully baked cakes, pies and even pizza over the coals of a campfire in my pursuit of the perfect gourmet camp meal. I called this enterprise “luxury” camping.

It was on our yearly spring pilgrimage to Stansbury Island, a peninsula of the Great Salt Lake, that I had a change of heart about “luxury” camping. Our campsite was a stand of juniper trees and sagebrush growing in sand over 20 feet deep and since we didn't have to backpack to get there, I went all out. I packed so much stuff in my duffel bag that I had to drag it to the tent. It was too heavy for me to pick up.

In these barren surroundings I had a “revelation” over my midday meal. I had prepared one of my “feasts” the night before, but for lunch I was simply roasting hot dogs over the campfire and eating them off the stick. (Yes, hot dogs! I was a health heathen then, as yet “unsaved” from my junk food ways). Anyway, as I sat there indulging in this simple fare, the thought came to me, “this is really luxury. When I get done I’ll throw the stick in the fire and I won’t have any dishes to wash.”

I suddenly realized that I was spending more time preparing and cleaning up after my “feasts” than it was worth. It also entered my brain that the more stuff I carried, the heavier my load. And in that moment of insight I invented “super luxury” camping. The idea of “super luxury” camping was to take as little as possible, substituting outdoor skills for camping equipment and easy to prepare meals for elaborate feasts. The goal became: how much can I do without, rather than what else do I need?

For example, did you know that with a little skill you can open a can with a pocket knife just as easily as you can with a can-opener? So why take both? If you let your eyes adjust to the dark you can see better at night without a flashlight than with one, especially if there is moonlight. Hence, I learned to see my way in the dark and only used a tiny penlight flashlight when I absolutely needed it. In addition, if you know a lot about medicinal herbs, you have a complete medicine chest handy everywhere you go.

I also found you could pack less gear by sharing. If four people get together, then one cooking kit can do for all four. In fact, if you’re willing to share you only need one or two flashlights instead of four.

I had perfected “super luxury” camping to a fine art by the time our troop went to the Wind River Wilderness Area in Wyoming the next year. By teaming up with three other guys and carefully planning, I managed to reduce the total weight of my pack to a mere 27 lbs. for a week-long backpacking trip. And that 27 lbs. included my camera and my herb book. By contrast, there were two brothers who went on this trip who had to have separate tents and equipment and they both wound up hauling nearly 60 lbs. each.

So, what has this got to do with health? Well, it seems that one of the greatest stresses in my life is financial problems. Most of this financial stress isn’t in my head, either. It’s in my heart. I get stressed because I let my wants become my needs. I get caught up in the idea of “luxury” living instead of “super luxury” living.

Henry David Thoreau said that a man doesn’t own his furnishings, they own him. I believe that is true. Just like on a camping trip, I’m carrying the
things I own with me through my life. The more unnecessary things I collect, the heavier the burden I have to carry. The more burdens I carry, the more my health tends to break down because of stress.

My ten-year-old daughter told me she wants to be rich. She thinks that having more money would make her happier, but I doubt that would be the case. I’ve found the more a person makes, the more he/she wants. So a person who makes a great deal of money is just as likely to get into financial straits and stress as anybody else.

The solution to my financial stress isn’t in having more money. After all, I’m already a very wealthy man. I became a very wealthy man about four years ago when I was sent to mainland China by the herb company I worked for. Let me tell you how it happened.

Outside of our hotel in Kunming, a group of college students stopped us to ask if they could practice their English on us. I spent several hours talking to them and during the conversation they asked me to describe the place where I lived. At that time, we were recovering from some severe financial difficulties. A year before the bank had foreclosed on our home after I lost my job. As a result, we were renting a small three bedroom home (less than 1,000 sq. ft.). It had a cute yard with a couple of fruit trees and a small vegetable garden. We also kept a few chickens. It was nothing to brag about by American standards, but when I described it to them, they were very impressed. One of them looked me in the eye and said, “You must be a very wealthy man.”

I have to remind myself of that fact every time financial problems rear their ugly head. After all, even in my worst financial straits, I’ve never been without a car, refrigerator, stove, central heating, clothing or food. Even as a poor, struggling student, I was rich compared to the majority of the world’s population.

Maybe that’s the solution to our stress—to be thankful for what we have and quit feeling like we’re deprived if we don’t have everything we want. Is learning to be thankful for our current blessings the solution to financial stress? If so, then it’s a major key to maintaining our health as well.

Come to think of it, I found I had more than wealth when I talked with those students. When I showed them a picture of my wife and our two children (one boy and one girl) they told me that I had happiness. The symbol for happiness in Chinese writing is the symbol for boy combined with the symbol for girl. When I told them number three was on the way, you should have seen the envy in their eyes. The Chinese traditionally have strong family ties, but in modern China, couples are limited to having one child. Since that time we have had another boy and girl, a double portion of happiness!

Wealth and happiness—what more can I want in life? It’s right here in our own hearts if we look for it, especially when we can learn to cast our burdens upon the Lord in faith.

Chapter Nine Footnotes

1 Ezra Taft Benson, In His Steps.
2 Ibid.
3 Journal of Discourses 12: 218
4 Discourses of Brigham Young, p. 187
5 Benson, In His Steps., p. 7
6 Journal of Discourses 8:80
7 Ibid., 10:222
8 Ibid., 8:79
9 Ibid., 12: 218
10 Ibid., 12: 201
11 Ibid., 12: 202
Chapter Ten

Faith to Be Healed

We have learned that obedience to God’s laws will bring the blessing of good health, but what should we do if we have already fallen prey to ill health? The scriptures also make plain the course we should follow as we seek to regain our health. In the Epistle of James we read:

Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. (James 5:14-15)

A similar injunction is also found in the Doctrine and Covenants.

And the elders of the church, two or more, shall be called, and shall pray for and lay their hands upon them in my name; and if they die they shall die unto me; and if they live they shall live unto me.

And again, it shall come to pass that he that hath faith in me to be healed, and is not appointed unto death, shall be healed. (D&C 42:44,48)

The Lord, Our Doctor

The Lord expects us to seek Him in faith as our source for healing. In Exodus 15:26 God tells us “...I am the Lord that healeth thee.” In the German Bible, according to the Martin Luthur translation, this text reads, “...I am the Lord your doctor.” Rabbi Eric R. Braverman, M.D. explains why this is literally true.

“God is the only true physician.” (Deuteronomy 32:39), not just because he says so, but because his instructions to the priests in regard to leprosy in the Book of Leviticus present the foundation of epidemiology—checking the spread of disease through quarantine, evacuation, and sometimes destruction of houses, as well as pathology and dermatology, diagnosing and prognosing about skin lesions.

Rabbi Braverman is one of the growing number of medical doctors who is recognizing that healing cannot be removed from its spiritual and scriptural foundations. We must recognize that God is the ultimate source of all healing power, for He is also the source of all life. He was revealing laws about prevention and treatment long before modern science “discovered” such things.

Our Church leaders taught us that (over a hundred years ago) the Lord was the greatest healer of all.

...the Lord heals the sick. He has made the tabernacles of the children of men, and he has organized them according to a law, so that every part of the human system is adapted to every other part....When any part or portion of this wonderfully constructed being, or, in other words, this almost perfect machine, becomes deranged or out of order, the same Being who first constructed man, with all the different organs, muscles, sinews and skin, can easily mend or regulate the same, and cause every part to work in perfect harmony with every other part, so as to impart health, and life, and vigor to the whole machinery. You would certainly think that a person was not much of a mechanic if, after he had constructed a beautiful clock, and it had run for several years, and got out of order—when you applied to him for repairs he replied that he could not, you would be apt to say, “You made it in the first place: you certainly ought to know what is the matter, and you can repair and restore it to working order.” Just so with the Lord. When our human machinery is out of order, He understands all about it; and He is the best physician that can be employed; and He also can be employed without money and without price. He imparts to this machinery His Holy Spirit which circulates through the whole body, and promotes health and strength in the individual. But how apt we are to apply to inferior physicians. As soon as something ails this mortal tabernacle, the cry is, “Oh, mother, or husband, will you send for the doctor. My son is very sick, and we need the doctor.” Now this is sometimes the way with those who call themselves Latter-day Saints, but they ought to be shamed that they do not honor the name which they have taken upon themselves. [emphasis added.]

The Lord has ordained that when you are sick, you should apply the simple ordinance of the laying on of hands, or the anointing with oil by His servants in the name of Jesus Christ. In this ordinance there is more power than in all the medical ability in the world; for there are many diseases which baffle the skill
of the wisest physicians, while by the laying on of the hands of the servants of God—not in their own name, but in the name of Jesus Christ—according to the directions given in the Scriptures, we have the promise that they shall be healed; that is if they are not appointed unto death.

Here, then, is another law of God; and we might go on and touch upon instances of the healing power,—the healing of the lame man, the blind man, the deaf man, or of fevers removed from the body, and the restoration of broken bones. Now, we have many testimonies, especially among our brethren in Wales, where they have, in the coal mines in which they worked, been crushed, as it were, until many bones in their bodies were broken. So much so, that it was supposed they could only live a very few hours, at the longest; yet by the laying on of the hand of the servants of God, we have the testimony of many witnesses that those bones were brought together, making a noise like the crushing of a basket and were placed in their proper form; and the individuals were restored to health and soundness. Could any herbs, or minerals, or physicians have accomplished this? No. Who did accomplish this? The Lord Jesus Christ, through His servants, by the laying on of hands, according to His commandment.

In the Old Testament we read this comment about the wicked king Asa.

And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great; yet in his disease he sought not the Lord, but to the physicians. (2 Chr. 16:12)

How many of us, like Asa have become sick and have sought the opinion of many physicians and healers, but have not sought after the help of the Lord? Does that mean we should never go to doctors? Of course not, sometimes we need the help of other human beings.

However, in seeking the help of physicians, many of us will relate to the following statement about doctors from an early church publication.

Consult one doctor; consult ten doctors, consult twenty doctors, and you will not find two of them would give the same advice, even for the same sickness. Medical doctors, herbalists, chiropractors, naturopaths and other healers have skills, but we must remember that they are only human beings like ourselves, subject to the same errors and limitations of knowledge. Their decisions are only as good as their knowledge and experience. All too often today’s miracle cure turns out to be tomorrow’s health quackery. So, even when we need the help of others, we should seek the inspiration of the Lord to know whether the treatment recommended is the right one for us.

Another thing, we ought not to run after doctors as much as we do. “But,” says one, “if we have a bone broken we must have somebody to set it.” Yes, that is true, but we need not take all the nostrums they can think of. We ought first to go to the Lord and exercise our faith as far as we can make use of it in that direction, and we will make fewer blunders than we do.

Where is Our Trust?

Unfortunately, most of us have far more faith in doctors, hospitals, drugs, vitamins, minerals, diets, herbs and other forms of treatment than we do in the Lord. We need to remember that the Lord is the great healer and the source of all life. We need to remember that Nephi warns us that we are cursed if we put our trust in the “arm of flesh” instead of in God.

Oh, Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will put trust in thee forever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh; for I know that cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh. Yea, cursed is he that putteth his trust in man or maketh flesh his arm. (2 Ne. 4:34)
in placing implicit confidence in the medical and surgical professions.⁵

Sometimes, people are instructed to get a “second opinion” from another physician before submitting to a controversial treatment. From these statements, it appears we should pray for guidance before undertaking any form of treatment. Being the greatest physician of all, God will always give us a sound “second opinion.”

**Limitations of Medicine**

Is it really necessary to inquire of God before submitting to treatments in this age of modern medicine? Yes, medicine has limitations because it was created by human beings who have limited understanding of the workings of the body. Brigham Young understood these limitations very well.

I can see the faces of this congregation, but I do not see two alike; and if I could look into your nervous systems and behold the operations of disease, from the crowns of your heads to the soles of your feet, I should behold the same difference that I see in your physiognomy—there would be not two precisely alike. Doctors make experiments, and if they find a medicine that will have the desired effect on one person, they set it down that it is good for everybody, but it is not so, for upon the second person that medicine is administered to, seemingly with the same disease, it might produce death. If you do not know this, you have not had the experience that I have. [emphasis added.]⁶

We do not know what to do for the sick, and if we send for a doctor he does not know any more than anybody else. No person knows what to do for the sick without revelation. Doctors, by their study of the science of anatomy, and by their experience, by feeling the pulse, and from other circumstances may be able to judge of many things, but they do not know the exact state of the stomach. And again, the operations of disease are alike on no two persons on the face of the earth, any more than the operations of the spirit of God are alike on any two persons. There is as much variation in these respects as there is in the physiognomy of the human family; hence, when disease seizes our systems, we do not know what to do, and death often overtakes us, and we bury our friends. [emphasis added.]⁷

Many people would say that we don’t need this advice today because we have “scientific” medicine. However, they need to realize that the above quotes are pointing out the limitations of the scientific method. “Doctors,” says President Young, “make experiments” and that is exactly what scientific medicine does today. Modern medical science is based on statistics. A drug or therapy is given to a group of people and the results are compared with a group who did not receive the treatment. If a certain percentage of the people get well using the medicine, then it is given to everyone with that problem. However, there are also those on whom the treatment has no effect and there are those for whom the treatment can be dangerous and even deadly. Brigham Young realized that we are all different and therefore, science is insufficient. We must have the inspiration of the Lord.

**Developing Faith to Be Healed**

How do we develop faith to be healed? For starters, we need to understand the nature of faith. In the Lecture’s on Faith, Joseph Smith taught, “before we can exercise faith in God we must know three things.” First, that He exists. Secondly, we must also have a knowledge of His nature. We need to know that God is just, that He is merciful, that He is all-powerful and can accomplish whatever He determines to accomplish. If we do not know these and other traits of God, we will not be able to exercise faith in Him.” In this case, for obtaining healing, we must know and understand that God loves us and wants us to be healthy. We must know that He also has the power to heal us or reveal to us the way we can be healed. If we do not know these things, we will not believe that He will be interested in helping us.

The third thing necessary for the exercise of faith is to know that the course we are pursuing is in harmony with God’s will. Thus, being healed may require that we repent and put our lives more in harmony with God’s laws. It is interesting to note that James says a person who is healed by faith shall have his sins forgiven if he has committed any. This suggests that to be physically healed, we must also seek to be spiritually healed.
In seeking to be healed we must remember that God is not going to alter natural laws for our self-centered benefit. Often we want God to wave a magic wand and remove all pain and suffering from our lives, without our having to change at all. However, we may recall from our discussion in chapter one that God's universe is based on laws of cause and effect. When we touch a hot stove we are burned. When we step off a cliff, we fall. If the laws of nature did not operate in a consistent manner, we would not be able to depend on anything. Our ability to act and know the consequences of our actions would be destroyed.

Hence, if we persist in touching hot stoves, we will continue to get burned. If we continue to violate the laws upon which the blessing of health is predicated, then we will continue to get sick. Alma tells us that if we have faith we “hope for things which are not seen, which are true.” (Alma 32:21) We may try to believe that we can grow wheat by planting corn seeds, but this is not a living faith, because what we are believing in is not true. Corn seeds will still grow up to produce corn regardless of our beliefs. Likewise, it is foolish to believe that God will grant us health without our having to alter our lives to bring them more in harmony with his will. This belief will likewise bring disappointing results.

Therefore, part of exercising faith to be healed is our determination to repent and strive to set our course of life back in harmony with the laws of God, which are the laws of our nature. We should examine how we have violated the laws of health and determine to make the adjustments necessary to bring our lives in harmony with them. Perhaps we need to exercise more; perhaps we need to eat better or lose weight. Perhaps we have placed ourselves under too much stress because we have had our hearts set too much upon the things of this world. Perhaps we are even under stress because we have committed errors which we are hiding and haven’t repented.

Whatever the case, we should determine to learn from our illnesses. The Lord has promised that all things will work together for our good if we walk uprightly and remember our covenants. ALL THINGS will work together for our good, including sickness and pain, if we exercise faith in the Lord and strive to bring our lives in harmony with His will. If nothing more, the pains we experience can give us greater appreciation for our Savior's innocent suffering and make us more empathetic to others who stand in need.

We might do well to ask ourselves a simple question when we are praying for healing from the Lord. That question is, “If God restores my health, what am I going to do with it?” If we want to be restored to health so we can continue to pursue our self-centered materialistic lives, then I doubt God will be that responsive to our desires. His purposes are to refine us and make us more like himself. So, unless the course we desire to pursue is one we know will be in harmony with his will, we will not be able to generate the faith necessary to obtain a healing.

Mental Power

The third and final requirement for exercising genuine faith is mental discipline. In the Lectures on Faith, Joseph Smith also taught “when a man works by faith he works by mental exertion instead of physical force.”8 Part of this mental exertion is to cast all doubts or fears out of our minds that we might not recover. Instead, we must hold in our minds only thoughts of recovering and living. We will not be able to do this if we have any doubt about God's desire or ability to heal us. This is why the first two steps are necessary. However, if we believe God has reason for us to be healed and we know He can heal us, then all that is left is for us to exercise faith, nothing doubting, that we can be healed.

Doctors recognize that most illness is “self-limiting”, which is to say that we would recover if we did nothing more than rest and drink plenty of water. In fact, we would recover from about 70-80% of the sicknesses we suffer from if we just exercised faith in the recuperative powers God has placed within our own bodies. We would just need to rest and allow our bodies time to do their work.

Doctors also recognize that many people will recover from a disease no matter what treatment they receive. We have all heard of the “placebo” effect. Placebo means “I will please.” The placebo effect is what happens when a person is given a sugar pill or
some other worthless treatment and made to believe that the treatment will heal him. The faith in the
treatment heals him, even when the treatment has
no known benefit. In double-blind studies, people
recover or improve on placebos about 20-30% of
the time.

Furthermore, researchers have now uncovered a
“nocebo” effect. This is the opposite of the placebo
effect. It is when something negative happens in
treatment because of the patients belief. For example,
about 30% of the patients who were given placebos
instead of chemotherapy drugs lost their hair. Because
they believed that they were taking chemotherapy,
and they believed that chemotherapy would make
them lose their hair, they lost it, even though there
was no physiological basis for this response. It has
also been demonstrated that the effectiveness of a
“proven” medication is diminished when the doctor
is told that the medication is a placebo, even though
he does not tell this to his patients.

These examples show us the tremendous impact
our faith has on our healing. Our belief can enhance
or inhibit our recovery, regardless of the therapy we
are receiving.

Many medical doctors are uncomfortable with
placebo effects and speak very negatively of therapies
which they believe are “only placebos.” If we think
about it, though, placebo effects validate the healing
power of faith. If exercising faith in the “arm of
flesh” can cause recovery, how much greater will be
our power to be healed if we put our faith in God?

A growing number of doctors are coming to
appreciate and utilize the power of faith and hope
in healing. Dr. Andrew Weil is one who has written
on this subject. In his books he makes it clear
that “Healing comes from inside, not outside.” He
also says that “...Medicines and medicine men can
sometimes catalyze a healing response or remove
obstructions to it, but they never give you what you
do not already have.”

Light and Darkness

A growing body of research is demonstrating that
all positive emotions such as joy, love, faith, hope and
trust tend to trigger the body’s immune response.
On the other hand, all negative emotions: fear, hate,
jealousy, worry, resentment and grief, tend to lower
one’s immune response. There is even a name for
this new field of study—psychoneuroimmunology.
This is the study of the effect of the mind on the
immune system through the nervous system.

Studies have found that people who are motivated
by selfless love have higher immune function and
are generally healthier than people who are more
self-centered.10 Other studies have found that prayer
assists in recovery, even if the patients do not know
that they are being prayed for. Numerous books are
appearing urging sick persons to visualize themselves
recovering and hold onto positive thoughts to help
them recover from disease.11

In chapter one, we discussed the fact that the
battle between health and sickness is one of the mani-
festations of the battle between light and darkness,
good and evil, life and death. It only makes sense
therefore, that when we keep our thoughts focused
on the light (love, faith, hope, charity, goodness,
life and peace) that we will move in the direction of
healing. In contrast, the powers of darkness (fear,
hate, jealousy, rage, resentment, death and decay) all
tend to weaken our bodies and destroy our health.

This brings us to an important consideration.
Many times well-meaning, but misinformed people
may pronounce a “death sentence” on a person. That
is, they may tell them that they are “terminally ill”
or that they have only so many weeks or months to
live. Dr. Robert Mendelsohn called this a “voodoo
hex” and said it was akin to the workings of black
magic by the African witch doctor. Because the per-
son believes that the witch doctor “knows” and has
“power”, the witch doctor can tell the person he will
die or suffer some accident and it will happen. Not
because the witch doctor actually had the power to
predict the future, but because the person believed
what the witch doctor told him.

Hence, we are unjustified in taking away any
person’s hope of recovery, for any reason. Perhaps we
do not agree with the treatment method they have
chosen, so we level with them and tell them we think
they are going to die if they take that treatment. How
do we know? Are we God? Even if the treatment is worthless from the standpoint of science, it may be necessary to that person’s faith.

Think about the healing methods which Christ used. Are they scientific? Does anointing a man’s eyes with clay or allowing a woman to touch the hem of your garment have any scientific basis? Still, these things were necessary to these people’s faith. The issue is faith. If a person really believes that what he/she is doing is right, should we interfere and cast doubts about the chance of recovery? We are not God and it is not our prerogative to judge such things.

Doctors sometimes do this because they do not wish to instill “false hope” in a patient. While it is true that one can place false hope in man’s puny efforts, there is no such thing as false hope when our hope is centered on God. Faith, hope and charity go together with the powers of healing, life and health. People must always be encouraged to have hope.

We should not discourage people even if they chose a healing method we do not understand. Christ and his prophets have used many “techniques” to enhance a person’s faith and help him/her to recover. We should not limit the Lord’s healing power only to those who follow those healing practices we (in our limited knowledge) approve of.

Healing by Faith

One herbalist and homeopath I know has helped over fifty people pronounced “terminally” ill recover. In addition to getting these people to change their health habits, he has them start planning the next 50 years of their lives. At first, many of them balk and say, “but I only have so long to live.” When they believe this, then they start mentally preparing to die and the “sentence of death” becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy for them. He has to convince them not to believe this “voodoo hex” and to start reaffirming life. By making plans and working on goals, they forget about dying and concentrate on living. He tells me that only two of these people he has worked with have died of their “terminal” disease and these were the two people who refused to set goals and work on them.

Not long ago, it was discovered that people with “terminal” diseases will postpone dying until they have accomplished some significant task or lived to see some important event. If people can postpone death from a terminal illness for several months because they just have to see their son or daughter graduate from college or get married, then why can’t they postpone death even longer if they have a reason to live and serve the Lord.

I had a personal experience with this some years ago when I met a young man who had AIDS. His immune system was severely depleted and his prognosis was poor. Because I am not a doctor, I do not treat AIDS (or any other disease for that matter), but I did talk to him about living the laws of good health. I also told him about exercising the mental discipline to think only about life and living. His countenance was dejected and he was obviously discouraged. The disease had robbed all hope from his life and he was mentally preparing for death.

Finally, acting on a hunch, I asked him if he felt that it was his time to die. I said, “Do you feel like your mission here on earth is done, that you have accomplished what you were sent here to do?” He replied, “It’s funny you should ask that question because just the other night I was praying and I felt impressed that God didn’t want me to die because I haven’t completed what I was sent here to do.” Upon hearing this I stated emphatically, “Well, there you have it. If God wants me to live, how can I die?”

Two weeks later, I saw him again. This time, however, his countenance was bright and you could see the hope in his eyes. He told me that he had thought about what I had said and had decided that he would live. He studied and improved his diet, lifestyle and attitudes. His immune system promptly returned to normal. Three years later, the last time I spoke with him, he was still doing fine. The university hospital had wanted to study him because he was the only person who had AIDS and was receiving...
no medical treatments for it. He had turned them down, because, in his words, “They would wreck my attitude.” As of the writing of this book, he is still alive and well.

As Latter-day Saints, this knowledge should strengthen our faith that God should be our first resort when we are in need of healing. If people who do not have the priesthood, nor the fullness of the gospel of Christ, can obtain healing because of their strong beliefs, how much more should we have power to overcome disease through our faith and obedience to God’s revealed laws?

I’m not saying that one should never submit to medical treatments. What I am saying is that we should put our faith first in God. We seek the Lord’s guidance and follow that method of healing which we feel is appropriate for our condition. In our own family, we have had experiences where we have had miraculous healings by faith alone where others would have felt that medical intervention was the only answer. On other occasions our prayers have guided us to seek medical attention. We have also been guided on many occasions to the appropriate herb or home remedy.

Let us strive to exercise greater faith in God’s promises of healing through faith so that the promised blessings might be ours.

He who hath faith to see shall see.
He who hath faith to hear shall hear.
The lame who have faith to leap shall leap.
(D&C 42:49-51)

Chapter Ten Footnotes

2 The Young Woman’s Journal, 2:140-3, 1890.
3 Joseph Smith, Lectures on Faith, compiled by N.B. Lundwall (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc.) page 61.
6 Bernie S. Siegel, M.D., Love, Medicine and Miracles and Peace, Love and Healing; Norman Cousins, Head First; The Biology of Hope; The Healing Heart and Anatomy of an Illness; Joan Borysenko, Ph.D., Minding the Body, Mending the Mind; Jim Jenks, Think and Be Healthy.
Chapter Eleven

Herbs and Mild Food

We have shown that since the beginning of creation, our Father in Heaven has counseled His children to rely on herbs and fruits for their food. The scriptures also tell us that God has given us herbs and simple foods for medicine. Through revelation to the prophet Joseph Smith the Lord instructed, “And whosoever among you are sick, and have not faith to be healed, but believe, shall be nourished with all tenderness, with herbs and mild food...” (D&C 42:43)

Joseph Smith believed this revelation and encouraged the Saints to do likewise. On one occasion he said, “It was according to the revelation that the sick should be nursed with herbs and mild food, and not by the hand of an enemy.” On another occasion he exhorted the Saints as follows:

I preached to a large congregation at the stand, on the science and practice of medicine, desiring to persuade the saints to trust in God when sick, and not in an arm of flesh, and live by faith and not by medicine, or poison; and when they were sick, and had called for the Elders to pray for them, and they were not healed, to use herbs and mild food.

The Lord’s counsel to use herbs and mild food when sick was part of a revelation “embracing the law of the church.” Hence, it was not given as a suggestion, but rather as a commandment. It is clear that Joseph Smith regarded this revelation as a commandment because he wrote the following in the History of the Church:

Went to visit my father, found him very low, administered some mild herbs, agreeable to the commandment. May God grant to restore him immediately to health for Christ the Redeemer’s sake. Amen.

He also recorded the following experience about his own illness:

I continued to grow worse and worse until my sufferings were excruciating, and although in the midst of it all I felt to rejoice in the salvation of Israel’s God, yet I found it expedient to call to my assistance those means which a kind Providence had provided for the restoration of the sick, in connection with the ordinances; and Dr. Levi Richards, at my request, administered to me herbs and mild food, and nursed me with all tenderness and attention; and my Heavenly Father blessed his administrations to the easing and comforting of my system...

There are many other scriptures which speak of the use of herbs. In D&C 59, the Lord declares, “the herb, and the good things which come of the earth” have been given “in the season thereof...for the benefit and the use of man...to strengthen the body and enliven the soul.” (D&C 59:17-20)

The Nephite historian Mormon also commented on this subject:

And there were some who died with fevers, which at some seasons of the year were very frequent in the land—but not so much so with fevers because of the excellent qualities of the many plants and roots which God had prepared to remove the cause of diseases, to which men were subject by the nature of the climate.” (Alma 46:40)

The psalmist declared: “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth;” (Ps. 104:14) The Apostle Paul affirmed that the earth “...bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed...” (Heb. 6:7)

The Bible also instructs us that herbs are part of the glorious city of God which is yet to come. There the Lord will plant the tree of life, whose leaves will heal the nations of the world.

...on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manners of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of nations. (Rev. 22:2)

And by the river upon the bank thereof, shall grow all trees for meat, and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine. (Ezek. 47:12)
The Bible contains many other references on herbs, especially on specific herbs. For example, in addition to gold, the three wise men brought two herbs: frankincense and myrrh. These two herbs were highly valued for their medicinal properties in the Middle East.

**God Planned for Man's Needs**

These passages have led many believing people to try herbs after failing to find answers through orthodox medicine. In my travels I have met many people, both members and non-members, who testify that God led them to the use of herbs in answer to their prayers for healing. These people bear strong testimony to the goodness of the Lord in providing these natural healing substances.

As a teenager, I had an experience which convinced me that God planned for the needs of His children and provided remedies for all their ailments in the herbs of the field. I had been learning about edible and medicinal wild plants to earn a merit badge in scouting. As I sat upon a hillside pondering the many uses of the plants around me, a thought came into my mind: "If you were a loving God, wouldn't you have provided everything naturally upon the face of the earth to keep your children healthy and strong?"

This question caused some reflection. I thought about all the people who had lived on the earth. Realizing that millions of people have lived and died on the earth before modern medicine was developed, I knew that God must have provided for their health needs. He would not have provided adequate health care only for a small percentage of relatively wealthy people living in modern times. Even today, there are millions of people living on the earth who cannot afford the expensive technology of modern medicine. I knew that God was the loving Father of all men and no respecter of persons. With His infinite foreknowledge He must have known every affliction that could come upon His children in this world.

In answer to this unspoken question, I concluded that God must have placed a plant upon the earth to heal every disease with which His children could be afflicted, regardless of their wealth or technological advancement. Years later, I found several scriptures which tended to confirm this belief. As we noted, the Book of Mormon says that God prepared plants and roots “to remove the cause of diseases, to which men were subject by the nature of the climate.” (Alma 46:40) Also the Doctrine and Covenants tells us that herbs have been provided to “…strengthen the body and enliven the soul.” (D&C 59:17-20) My experiences with these herbal remedies over the last ten years has further confirmed this belief.

**A Controversy**

In spite of the passages in the scriptures referring to herbs, it seems that most LDS people believe they are no longer needed. Modern science teaches us that herbs are a crude form of therapy belonging to a less enlightened era. We are told that modern drugs are more effective than these primitive herbs. We are even led to believe that they are safer.

However, there are many Latter-day Saints who feel that the counsel to nourish the sick with herbs and mild foods is just as applicable today as it ever was. In fact, the modern resurgence in the use of herbs is largely due to the influence of Latter-day Saints who believed strongly that herbs were given of God for the healing of the sick. LDS people like John Christopher, LaDean Griffin, Stan Malstrom, and others have been leaders in the movement to encourage the use of herbs. Furthermore, Utah is the home for most of the prominent manufacturers of herbal products. Most, if not all, of these herb companies are run by LDS people who believe that herbs are ordained for “the constitution, nature, and use of man.”

To understand this difference of opinion better, we need to remember the nature of orthodox medicine in Joseph Smith's day. In that day orthodox medical doctors relied primarily on mercury, strychnine, arsenic, antimony and procedures like blood-letting and blistering. Joseph's older brother Alvin was killed by a dose of calomel, a mercury compound commonly prescribed in that day. So we can readily see why Joseph counseled the Saints “to trust in God when sick...and live by faith and not by medicine, or poison...” We can also see why Brigham Young said: “Doctors and their medicines I regard as a deadly bane to any community.” Most
modern doctors would probably agree that this was good advice in their day, given the dangerous nature of orthodox medicine.

Of course, medicine has changed since the time of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Hence, most people feel that the counsel is no longer applicable. Few people realize that much of the advancement in modern drug therapy came from the study of plants and molds. The majority of the drugs available today, with or without a prescription, contain at least one substance originally derived from a plant. Common drugs derived from plants include digitalis, resperine, quinine and even aspirin. Many over-the-counter medications rely on volatile oils from herbs, such as menthol, eucalyptol, and thymol. There are bulk-forming laxatives whose major ingredient is an herb, psyllium hulls. If substances derived from molds are included, our current materia medica is about 60-70% plant-derived drugs.

**The Key Issue**

Note, however, that the materia media of modern science is composed largely of plant-derived drugs. The key issue between those who favor herbs and those who favor orthodox medicine is not really whether or not herbs are effective, but rather the method in which the herbs are used. Modern medicine does not use the whole herb, but rather isolated “active” constituents. In most cases the drugs they use are not derived from the plants anymore. Instead, modern science has created synthetic duplicates of the plant constituents. In most cases, they have also chemically altered or modified the molecular structure of the original substance, so that it is different from the substance originally found in the plant.

In contrast, those who believe in herbs generally believe that when God created the herbs he knew what he was doing. That is, they believe that God, in His perfect wisdom, made the whole herb to work in harmony with the “constitution and nature” of man. Hence, the herbalist believes that the whole herb is safer and perhaps even more effective in the long run, because it works more in harmony with the body.

So the question is, could it be that modern medicine has made a mistake in departing from the use of whole (or wholesome) herbs in favor of isolated chemicals? Is it possible that both have their place? Here is some food for thought on this subject.

First, it is a fact that a whole plant is different in nature from a chemically isolated and purified drug. In his book, *Understanding Conventional and Alternative Medicine*, Dr. Andrew Weil, M.D. summarizes the differences between whole plants and pure drugs. He indicates that the idea that plants owe their effects to a single compound is simply untrue. Herbs are complex mixtures of substances. Whereas a drug is a single chemical, an herb may contain hundreds of chemicals which no doubt modify the action of their so-called “active” ingredients. Dr. Andrew Weil, author of *Health and Healing*. He says, “isolated and refined drugs are much more toxic than their botanical sources.” They work faster, but their effects also wear off faster. He also notes that isolated chemicals do not always reproduce the actions of the whole plants they come from and that the plants sometimes have natural safeguards which the chemicals do not.

According to Dr. Weil, the margin of safety in using herbs is much greater because the bulk of an herb is indigestible fiber, the percentage of active ingredients is low, and the active ingredients are absorbed slowly through the process of digestion. It is also possible that some of the other compounds in plants act as buffers or safeguards for the active chemicals.

One of the complaints modern science has had about herbs is that the strength of their “active” ingredients may vary. This issue is not as critical with herbs, because they do not have the high risk of toxicity that drugs do. However, even if one is concerned about precise dosage, there are ways of controlling growth and assaying quantities to obtain standard doses for whole plants. In fact, several herb companies are already producing herb products with standardized levels of known active ingredients. These standardized herbs may represent a compromise between whole herbs and refined drugs.

**Reasons for Using Isolates**

One of the problems we face is that very little research has been done on whole plants compared to isolated chemicals. Doctors have been mistakenly
lead to believe that the abandonment of herbs in favor of isolated chemicals was due to research which demonstrated they were safer and more effective. The truth is that this type of research has never been done. This is merely a matter of current scientific opinion, not scientific fact; because the question has never been seriously studied. Why then do we use isolated chemicals rather than whole herbs? Here are some possible reasons.

First, isolated compounds and synthetics are generally cheaper to produce, easier to store and are not subject to crop failures. It is also easier to control dosage (but it is also more critical to control dosage because of increased toxicity).

A bigger reason is that molecules (chemicals) can be patented, but whole plants cannot. Currently the definition of a drug is anything which is sold for the cure or prevention of disease. Even water has become a drug under current laws when it was marketed to affect a disease condition. Expensive and time-consuming double-blind studies are required to verify a specific therapeutic action and to calculate dosages and side effects. Understanding this, we can see why no drug company in its right mind would want to test an herb for therapeutic value. Who wants to go through ten years of testing and fifty million dollars to prove that a commonly available herb could prevent or cure a disease? The investment could never be recovered.

Finally, modern drug research became so exciting and financially rewarding that it pushed herbal research into the background and almost destroyed it. In the preface of his book, *The Scientific Validation of Herbal Medicine*, Daniel B. Mowrey, Ph.D. explains this phenomenon.

At one time in the West, herbs were the subject of intensive scientific investigation. One can find numerous published studies on the effects of herbs on animal and human physiology. As late as the mid 20th century, important herbal research was being undertaken in Europe.

Concomitant with herbal research in this century in the West was the development of powerful synthetic medicines that had the power to virtually wipe out many terrible diseases.

As cure after cure was found, great excitement spread through the medical research establishment. Young scientists, especially, were vulnerable to the lure of exotic new lines of study. Unlike the old vanguard, who recognized the value of the new, but attempted to preserve the fundamental value of botanical medicines and continued to pursue research in them, the young students could not resist the excitement of modern drug research.

The old vanguard died off (or is dying off). Many of the following generation, who had studied medicinal plants under the tutelage of their masters, left those pursuits at the earliest opportunity in order to join the rush to the exciting sea of synthetic medicines...

The movement away from the natural and toward the synthetic was not a conscious rejection of medical botany. I don't believe anybody realized how completely the older positions were being abandoned. Nobody in mainstream medical science intended for it to happen that way.

So, the movement away from whole herbs had more to do with interest and economics than it did with science. One pharmacologist told me that one of his teachers, a member of the “old vanguard” had told the students in pharmacy school that this “flirtation” with isolated chemicals would be short-lived. He predicted that by the year 2000 we would be moving back to the use of whole herbs for medicine. This pharmacologist was studying herbs because he could see that this instructor’s prediction was coming to pass.

**Modern Herbal Research**

Interest in whole plants is growing because of the increasing volume of scientific research being done on the subject. Much of this research was touched off by a mission statement for the World Health Organization issued in 1976 by Dr. Halfdan Mahler, Director-General of that organization. In order to get adequate medical care to all the people in the world by the year 2000, WHO recognized that they would have to rely upon locally available herbs rather than on expensive synthetic drugs. Hence, Dr. Mahler stated:
The age-old arts of the herbalists too must be tapped. Many of the plants familiar to the ‘wise-woman’ or the ‘witch-doctor’ really do have the healing powers that tradition attaches to them; the pharmacopoeia of modern medicine would be poorer if one removed from it all the preparation, chemicals and compounds whose origins lie in herbs, funguses, flowers, fruits and roots.

Let us not be in any doubt: modern medicine still has a great deal to learn from the collector of herbs.12

Because of this mandate from WHO, a great deal of credible, scientifically based information is rapidly becoming available which is validating the fact that herbs can be an extremely safe and effective form of therapy. This research is being conducted primarily in Europe, Russia, China and other parts of the world because of the tremendous legal and financial obstacles here in the United States. Still, there are those in the United States who are following this research with much interest. A world-recognized medical doctor and research scientist, Dr. Bruce Halstead, told me that we do not need to wait for herbs to be proven; they are already proven. However, he said that it takes about 20 years for current research material to filter down into common practice among physicians.13

Are Herbs Dangerous?

The allegation is frequently made that using herbs is dangerous. There are poisonous plants such as foxglove (digitalis), coca leaves (cocaïne) and opium (heroin) and these plants are dangerous. Ironically, many of our modern drugs are the isolated and concentrated poisons from these poisonous plants. Modern medicine tends to use this type of plant because they want to produce rapid and dramatic effects.

This does not mean that these poisonous plants do not have therapeutic value. The Word of Wisdom states that “tobacco is an herb...to be used for bruises and all sick cattle...” (D&C 89:8) In other words, although tobacco is toxic to man’s body and belly, it is useful for certain specific therapeutic purposes. Note, however, that such plants must be used with “judgment and skill.” Thus there is therapeutic value in many of these poisonous herbs, but there is also a need for trained medical practitioners who can handle these more potent medicines with “judgment and skill.”14 It would seem reasonable that “judgment and skill” is also required in the use of isolated, refined drugs.

However, there are completely non-poisonous herbs which can be used for therapy. Remember, the Lord specifies that the sick are to be nourished with herbs and refers to all wholesome herbs as being made for the use of man. One cannot nourish the body with an unwholesome poison. One can only nourish the body with a food. Hence, the herbs with which we should nourish the sick must also be safe for use as food.

The majority of the herbs sold on the market today are wholesome herbs, many of which people use in food products without any concern. We are talking about herbs like garlic, cayenne, peppermint, chamomile, ginger, parsley, thyme, fenugreek, fennel, and so forth. These herbs are on the GRAS (Generally Recognized As Safe) list of the FDA. Most are in common use throughout the world in food. Others have been used for thousands of years without observations of harmful effects. Most modern researchers distrust this “historical use” data, but it does have value. A top pharmacognist (one who studies plant-derived drugs), Dr. Norman Fransworth, has pointed out that it is strange that we will eat the foods our ancestors ate and assume they are safe without years of scientific testing, but we are afraid of the plants they used for medicine. If they were smart enough to figure out what was safe to eat, why weren’t they smart enough to figure out what constituted a safe medicine?

The point is, that as long as an herb is wholesome (ie., not narcotic or poisonous) we simply need to use it with “prudence and thanksgiving.” (D&C 89:11) Of course, anything, even a wholesome herb, may be harmful if not used with “prudence” (reason and common sense).

Biochemist and herbalist, Dr. Edward E. Shook said, “Allopathic physicians use countless poisonous herbs, and ignore the most virtuous and harmless ones.”15 These milder, non-poisonous herbs have been largely ignored by modern medicine because they do not produce a “quick fix.” Most people going to the doctor want immediate relief, they do not want...
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to gently and gradually nourish their body back to health with gentle herbs and simple foods. They want something that works rapidly and dramatically.

As Dr. Michael Lesser stated in hearings before the Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs of the United States Senate:

- Nutrition works gradually and cumulatively over time.
- Drugs give you a slam-bang effect right away.
- American people seem to like that to some extent.
- Unfortunately, you suffer from that later.
- When you use nutrients you gradually get better, but you don't get that dramatic response immediately using nutrient therapy.16

This is exactly the way these non-poisonous herbs work. In the Lord's own words we are to be “nourished” with herbs when we are sick, not poisoned or drugged.

There are complaints that some of these non-poisonous herbs are also toxic. However, these complaints come primarily from people who have only studied the isolated chemicals from these plants. Generally, these people have had no experience using the whole herb. Herbs, like most foods, contain chemicals that are toxic when isolated and refined. For example, spinach contains oxalic acid and potatoes contain solanine, both chemicals are toxic in pure form. The fact that a pure chemical from a food is toxic doesn't make the food toxic, however.17

Even Brigham Young recognized that there was a difference between a whole food and an isolated ingredient.

I do not dispute that the poison contained in the bread that has been distributed from the table this afternoon, if extracted by a skillful chemist, would be enough to kill; but still, as combined with the other constituent elements of which bread is composed, it is not injurious, and we eat it without harm.18

In addition, critics of herb use also warn that self-treatment can be dangerous. However, the majority of all illnesses are not serious. Most cases of illness (colds, flu, etc.) are treated at home, anyway. In fact, it has been estimated that about 70% of all illness is self-limiting, that is, one would get better if all one did was rest in bed. There are serious illnesses which may require professional help, but even here it is possible that better nutrition and wholesome herbs could aid recovery.19 Understanding this, we can see why Brigham Young counseled:

Give your children, when sick, a little simple herb drink; and if they have eaten too much let them go without food until their stomachs are cleansed and purified, and have faith in the name of Jesus and in the ordinances of His Church, and they will live. That is my faith with regard to this thing.20

Isn't it time we began to re-examine this important part of “the law of the Church”? After all, this law has never been revoked. Even our late prophet, Spencer W. Kimball encouraged the use of simple herbs, when he said the following about caring for our bodies when we are sick.

We should do all we can for ourselves first: dieting, resting, taking simple herbs known to be effective, and apply common sense, especially to minor troubles. Then we could send for the elders...Frequently, this is all that is required, and numerous healings can be affected. In serious cases where the problems are not solved, we turn to our skilled and helpful men who can help us so wonderfully.21

Let us seek to better understand these natural medicines which God prepared to remove the cause of our diseases. We should not blindly accept everything which people tell us is “natural.” Nor, should we completely reject the knowledge and skills available to us through modern medicine. However, by seeking the help of the Lord and exercising wisdom and prudence we may discover that God has prepared simple and inexpensive means for our healing.22 We may only need to look and live. (Num. 21:6-9. 1 Ne. 17:41)
Chapter Eleven Footnotes

1 Alma A. Burton, Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1965), p. 229
2 History of the Church 4:414
3 See preface to D&C 42
4 History of the Church 7:228
5 Ibid, 2:493
6 History of the Church 4:414 and Journal of Discourses 14:109
8 Weil, Health and Healing, p.99
9 Ibid., chapter 9.
10 Consider the case of Kelloggs. All Bran Cereal became a drug when they published the findings of the National Cancer Institute on the box. Hence, when a disease claim is made for a food, it becomes a drug. This is why herb companies are unable to publish legitimate research on herbs. Herb salespeople are not deceiving the public by promoting herbs as foods. They are simply complying with the current FDA law which classifies them as foods and forbids companies to claim them as anything else.
13 From a private conversation with Dr. Bruce Halstead in 1988.
14 It would still be worth investigating the possibility that some of these herbs might be less toxic and hazardous in their whole form than in their current form as purified drugs. For an excellent discussion on this problem using the difference between foxglove herb and pure digitalis as an example, see Weil, Health and Healing, pp. 99-106.
16 Statement of Dr. Micheal Lesser, Psychiatrist, Diet Related to Killer Diseases, V: Nutrition and Mental Health, Hearing Before the Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs of the United States Senate, June 22, 1977, p. 18.
17 The government has been partially responsible for this misinformation. In an article entitled "Herbs are Often More Toxic than Magical" the FDA claimed there had been numerous cases of poisoning by herb teas. When the Herb Trade Association pressed them for documentation on this point they never produced a single case of anyone being poisoned by a commercial herb tea. The only problems on file were a few allergic reactions. (Maybe we better tell people strawberries are dangerous). This was reported in the November 1984 issue of HerbalGram.
18 Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses 13: 276
19 In conversation with the author, Dr. Bruce Halstead, M.D. he stated that there is no longer any need to prove that herbs and nutrition work. On the contrary, he says it has already been proven that they do work. Dr. Halstead reviews medical journals from all over the world and has contacts with researchers in Russia, China, Europe and so forth. Although the research is there, he says it will take about 20 years for it to filter down into actual practice in orthodox medicine.
20 Journal of Discourses 14: 108 & 109
22 For some reliable information on herbs you may wish to consult any of the following sources: The Scientific Validation of Herbal Medicine by Daniel Mowrey, Next Generation Herbal Medicine by Daniel Mowrey, Planetary Herbology by Michael Tierra, The New Holistic Herbal, David Hoffman; Nutritional Herbology, Mark Pederson; Magic and Medicine of Plants, Reader’s Digest Books; The Illustrated Herb Encyclopedia, Kathi Keville; and HerbalGram—a quarterly publication of the Herb Trade Association.
Chapter Twelve

The Gift of Healing

Our society tends to view healing as a science. However, the scriptures testify that healing is a gift of God. The gift of being able to heal others is listed as one of the gifts of the Spirit.

...there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God...to some it is given to have faith to be healed; and to others it is given to have faith to heal. (D&C 46:11,10-20)

I exhort you my brethren, that ye deny not the gifts of God, for they are many...to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may teach the word of wisdom...to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit... (Moro. 10:8-9,11)

Most of us recognize there is such a thing as the gift of healing, but we usually use it as an adjunct to medical treatment. Brigham Young felt that if the Saints were faithful, they would have no need for doctors, because they could be healed through the power of faith.

God had sent to his Church—the gift of healing, the gift of discerning of spirits, of tongues, of prophecy, etc. Are they here? Yes, right here in abundance, to overflowing. If the Saints would be faithful in cultivating these gifts every doctor might be removed from our midst. Let the mothers say nothing about the Elders in Israel, exercise the faith that it is their right to exercise, and I am satisfied that nine out of every ten children that now die might be saved.¹

Elder Moses Thatcher testified that if we were not experiencing these blessings of healing it would be because we lacked faith in the Lord's promises to us.

...instead of having to call in physicians to minister to the members of our families when sickness makes its appearance, the power of God will be upon us in such rich abundance as to enable us to rebuke it from our dwellings, and to invoke the blessings of health to attend us and ours, which was the case years ago in the primeval days of the Church. If we have lost any of these blessings it is not through any fault in the Lord, or that there is less power and efficacy in the priesthood we bear, but rather in our own lack of faith in the promises made to the faithful.²

Lorenzo Snow said that we should have priesthood bearers among us who had developed this gift of healing so that they could be sent for instead of doctors. He claimed that if these men would learn to exercise enough faith, they could make sickness and disease flee before them.

When our friends are stricken down by sickness and disease, or when our little ones are in the agonies of pain and death, there should be Elders in our midst who have educated themselves so thoroughly in developing the gifts of the Spirit within them, and in whom the Saints have such perfect confidence, that they would always be sought after instead of doctors. There are men among us who possess the gift of healing, and might have great faith; but they do not exercise the gift, they do not live for it, and, therefore, do not have the power to use it so effectually as they might. There are men in this Church who are as good in their hearts and feelings as men ever were, but lack faith and energy, and do not obtain really what it is their privilege to receive. If their faith, their energy and determination were equal to their good feelings and desires, their honesty and goodness, they would indeed be mighty men in Israel; and sickness and disease and the power of the evil one would flee before them as chaff before the wind.³

George Q. Cannon testified that these blessings were had in abundance among the early saints, although they were still not as numerous as they should be.

The sick are healed. There are hundreds of families in this Territory, thousands of them who never think of anything else but sending for the Elders, as the Apostle James said they should do, in cases of sickness. “Is any sick among you? Let him call for the Elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick,” said the Apostle. Now, among the people called Latter-day Saints, this is an almost universal practice, and we solemnly testify that—while we are far from being what we should be, far from having that faith we should have—there are numerous instances of the sick being healed by the laying on of hands.⁴
The Genuine Physician

We tend to think of the gift of healing as being solely related to the giving of priesthood blessings, but the gift of healing also involves knowing by the Spirit the best treatment to help a given individual recover from a disease. Brigham Young boldly declared that the only genuine physician was the one who possessed this Spirit of revelation.

Now let me tell you about doctoring, because I am acquainted with it, and know just exactly what constitutes a good doctor in physic. *It is that man or woman who, by revelation, or we may call it intuitive inspiration, is capable of administering medicine to assist the human system when it is besieged by the enemy called Disease; but if they have not that manifestation, they had better let the sick person alone.*

President Young was well acquainted with the limitations of medicine. He understood that each person is a unique individual and hence, what is good for one person may not be good for another.

Doctors, by their study of the science of anatomy, and by their experience, by feeling the pulse, and from other circumstances may be able to judge of many things, but they do not know the exact state of the stomach. And again, the operations of disease are alike on no two persons on the face of the earth, any more than the operations of the spirit of God are alike on any two persons. There is as much variation in these respects as there is in the physiognomy of the human family; hence, when disease seizes our systems, we do not know what to do, and death often overcomes us, and we bury our friends.

This is why no amount of scientific knowledge can ever replace the need for this intuitive inspiration of the Spirit Brigham Young has alluded to. In modern research, a medicine is given to a group of people and statistical data is collected on its effects. Some people may experience benefit from the medicine, others no effect, while others may have serious side effects. Unless you have the spirit of inspiration, you do not know how a person will react to a particular therapy. Hence, there will always be a percentage whom the medicine may not benefit and may even cause greater harm.

Placebo effects, as discussed in chapter 10, also demonstrate the need for this gift. A person’s healing may have as much to do with their confidence in the healer as it does in the method used. Some men have a great deal of “scientific” knowledge, but they make poor physicians because they have a poor “bedside manner.” Other men, with less knowledge may obtain better results because they have been blessed with the intuitive ability to inspire confidence and trust in their patients.

Parents Entitled to This Knowledge

Brigham Young further stated that we have the right as parents to know what treatments are good for our own children. Since our children are entrusted to us from the Lord, we have a right to approach the Lord in prayer and ask Him what is best for those in our stewardship.

*Learn to take proper care of your children. If any of them are sick the cry now, instead of “Go and fetch the Elders to lay hands on my child!” is, “Run for a doctor.” Why do you not live so as to rebuke disease? It is your privilege to do so without sending for the Elders. You should go to work to study and see what you can do for the recovery of your children. If a child is taken sick with fever give it something to stay that fever or relieve the stomach and bowels, so that mortification may not set it. Treat the child with prudence and care, with faith and patience, and be careful in not over-charging it with medicine. If you take too much medicine into the system, it is worse than too much food. But you will always find that an ounce of preventive is worth a pound of cure. Study and learn something for yourselves. It is the privilege of a mother to have faith and to administer to her child; this she can do herself, as well as sending for the Elders to have the benefit of their faith. [emphasis added.]*

*And it is the duty of every father and mother to live so that they may have the mind and will of the Lord concerning their duties to their families. If they are not called to exercise the priesthood which they hold, more than to administer to...*
their children, it is their duty to live so as to know how to teach, lead and advise their children; and if they are disposed they may have the privilege, for it is God's mind and will that they should know just what to do for them when they are sick. *Instead of calling for a doctor you should administer to them by the laying on of hands and anointing with oil, and give them mild food, and herbs...*[emphasis added.]

In our own family, we have been blessed with enough knowledge of home remedies to be able to successfully treat almost all childhood ailments. We have only made a few trips to a medical doctor in over twelve years. We have had the same experience as Brigham Young had in this regard.

I am happy to say I have never been under the necessity of calling a doctor to my family for forty years. I have had them in my family, but not from necessity. I like them when they are gentlemen; when they are wise and full of intelligence I am very fond of them, but I do not ask them to doctor my family in any case; and there are no circumstances under which I think them necessary except in case of a broken bone, or where skillful mechanical or surgical aid is necessary. But to call a doctor to my family to administer physic to them, I am not under the necessity of doing it. Is this so? Yes, it is; and if the experiment could be tried, independent of the Gospel and of faith, in any community, I care not where, nor for what length of time, of having any number of persons, with regularly qualified physicians to attend them, and the same number without such physicians, but who will doctor themselves according to nature and their own judgments, among that portion without doctors, there would be less sickness and fewer deaths than among those who had their doctors. The experience of the Latter-day Saints in Utah confirms this. When we first came here we had no sickness, and we had no sickness until we had doctors. When they began to obey the Gospel they did not want to dig in the field, hoe potatoes, go to the canyon for lumber or wood, to secure for themselves and families the necessities of life; but they wanted to live by doctoring the people, and from that time on, as we got richer and built warm houses, and have lived more richly, indulging in sweet cake, plum pudding, roast beef and so on, we have had more or less disease among us. Perhaps I have said enough about doctors.9

Brigham Young did not feel that it was necessary that parents of his day watch their young children suffer and die. He felt that if the Saints had enough faith, God would show them what to do to preserve the lives of their children.

No less vigilant should we be in preserving the lives of our children, for they are of the kingdom of heaven. No pains should be spared, no care omitted, in guarding the tender infant through the perilous hours of childhood to mature years. Through the inattention and ignorance of parents, death makes many victims among our children, and they are deprived of magnifying their mortal life according to the design of the All-wise Creator. Numbers of our children are carried off by death, through want of sufficient promptitude in battling the destroyer when its insidious approaches are first discovered. We have power in a great measure to prevent disease; and when it fastens upon the vitals of our little ones, we have power, faith, and means at hand, it is promptly applied, to restore our children to life and health, to boyhood, then to manhood, and to honor and power in Israel. Yet we neglect our children, and let them run out in the cold and wet. They are sick at night; nothing is done for them; but they are sent to bed to lie all night with a burning fever, and so they are suffered to linger on day after day, while the Destroyer is busily at work consuming their lives. At length the parents become alarmed and send for a doctor, who is just as apt to destroy the life of the child as to restore it again to good health. We mourn over the little fragile remains as we lay them in the tomb, and comfort ourselves by saying, "Thy will be done, O Lord; thou givest and thou takest away at thy pleasure," D&C., when by our ignorance and carelessness we have destroyed the life God gave to us for a kingdom of glory and power, which can only be obtained through our posterity. From this one child, this Isaac, could his life have been preserved, nations would have sprung into existence, until the multitudes of people through him would have become as the sands upon the sea shore for number. But he is gone, and his spirit has returned back to God, and that is the end of his life upon the earth; your posterity is cut off, and from whence will you receive your kingdom and glory?

Today, many parents are still having their children taken from them through various chronic and...
degenerative diseases which modern medicine has no treatment for. Many times people say that this is “the will of God,” but Brigham Young testified that it was not the design of God that any of us should die before our days were fulfilled on the earth. Hence, we still need to seek the Lord’s help and cultivate this gift of healing among us.

And let me say to my brethren and sister, that it is not the design of the Father that the earthly career of any should terminate until they have lived out their days; and the reason that so few do live out their days, is because of the force of sin in the world and the power of death over the human family. To these causes, and not to the design of the Creator, may be attributed the fact that disease stalks abroad, laying low the aged, middle-aged, youth, and infants, and the human family generally by millions. Some think that not one-half die before reaching fifteen or seventeen years; but, be that as it may, it is not the design of our Father in heaven that it should be so. However, here we are, and we have to meet with these obstacles, and if we are not able to overcome them we have to yield, and this is why we lose our children, our young men and women, and those near and dear to us. We do not know what to do for the sick, and if we send for a doctor he does not know any more than anybody else. No person knows what to do for the sick without revelation.

We Are Commanded to Heal the Sick

Cultivating this gift of healing is an important work. We may recall that healing the sick was one of the great missions of Christ. We are commanded to follow His example; hence, we also should learn how to care for and heal the sick. Here is another quote from Brigham Young.

We are to be like the good physician; and if we see the sick--those afflicted with pain and distress in the head, eyes, teeth, or in any of the limbs or other portion of the body, it is our duty to have the medicine—the remedy to administer to that pain, to heal, to cure, to rebuke the disease and save the sick like a good physician, and not kill them by dosing down the medicine as do some of our doctors. Administer the medicine in all mildness, and with good judgment and discretion. Seek until you learn the medicine to administer to each patient, and how much to give to each. There is just as much difference in the spiritual organization as you see in the temporal organization. You can see that eternal variety in both. You may go to a man taken with a fever, and if you treat him as you did a similar case last week, you may consign him to the grave. You ought to know better.

I could preach a sermon on doctoring the body, we have so many that do not understand it among those who profess to; but it is of no use. I would rather have the sister wait upon me in sickness than many of those who profess to be physicians.

Elders of Israel, learn to be spiritual physicians. Carry the medicine with you to deal out to every patient as he needs it. If a patient has chills and fever in his spirit, you must carry the medicine to cure it; also for the erysipelas, or the dumb ague, or the rheumatism in the spirit, you must carry the medicine to heal. Thus learn, when you have chastened enough, to cease; and be sure you never chasten beyond the balm you carry in your portmanteau.

Joseph Smith also recognized this gift of healing involved more than priesthood blessings. Edna Loretta Anderson Foote records that Joseph Smith blessed her grandfather and told him he was a natural born doctor.

My grandfather, Wiley Payne Allred, was blessed by the Prophet Joseph Smith who told him “You are a natural born doctor and will be able to put your hand on people and tell them where their pain is. (I have seen him do it). And you will know the herbs of the field.”

This same resource states that Joseph gave her grandfather an herb book written by Samuel Thomson and told him to study it. The prophet also encouraged others to practice the method taught by Samuel Thomson. In fact, after having read both Thomson’s works and the writings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young on the subject of health care, it is quite clear that both of our prophet leaders were highly influenced by Thomson’s teachings. In fact, all of the early Mormon physicians practiced Thomson’s system of botanical hydrotherapy. One of these was Priddy Meeks, who wrote the following in his journal about Thomson.

It is stated that Joseph Smith said that Thomson was as much inspired to bring [forth] his
principle of practice according to the dignity and importance of it, as he was to introduce the Gospel. Then we should look on [these] principles as an appendix to the gospel—as a temporal salvation. It was introduced nearly contemporary with the Gospel, even the Word of Wisdom and Thomsonianism [run] together and [strengthen] each other, instead of coming in collision with each other.\textsuperscript{13}

I have utilized the principles of Thomsonian hydrotherapy and find that they still work.\textsuperscript{14} In fact, I feel that they work more quickly and effectively than many modern treatments do. However, a more important point is that Joseph Smith did encourage people to study as well as to rely on faith. Many times, unskilled people (with just enough knowledge to be dangerous) undertake to treat very serious and life-threatening diseases.\textsuperscript{15} Joseph Smith would not approve of this. He once stated, “All ye doctors who are fools, not well read, and do not understand the human constitution, stop your practice.”\textsuperscript{16} He also stated once that the herb lobelia was “excellent in its place,” but “…like the power of God, or any other good, it becomes evil when improperly used.”\textsuperscript{17}

Modern proponents of herbs (and all people in the health field) should carefully consider these things. It appears that the gift of healing includes more than just the ability to give blessings. It is also the inspired knowledge and ability to “doctor” people, which knowledge and ability comes from both study and faith.

Gift of Healing Needed Today

Don’t we still need this gift of healing in our day? We have not conquered disease, yet. We have not eliminated the need for physicians yet, either. There are numerous “incurable” diseases we face today: heart attacks, cancer, arthritis, lupus, strokes and AIDS are a few of the better known afflictions. If God has prepared herbs and roots to remove the cause of diseases in Alma’s day, then did He not foresee these problems and prepare the means to heal them today as well. If Christ and His prophets could heal such serious afflictions as leprosy, blindness and crippled limbs, can we not learn to exercise faith today to overcome these serious diseases?

As parents, do we believe it is the will of God that our children should be sickly, prone to infections, colds, earaches, kidney and bladder infections and a host of other ailments? In the days before modern medicine Brigham Young claimed that children could be brought to health with priesthood blessings, fasting, rest and some simple herbal remedies. If these methods worked then, they will work now. They have worked in our family.

If we trust the words of Brigham Young, a prophet of God, then the Lord has answers to all of these problems. What we need is not more scientific medicine, but more of an ability to go to the Lord and discover how to care for the sick. No amount of modern scientific medicine will ever replace the need for this spiritual gift of healing.

Here is a story which illustrates this point. I met an LDS woman in Florida who was the daughter of two medical doctors. One day she went to see her father because a sore had broken out on her body. Her Dad, without thinking what he was saying, said, “Oh, that’s the kind of sore that appears on someone right before they die of cancer.” Then he realized this was his daughter and quickly toned down his statement. She went for further tests and discovered that her body was filled with cancer. Her Father urged her to go on chemotherapy, but she had prayed about it and the Spirit had told her: “If you go on chemotherapy, you will die.”

So instead, she began reading books and searching for answers. She testified that when she came upon those things she was supposed to do, the words shimmered on the page. She followed these procedures and rid herself of the cancer. That had been over five years ago and there was presently no sign of cancer in her body at all.

Does this mean that no one should ever go on chemotherapy? I don’t know. The point of the story is that this woman trusted in God, and he showed her what she should do for her unique body. What another person, with his/her unique biochemistry, should do might be very different.

In my own life I have sought the Lord’s counsel on many health problems dealing with myself and my family. In many cases, the Lord has guided us
to a solution that saved us from drugs or surgery. In some cases He has intervened in problems that could have been life-threatening emergencies. On a few occasions, however, we have been inspired to seek out help from orthodox physicians. What is right for any given circumstance depends on the unique situation and makeup of that individual. That is why there can be no magic formulas, no secret elixirs or programs that will solve everyone’s health problems. Even Christ used different approaches with different individuals, depending on their needs and faith. Hence, only through inspiration and the gift of healing can we truly know what to do to heal the sick.

Chapter Twelve Footnotes

1 Journal of Discourses 14: 108 & 109
2 Journal of Discourses 20:195
3 Journal of Discourses 23: 194-195
4 Journal of Discourses 24: 138
5 Journal of Discourses 15: 225
6 Brigham Young in Journal of Discourses 14: 230
7 Journal of Discourses 13: 155
8 Journal of Discourses 18: 71
9 Brigham Young in Journal of Discourses 13: 142
10 Brigham Young in Journal of Discourses 9: 171
11 Journal of Discourses 9: 125
12 Statement Concerning the Prophet Joseph Smith by Edna Loretta Anderson Foote (Born 26 March 1885), recorded by Thomas Ghoon Truitt 23 June 1965 in possession of the author.
14 I have written a short book on natural healthcare for children and families based upon the Thomsonian principles. For those who would like to learn more about the Thomsonian system, it is called The ABC Herbal.
15 Unfortunately, many of these people are motivated primarily by the profits of their latest “multi-level marketing” company or by their shallow belief in some holistic “guru” rather than a sincere concern for the sick and a genuine inspired knowledge.
16 History of the Church, 6:59
17 Ibid., 5:209
Chapter Thirteen

Cranks and Fanatics

Now we come to a very touchy subject. In the field of health care, there is a very bad tendency to call any form of health care we do not understand, quackery. Because of licensing laws, most Americans have been exposed to only one form of medicine. They have been taught that this form of healing is “scientifically proven” while other forms of healing are not. There are many orthodox physicians and laymen alike who consider herbology, naturopathy, homeopathy, acupuncture, massage therapy and other “alternative” forms of therapy to be quackery. Even nutrition is commonly considered a “quack” form of therapy as noted by the late Dr. Robert Mendelsohn, M.D.

If you look at almost any other system of medicine besides the Western, you'll find a heavy reliance on food. The “food” of Modern Medicine, however, is the drug. The American doctor, aside from a very fragmentary and usually incorrect approach to certain “therapeutic diets” completely disregards nutrition. Those who are concerned with nutrition are labeled faddists, freaks, extremists, radicals, and quacks...

A medical doctor I know has counseled me not to create opposition where opposition does not exist, so I want to acknowledge that there are many doctors who are aware of the importance of good nutrition. However, the greater percentage of doctors I have encountered tend to belittle and criticize people involved in nutrition, herbs or other alternative therapies. Usually, these doctors know little or nothing about the therapy they are criticizing. They just assume that their brand of medicine is superior.

This is true even in the Church where those who rely heavily on nutrition or alternative theories of health care are called fanatics, cranks, quacks and food faddists. Let me assure you, the general principles presented in this book are neither quackery nor faddism. They are common sense health rules which are in harmony with scripture and the teachings of the prophets. However, even if someone believes in a health care system we know to be erroneous or ineffective, we are not justified in applying emotionally explosive titles as quacks, cranks and kooks.

Of course, the problem isn’t just medical people criticizing “alternative” people. The problem goes in both directions. There are also those who get into “health food” and “alternative” healing fields who heap derision and ridicule on members of the orthodox medical profession and those who seek their help. They even criticize Church leaders who turn to doctors for help, citing this as a sign of apostasy.

In either case, this type of name-calling is entirely inappropriate for the Saints of God. Christ taught us to be careful how we judge and indicated that calling our brother a “fool” put us in danger of God’s judgment. The scriptures tell us, “to esteem our brother as ourself.” They tell us to “judge not, that ye be not judged.” (St. Matt. 7:1) They also tell us that we should not mock our brother. (D&C 38:25, 27 and Alma 5:30-31)

We should refrain from judging the choices of others in these matters. How someone chooses to care for the health of his/her own body is a personal matter between them and God. That is why I have adopted a personal rule. I strive at all times to avoid judging the way others take care of their own bodies. How you chose to eat is none of my business. Likewise, how I chose to eat is none of your business. If I chose to refrain from pork, sugar, white flour or some other food which you enjoy, that is my affair. It does not affect you. I will not preach at you for eating it; I do not want you to preach at me for not eating it. Occasionally, I will indulge in a little junk-food “treat” myself. When I do, I want to enjoy it. I don't want someone to preach to me about diet and ruin my dinner. It is one thing to teach people correct principles about nutrition; it is quite another to dictate how they should eat.
Likewise, we need to avoid criticizing people’s choices in health care. Although my family primarily relies on faith, nutrition, herbs and a few other home remedies, we are not above calling upon professional medical help when we feel the situation warrants it. Hence, we will not criticize someone who elects orthodox medical care. We do not appreciate the times we have had doctors or medically-oriented people criticize our health care choices, especially when we know more about the subject than they do. We do not criticize their knowledge of drugs and surgery because we do not have the knowledge and experience to qualify us as judges. It seems reasonable that they are not qualified to criticize alternative health care practices, having little knowledge and experience with them.

Perhaps it will help if we examine the real definitions of some of faddism, quackery, etc. With a more accurate understanding we may be less inclined to engage in the sin of “evil speaking” against our brothers and sisters.

**Faddists**

A person who carefully and thoughtfully adopts certain health or diet practices is not a faddist. Faddists are people who adopt fads, who go with the latest fashions of the day. However, orthodox medicine is not exempt from the problem of faddism either. Medicine is constantly promoting the latest breakthrough in surgery, the latest “wonder drug” and so forth. History shows that many of yesterdays “miracle cures” proved to be harmful or ineffective.

The reason most of us are susceptible to faddism is that we keep trying to ignore the law of the harvest. The common man and the doctor tend to fall prey to the same erroneous idea that health can be obtained by swallowing some pill or finding some new “miracle cure.” But, as we have seen in this book, health is obtained by obedience to law. “As a man soweth, so shall he reap.” Health must be earned and jealously guarded by good habits and most of us are too lazy to work for it. Simple truths about health, however, are not new or fashionable. So, we all tend to fall prey to the latest promise of a quick fix, be it the newest drug, the latest food supplement and so forth. As Dr. Henry Bieler has so eloquently stated, “...a search for pure air, pure raw milk, pure water, natural, unprocessed, unpreserved foods, unsprayed vegetables, nourishing whole-grain bread is too simple, too unpretentious to be extolled as a ‘new’ therapy in treating disease.”

In contrast, one who learns more about nutrition and determines to adopt a healthier diet hardly deserves the label of “faddist.” One might as well call someone a faddist who seeks to exercise, lose weight or apply any other good principle of health care wisdom.

**Fanatics**

Likewise, people who hold to principles different from our own are not fanatics. Fanatic is a much abused term. We tend to call anyone who holds an opinion more strongly than we do a fanatic. Unfortunately, people who refuse to eat white bread or refined sugar or who use home remedies instead of going to the doctors, have often been called fanatics, even in the Church.

This is both unkind and uncalled for. I suppose that Mormons appear fanatical to some people because they refuse to drink any alcohol at all. After all, a little bit of alcohol won’t hurt anyone, will it? Isn’t it being radical not to drink even a few sips now and then? We should be moderate in all things, right? Wrong! People commonly say that the Word of Wisdom preaches “moderation in all things.” It does not. That phrase is a pseudo-scripture. There is nothing in the Word of Wisdom about being “moderate in all things.” Should we be moderate in consuming alcohol, smoking “pot” or committing adultery?

We are not supposed to be moderate—we are to “prove all things” and “hold fast [to] that which is good.” (I Thess. 5:21) So, if we discover something is bad for us, we ought not to eat it or drink it, for the same reasons we abstain from alcohol. Just because someone believes that something is not good for the body and refuses to eat it doesn’t mean that he/she is a fanatic. A vegetarian who refuses to eat meat is no more a fanatic than a Mormon who won’t take a sip of alcohol or an orthodox Jew who won’t eat swine’s flesh.
A better definition of a fanatic is someone who wants to cram his belief down everybody else's throat. A person who has quietly made decisions about his dietary preference, no matter how different that preference may be from ours should not be called a fanatic.

I remember when I was trying to improve my health I gave up eating refined sugar. Before that time I had never understood how hard it must be for a non-member to give up alcohol, tobacco, coffee or tea. It isn't the physical addiction that's hard; it's the social addiction. Many of my good Mormon friends said precisely the type of things that other people probably say to someone trying to give up drinking alcohol or coffee. "Oh, come on," some people would say, "Just a little bit won't hurt you. You don't want to be a fanatic do you? The Word of Wisdom says moderation in all things, so a little bit won't hurt you."

Until I experienced this I never understood the meaning of social addiction. Early in my experience of changing my diet I learned that even though I wasn't trying to make anyone else eat or live like I was, I was getting labeled a fanatic. The very people who labeled me as such, were those who wanted to force their way of life on me. That is an odd paradox. Who is the real fanatic?

I readily admit that there are those who lose their sense of balance and place the Word of Wisdom ahead of more important things in the gospel. In my experience, these are a small minority of those who become interested in health. Most of the Church members I've found who are striving to live the positive aspects of the Word of Wisdom, put their lives in harmony with the rest of the gospel principles. They are active, faithful Latter-day Saints. Hence, they are not fanatics.

Quacks

This brings us to the highly abusive term "quack." This is frequently applied to people who use herbs, nutrition, and help other people learn how to use them, in spite of the numerous scriptural references which support their use. I have also met those who insist on calling all medical doctors quacks. Basically, we tend to apply the term quackery to any treatment method which we feel is ineffective. Quack is an emotionally explosive term which few people really understand.

The word "quack" appears to be derived from the term "quack salver" which was derived from the idea of using "quick silver" or mercury to "salve" or cure disease. Hence, the term originally referred to those who abandoned herbal practice in favor of mineral drugs like mercury, arsenic and antimony. However, in modern use the term is used to refer to anyone who uses "unproven" remedies.

Since the majority of scientists and doctors involved in modern medicine consider herbs, mild food, faith healing and the like to be unproven, these methods have been labeled quackery. But this is not a good usage of the term. More accurately, a quack is an ignorant pretender. Quackery is a form of deception. A quack is someone who pretends to have knowledge he does not have. Thus, to call someone a quack is to call him/her an immoral liar. So, before we bring such a serious charge against a person, we had better make certain that we have our facts straight.

Those who honestly represents their credentials, knowledge and training are not quacks simply because they are using methods we disagree with. They are not guilty of any crime if they represent themselves honestly.

In contrast, if we believe that anything which is unproven is quackery, we create serious problems for ourselves. First of all, relying on God for healing is a scientifically "unproven" method. For example, the FDA and many "anti-quackery crusaders" consider faith healing a "quack" cure. Is a priesthood holder practicing quackery if he relies on the "unproven" method of healing a person through a priesthood blessing?

A study done by the Office of Technology of the United States suggests that only 15-20% of the current practices of orthodox medicine have been proven by modern "scientific" standards. That makes 85-90% of modern medicine quackery by their own standards. Remember that the scriptures teach we will be judged by the same measure we use to judge
others. If we call other people quacks, can the same standard condemn us?

As saints, however, we do not have to wait for scientific proof because we have the word of the Lord. We did not need to wait for scientific evidence to recognize the harm of tea, coffee, alcohol and tobacco. Why should we wait for scientific proof to adopt a diet of natural, unprocessed, unpolluted, unadulterated fruits, vegetables and whole grains? Can we not trust that what God created is wholesome, when He declares that it is? Does He have to prove that herbs and mild foods work before we will obey His commandment to nourish the sick with them?

Many of the LDS and non-LDS people who are involved in nutrition and herbs exhausted the resources of orthodox medicine in trying to solve our health problems. Many bear strong testimony that they were lead to use herbs, mild food, fasting and other simple means as an answer to their prayers. Many use these things because they have studied the scriptures and are convinced these are God’s methods of healing. Others feel they have been blessed by the advances in modern medical technology. Should we call anyone a quack who is acting out of personal or religious convictions? I think not, unless we wish to be judged of God by the same harsh yardstick.

Church Members Lead the Way

It is interesting to note that members of the Church have been one of the driving forces behind the resurgence in the use of herbs and dietary therapy in the United States. Many of the foremost leaders of the natural health movement have been Latter-day Saints, who gained much of the inspiration for their work from the above passages. These include John R. Christopher, Paavo Airola, La Dean Griffin, C. Samuel West, Stan Malstrom and many others. Utah hosts the largest encapsulated herb companies in the world, which were founded and are directed by active Church members. Clearly, LDS people are more than just sheep following a current trend; they are at the forefront of this trend. If we consider all this to be quackery, then it is clear that it has been LDS people who have lead the way in establishing quackery in this country. Or, are these leaders just as inspired in their work as many of our LDS doctors and scientists have been?

It is often asserted that those involved in alternative medicine are in it solely for profit and gain. After traveling the country and visiting several foreign countries, I can decidedly say that the majority of the herbalists, nutritionists and alternative healers I have encountered were far more interested in helping people than they were in financial gain. I am not referring to people who sell “cure-all” and “miracle” products through multi-level marketing programs. These people frequently know little or nothing about the products they sell.

Rather, I am speaking of the genuine natural therapist who has studied his method of therapy extensively through reading, course work, apprenticeship and/or practical experience. Most of these people make only a modest, average living. They do what they do because they were helped and want to help others.

Even those who do make an above average living should not be condemned for their success. After all, medical doctors make money, too, but that doesn’t mean that greed is their primary motive for being doctors.

Proof

What is considered proven varies from culture to culture and from person to person. An excellent book to read which demonstrates this problem very clearly is Medicine and Culture by Lynn Payer. This book, written by a medical journalist, compares the practice of medicine in France, Germany, England and the United States. It shows that what is considered scientific in one culture may be rejected in another culture. What is interesting is that although the practice of medicine differs widely in these four countries, they all have similar health statistics. As the gospel spreads into Asia are we going to call our Chinese and Indian brethren quacks and cranks because they rely heavily on acupuncture, herbs, massage and diet for healing?

History shows us that we should not be too quick to condemn those whose views on health and disease are “unorthodox.” Every major discovery of modern
medicine has come with great opposition. When Admiral Lind published “A Treatise on Scurvy” claiming that lime juice would prevent scurvy in the British navy, he was scoffed at. After all, the men had enough to eat. If they couldn’t take it without getting sick they were obvious malingerers who needed a good flogging—and received it. Faced with this strong opposition by orthodox medicine he bitterly noted, “there are certain persons who just will not let themselves be convinced that a terrible disease can be cured easily, yes, that it can even be prevented. I’m afraid they would have more confidence in some mixture that bore a highfalutin title, such as Antiscorbutic Golden Elixir.” It took 42 years before Dr. Lind received credit for his discovery.

When Semmelweis announced that the infant and maternal mortality rate could be drastically reduced by doctors washing their hands between autopsies and deliveries he was immediately derided as a “quack.” After all, everyone knew that childbed fever was the curse of Eve, a divine judgment, and therefore could not be prevented. Semmelweis was driven insane by the deridings of his fellow physicians and died because of the severe stress. It wasn’t until years after he died that bacteria were discovered and Semmelweis was vindicated.

The history of medicine is filled with examples like these. Today, there are those who claim to be having great success in treating “incurable” diseases with simple herbal and dietary therapies. Though some of these people are faking, others are sincere. Can this possibly be true? Why should we doubt it? Do not our own scriptures testify that God has prepared herbs and roots to remove the cause of the diseases to which we are subject. Do not they tell us that we should nourish the sick with herbs and mild foods? At the least we should learn from history to give these things the benefit of the doubt. We should not follow the way of the world in ridiculing and persecuting those who do not believe as we do.

There is no need for a “war” between church members on the subject of health care. We have far more to gain by opening meaningful dialogue. Again we quote Dr. Mahler of the World Health Organization.

For far too long, traditional systems of medicine and “modern” medicine have gone their separate ways in mutual antipathy. Yet are not their goals identical—to improve the health of mankind and thereby the quality of life? Only the blinkered mind would assume that each has nothing to learn from the other.”

Legal Considerations

Even more importantly, we must not pass or support laws which make it illegal for people with differing opinions about health care to practice according to the dictates of their consciences. Most of us assume that medical licensing laws were put into effect to protect the public. However, they were lobbied for by the medical profession to eliminate competition. We have noted that there are many other schools of thought in health care, including: naturopathy, homeopathy, herbology, massage therapy and acupuncture. Unfortunately, it is illegal to practice most of these healing arts under current medical licensing laws.

The American Medical Association tends to claim that all alternative forms of treatment are quackery, even those that are accepted practice in other countries. In fact, the AMA was convicted in federal court of illegal conspiracy against the profession of chiropractics. It was proven that they have worked to deliberately discredit chiropractors so they could put them out of business.

Medicine is big business and unfortunately, in this world, money often rules. Those who have control and power seldom want to let it go. That is why medical doctors are not likely to hear many positive things about alternative healing arts. After all, they are competing forms of therapy.

The biggest problem with all medical licensing laws, however, is that they deny the gifts of the Spirit. We have seen that the gift of healing is more than the ability to lay hands on the sick and bless them. We have shown that it is also the ability to know by the spirit of revelation what sort of medicine or treatment a person might require. This cannot be done under medical licensing laws and here is why.
Doctors are required to follow standardized procedures or they run the risk of losing their licenses. Hence, many doctors who have ventured into using herbs and nutritional remedies have been accused of unprofessional conduct and have lost their licenses to practice. If a doctor began to dispense remedies according to the spirit of revelation and prophecy he might be prompted by the spirit to use some non-standard procedure. This could result in malpractice suits and criminal prosecution.

On the other hand, if a lay person, who has the spirit of revelation and prophecy, begins to dispense remedies, herbs, diets, exercises, or other treatments he can be charged with practicing medicine without a license. This is a felony charge and could land him in jail.

I once saw a cartoon illustrating this problem. It depicted the prophet Isaiah telling King Hezekiah to put a lump of figs on his boil and he would recover. It then showed Isaiah being arrested for practicing medicine without a license, in spite of the fact that the remedy worked. This may sound far-fetched, but if Isaiah lived today, that is exactly what could happen. In many states, Christ himself could be arrested for practicing medicine without a license if He were among us today.

Many healers in this country have been arrested and prosecuted for practicing medicine without a license, in spite of the fact that none of their clients or patients were dissatisfied with their treatments. Some of these have been religious practitioners. We may disagree with the teachings of a Christian Scientist or a Seventh-Day Adventist who seeks to heal himself or his children by following religious convictions. However, if we support laws which prosecute and punish these people, then our own rights to follow the dictates of our own consciences are endangered. How would you like to have the law force you to accept treatments for cancer from an herbalist if you thought surgery was your only hope?

Free Agency Is Vital

People who support these laws say we must “protect” the public. They say that if we allow people to practice “unproven” healing arts then people may delay getting “proper” treatment. They say that people may be hurt and injured. On the surface, these arguments seem very convincing. However, they remind me of the war in heaven. Perhaps we should recall that it was Satan’s plan, not God’s, which called for “protecting” people from being able to make wrong choices. God said that we must be given the chance to commit sin and then be punished for it.

Under God’s plan, punishment can only be just if a person has actually committed a trespass. God was not willing to restrain us because we “might” commit trespass if He did not restrain us. Hence, we are justified in punishing someone who has actually committed a trespass, but we are not justified in punishing someone because we believe that he might commit a trespass if we let him do what he wants to do.

So, if a person lies to someone about the risks and/or benefits of a treatment they should be liable for the damages. If a practitioner injures a person through carelessness, neglect or fraud, then he should be punished. However, a practitioner should not be restrained from helping someone because we believe his methods are dangerous or ineffective. A person is supposed to be innocent until proven guilty. Hence, unless we have proven that a practitioner’s methods are dangerous or ineffective we have no right to restrain him/her.

Where then is the room in our current health care system for inspiration from the Lord? We are hung up on scientific “proof” and have more faith in our scientists than we do in inspiration from the Lord. While it is true that there will always be those who are charlatans and fakes, this does not mean that we should outlaw every practice we don’t feel conforms to good scientific practice. Should we convict all men who claim to be prophets because most of them are false prophets?

Herbs, for example, have fallen out of popular use. Yet, there exists a wealth of historical, clinical and biochemical evidence that they work. I have met many skilled herbalists who I feel have that intuitive gift that Brigham Young referred to, that natural gift of healing. These people, however, cannot practice openly because of the laws. Reputable herb companies
are unable to publish reliable information because of the current laws. Hence, the current laws leave those who want to learn how to use herbs and mild foods properly to muddle through for themselves. The solution, is not stricter laws on herbs; it is a relaxing of restrictions that would permit qualified and experienced herbalists to openly teach their correct use. We must not continue to deny the gift of healing by supporting laws which would prosecute those who exercise this gift.

**Cooperation**

Please don’t misunderstand. These things are not designed to put down or replace all of the services of our skilled doctors and surgeons. Even those of us who rely primarily on herbs and mild foods for our health care rely on orthodox physicians for certain problems. We can be grateful for many of the wonderful things they can do, particularly with surgery and the treatment of trauma victims, such as those who have been in automobile accidents. Yet, can there not also be room for those who have skill, training and experience in the use of herbs and mild foods to offer our counsel to our fellow Saints? Even in cases of serious illness, isn’t it possible that these practices could enhance recovery?

I propose that those involved in orthodox medicine and those involved in alternative remedies within the Church should get together as brethren and discuss their differences of opinion, honestly and openly—as equals. Instead of deriding each other, let’s work together and discover the mix that the World Health Organization is seeking. We have much to gain. It is true that more research needs to be done on herbs and mild foods. So, why don’t we as Latter-Day Saints do the research? Let’s use the laboratories and facilities available to us and test the various nutritional and herbal cures for disease.

If we could verify the therapeutic value of whole herbs and learn how to use herbs and mild foods in a more studied manner we could do much in helping the third world nations obtain medical care. China has already been very successful in getting medical care to all their people by blending traditional and modern medicine. Their “barefoot doctors” know how to use local herbs, teach sound hygiene, and are able to perform simple surgery and other modern medical techniques.

We have much to lose if we continue in our current course of opposition. Let’s remember the words of the apostle Paul.

> Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him who eateth: for God hath received him...  
> ...He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks...  
> ...For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, are the Lord’s...  
> ...Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, and there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably, Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink [or herbs vs. drugs, or alternative vs. natural health care]; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” (Rom. 14:1-3,6,8,15,17)

Even if we cannot come to agreement, let us all, both orthodox and alternative, practitioner and layman, be charitable in our judgments and give our brethren in the gospel the benefit of the doubt. As Christ’s disciples, we cannot afford to do anything less.
Chapter Thirteen Footnotes

1 Mehndohlson, Confessions of a Medical Heretic, page 77
2 I have refrained from citing examples, but it does happen, even in Church publications.
3 “Far too many of these new ‘miracle’ drugs are introduced with fanfare and then revealed as lethal in character, to be silently discarded for newer and more powerful drugs, which allegedly cure all the ills to which the flesh is heir.” Bieler, Food Is Your Best Medicine, Introduction XIII
4 Bieler, Food Is Your Best Medicine, p. 12
5 “It has been estimated that only 10 to 20 percent of all procedures currently used in medical practice have been shown to be efficacious by controlled trial”, From “...Assessing the Efficacy and Safety of Medical Technologies”, Office of Technology Assessment Publication #PB286-920, p. 7, Sept. 1978. This was just one of the citations in Proving Orthodox Medicine is Unproven, Researched and Edited by Catherine J. Frompovich, Ph.D., and Laraine C. Abbey, R.N., M.S., published by CANAH., Richlandtown, PA.
6 Mahler, Aesculapius.
7 Current Medical Practices Acts conflict with our right of free speech because they prohibit those with knowledge of alternative medical practices from advising others. This is diagnosing and prescribing and is a felony. Many well trained herbalists, naturopath, massage therapists, etc. have been convicted as criminals for trying to help others with the knowledge they have obtained.
8 Dr. Anthony J. Sattilaro, M.D. points this out beautifully in Living Well Naturally (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984)
Chapter Fourteen

Conspiring Men

The Lord tells us in the Word of Wisdom that He gave this revelation “In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days…” (D&C 89:4) This passage is often quoted with reference to those who produce and sell tobacco, alcohol and other harmful substances and with good reason, too. In order to understand why, we need to examine the nature of “conspiring men.”

We might remember that the first evil and conspiring man was Cain, who slew his brother Abel “for the sake of getting gain.” (Moses 5:50) Cain was called Master Mahan, because he was master of the great secret, the secret of getting gain without the labor of one’s own hands through deceit, plunder and murder. Cain formed the first conspiracy or secret combination with Satan. Surely, then, anyone who knowingly sells products which are harmful and destructive to human life, and plots to keep the harmful effects of these products secret, is guilty in a degree of slaying his brother for personal gain.

This means that we should not market any product which we believe may be harmful. If we do, we are guilty to a degree of supporting Satan’s conspiracy to destroy life. It doesn’t matter whether people would buy the product anyway or not. We should not profit from transactions which are anything except beneficial to all parties involved.

We can readily see that those who produce and market tobacco, alcohol and other harmful drugs are guilty of “slaying” their brethren to obtain gain. However, after becoming aware of some of the principles taught in this book, perhaps we need to extend this condemnation to a wider group.

For example, what about the major food manufacturing companies and fast food chains who promote products loaded with salt, fat and sugar? Are they doing this because they desire to bless their fellow men with nutritious, health-building food or because they can make a good profit on the transaction? Millions of dollars are spent developing and marketing food products which contribute to our destruction through heart disease, cancer, diabetes and other health disorders? Are there conspiring men behind this industry? The answer is YES.

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) traces its origins back to the Bureau of Chemistry. In 1906 a law was passed to help protect the American public against contamination of the food supply. The architect of this first Pure Food and Drug Law was the head of the Bureau of Chemistry, Dr. Harvey W. Wiley. Armed with this law, Dr. Wiley went after major food manufacturers to stop the over processing and refining of foods such as bleached white flour and the addition of man-made chemicals and food additives. He even filed suit against the mighty Coca-Cola Company because their product contained many substances research had shown were harmful to human health.

The major food companies fought back in a big way, and in 1912 they lobbied to replace Dr. Wiley with a man named Elmer M. Nelson. Someone who was on their side. In spite of growing scientific evidence that these unnatural foods were harmful, Dr. Nelson defended the major food manufacturers. He is quoted as saying, “It is wholly unscientific to state that a well-fed body is more able to resist disease than a less well-fed body.”¹ The FDA and other government agencies have been publishing literature defending the major food and drug manufacturers ever since. At the same time they have ridiculed, demeaned and belittled anyone who promotes whole, natural and unprocessed foods as being superior for human health as “quacks, cranks and faddists.”²

This explains why a Utah baker was accused of false advertising for using the slogan— “The whiter the bread, the sooner you’re dead,” while TV advertisements can claim that sugar laden breakfast cereals are part...
of “a nutritious breakfast”? The Lord had to give us the Word of Wisdom—so we would have accurate health information in these last days.

As Latter-day Saints, many of us have bought this propaganda whole-heartedly. We honestly believe that man has improved upon the food God says he created for our “constitution, nature and use” by refining, processing and adding man-made chemicals. Do we honestly believe that we can make better food than God?

This problem has a much broader base than would appear at first glance. In this chapter, we will see that it is only a part of a much larger problem. Note the words of this verse again, in their entirety.

Behold, verily thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation— (D&C 89:4)

Note these words carefully: “I have warned you, and forewarn you.” The intent of this passage becomes clearer when it is rendered, “I have warned you about the evils and designs of conspiring men and now I forewarn you.” The Lord is saying He has already told us about these evil men, and now He is going to repeat and elaborate on His warning. Where was this previous warning?

A Prior Warning

If we turn back to the thirty-eighth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, we find these words,

And now I show unto you a mystery, a thing which is had in secret chambers, to bring to pass even your destruction in process of time, and ye knew it not;
But I tell it unto you, and ye are blessed... (D&C 38:13-14)

In other words, the Lord told the saints in January of 1831, less than a year after the Church was organized, that there was a plot in secret chambers to bring about their destruction. He then stated, “And for your salvation I give unto you a commandment...”

This commandment is not actually given until verse 32. Before He gives this commandment the Lord launches into a digression to educate the Saints, possibly to prepare their minds to receive this commandment. He tells us that the poor have complained to Him and that He has made the rich and that all things belong to Him. He indicates that He desires all of His children to be equal in temporal things, for if we are not one we are not His. The whole message pivots around this key point: “let every man esteem his brother as himself.” This concept was so important that it was repeated twice: “And again I say unto you, let every man esteem his brother as himself.” (D&C 38:24-25)

That, of course, is the grand key which stands in direct opposition to the nature of secret combinations and works of darkness. Conspiring men esteem themselves above their brethren. That is why they can justify dishonesty, theft and even murder in order to gain. They view their needs and rights as being greater than the needs and rights of those they plunder. A righteous man, on the other hand, who esteems his brother as himself, would never do anything that would give him unfair advantage in a business transaction. He would do unto his brother as he would like his brother to do unto him.

Once this point has been made and elaborated upon, the Lord reaffirms that there are conspiring men in our nation: “And again, I say unto you that the enemy in the secret chambers seeketh your lives.” He goes on to say that we hear of wars in far countries, but we are missing something because “ye know not the hearts of men in your own land.” (D&C 38:28-29)

This is an important point, because of the goodness of their hearts, righteous people often have a hard time believing that men could be so ruthless as to conspire in secret to destroy people’s lives and take their property. Yet, the Lord points out that these men do exist in our own land. In fact, He has warned us that they are so wicked that they are plotting our destruction.

The passage then continues:

I tell you these things because of your prayers; wherefore, treasure up wisdom in your bosoms, lest the wickedness of men reveal these things unto you by their wickedness, in a manner which shall speak in your ears with a voice louder than that which shall shake the
earth; but if ye are prepared ye shall not fear. (D&C 38:30)

The last phrase “if ye are prepared ye shall not fear” is often quoted out of context to stress the need for food storage and family preparedness. But the passage itself stresses we must prepare by treasuring up wisdom in our bosoms. Otherwise, the true nature of the wickedness of these men will be revealed unto us by the actual wicked acts they will bring forth, which will be so terrible that they shall speak in our ears “with a voice louder than that which shall shake the earth…” Only if we have prepared for that day by treasuring up wisdom will we be prepared and unafraid when that day comes.

Secret Combinations

We might point out here that the Book of Mormon also warns us about secret combinations and works of darkness. In fact, it testifies that they caused the overthrow and total destruction of both the Jaredites and the Nephites. And lest we should feel that we are immune from this problem, Moroni tells us:

Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye might repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain...Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of this secret combination which shall be among you... For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations and countries; and it bringeth to pass the destruction of all people...[emphasis added.] (Ether 8:23-25)

President Ezra Taft Benson testified that these secret combinations were operating today.

Wickedness is rapidly expanding in every segment of our society. It is more highly organized, more cleverly disguised, and more powerfully promoted than ever before. Secret combinations lusting for power, gain, and glory are flourishing. A secret combination that seeks to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries is increasing its evil influence and control over America and the entire world. If we believe that these are the words of a modern prophet, then it is time that we awake to a sense of the awful situation we are in.

A Commandment for our Salvation

Let us recall that the Lord promised the early saints that He would give them a commandment for their salvation against plots of this secret organization. This commandment is found in verse 32, where the Lord tells the saints in order to “escape the power of the enemy” they needed to “go to Ohio; and there I will give unto you my law; and there you shall be endowed with power from on high...” (D&C 38:31-32)

The Saints did go to Ohio, and there, God gave them a revelation which Joseph Smith specified as “embracing the law of the Church” in fulfillment of the promise made earlier. There also, they built the first temple in this dispensation and were “endowed with power from on high” by heavenly messengers restoring vital priesthood keys. We will discuss the implications of these in a moment, but first, we want to note that there is a direct connection between D&C 38 and another revelation received in Ohio. This, of course, is D&C 89, the Word of Wisdom.

Remember specifically what the Lord says in verse four of section 89? He says this revelation was given in consequence of the evils and designs of conspiring men. As we pointed out before, He tells us “I have warned you.” Are not these evil and conspiring men the same who were plotting our destruction in secret chambers? Are they not the same conspirators that Moroni warned would be among us and would seek to overthrow the liberty of all people and bring them down to destruction?

The Lord had warned us, and now, in this revelation He was forewarning us by giving us a Word of Wisdom. Remember what He said we must do to avoid the wickedness of men revealing these things unto us by their wickedness? Was it not to “treasure up WISDOM” in our bosoms?

Who these evil men are and specifically how they operate has never been revealed by God. In fact, we read in the Book of Mormon that this knowledge was deliberately withheld from the Nephites. So it has probably been withheld from us for the same
reasons. Therefore, we will avoid attempting to place the finger on who these evil men are. Our purpose here is only to establish that they do exist and that they are a serious threat. Furthermore, we want to establish the fact that the phrase “evils and designs of conspiring men” has deeper implications than merely those who market alcohol, tobacco and drugs.

**For our Temporal Salvation**

To stress this point further, we should note that one of the purposes of the Word of Wisdom is for the “temporal salvation of all saints in the last days.” Could this temporal salvation be a salvation from the destruction planned by our enemies? The final verse suggests a similar possibility. Does it not tell us that the “destroying angel shall pass [us] by as the children of Israel and not slay [us].” Do we not get the feeling that if we are to physically survive the last days, we must obey the whole Word of Wisdom while walking in obedience to the other commandments of God?

Of course, the Word of Wisdom is only one of the tools the Lord has given us to escape the power of the enemy. We were also given His law which is found in D&C 42. This revelation was given one year after D&C 38. A major portion of this law is devoted to teaching the saints the basic principles of the law of consecration, which is a fulfillment of the Lord’s desire that we esteem our brother as ourselves. This law must also play a vital role in escaping the power of the enemy, as we are told elsewhere in the Doctrine and Covenants that this law will enable us “notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon [us]” to “stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world.” (D&C 78:14)

In keeping with the theme of this book, we should also point out that the law of the Church tells us what to do when we are sick. We examined this earlier, and you will recall we are counseled to call for the elders of the church to bless us, and if we have not faith to be healed, we should be nourished with herbs and mild foods. Note that this nourishing process should not be “at the hand of any enemy.” We certainly wouldn’t want to fall into the hands of the enemy who seeks our destruction when we are sick, would we?

The priesthood powern upon us by the visitations of Christ, Moses, Elias and Elijah in the Kirtland Temple will also be necessary for us to escape the power of the enemy as well. We have seen in this book how the power of faith can work for our temporal salvation in helping us to overcome illness.

However, is it possible that the plot to destroy us involved destroying our health? Could not our destruction by diseases such as cancer, heart disease and so forth be linked to the plans of our Adversary, the Devil, who desires to bring us down to premature death and destruction so that we might not be able to complete our work here upon the earth?

Furthermore, the scriptures prophesy of great calamities that will take place in the last days. If we had to cross the plains as our pioneer forebears did so many years ago, could we survive these physical hardships. If he can succeed in weakening our bodies by getting us to violate the laws of good health, then will we be able to survive these prophesied hardships?

**Deceived by Sorcery**

These secret combinations who seek to destroy the liberty of all people are also referred to in the Book of Revelation. In that book they are described as an evil woman called “Mystery, Babylon the Great, The Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth.” (Rev. 17:5) In chapter 18 of Revelation where her overthrow is foretold, we find another way in which obedience to the Word of Wisdom may save us from this evil power. Verse twenty-three tells us “by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.”

I used to think of sorcery as the superstitious practice of black magic. It conjured pictures in my mind of some alchemist in the middle ages trying to conjure gold out of lead. The dictionary says that sorcery is “the supposed use of an evil supernatural power over people and their affairs.” The Bible dictionary says that a sorcerer is one who foretells the future by casting lots. However, neither of these definitions seem to fit. How could “Mystery, Babylon” deceive all nations of the earth (including our own country, the United States) by superstitious magic in these days of scientific advancement?
Yet, it appears that sorcery will exist on a wide scale in the last days for it is mentioned in other passages as well. We are told in the Book of Revelations that when the plagues come upon the people of the world, they will not repent (i.e., turn away from) their sorceries. (Rev. 9:21) We are also told in Malachi that when the Lord comes in his glory he “will be a swift witness against the sorcerers.” (Mal. 3:5)

Some years ago, I learned the real definition of sorcery and I found it very alarming, because it shows that all nations are being deceived by this power. The word translated as sorcery is the Greek word pharmakia. This is a Greek term which refers to poisons. The word witchcraft in the New Testament is also translated from the same word. So, according to the original Greek, sorcery is the mixing of poisons. A sorcerer is one who mixes poisons. Since “pharmakia” is the root term for pharmacy and pharmacist, it would be reasonable to translate this word as drugs or druggist in modern English. In other words, witchcraft and sorcery are the use of drugs (or poisons). Is the whole world being deceived by drugs? Or to put it even more clearly, is the whole world being doped, drugged and stupefied by the use of drugs? It seems so.

We all know the dangers of illegal drug use. This information is being publicized everywhere. However, remember that tea, coffee and alcohol are also drugs. They are addictive substances. Alcohol creates a “high”, too. But, let’s not forget the root of the issue here: drugs are poisons. Elin Lilly, founder of one of America’s largest drug firms, said that all drugs are poisons and any medicine which is not a poison is not a good drug. Every day people are seeing ads for drugs which promise instant relief from pain and suffering. We are told, “Can’t sleep? Take this drug and sleep peacefully.” The actor tells us, “I had a splitting headache, then I took two drug pills and it was gone.” The message is clear—take these drugs and you’ll have virtually instant relief from your sufferings.

Doctors are taught that the only difference between a medicine and a poison is dose. Hence, there is a widespread belief that small doses of poisons actually can improve our health and well-being provided they are given in small enough doses and with enough skill. However, the numerous side effects people experience on these medications makes one wonder—is it really proper to use poisons as medicines?

Joseph Smith was concerned about the use of poisons for medicines in his day. He warned the saints against there use in these words.

I preached to a large congregation at the stand, on the science and practice of medicine, desiring to persuade the saints to trust in God when sick, and not in an arm of flesh, and live by faith and not by medicine, or poison; and when they were sick, and had called for the Elders to pray for them, and they were not healed, to use herbs and mild food.

Brigham Young was likewise opposed to the use of poisons for treating the sick.

As long as you will give yourself up to be treated with poisonous medicine, sickness, ruin, and death has been brought to hundreds, thousands, yes millions of the daughters of God who would not have died otherwise...I will say as I have said before, medicine never has and never will cure a single person. But it is the proper care and treatment connected with the blessings of God, which will restore a person to health, and not the drugs administered. When it is asserted that they have done so, it will be found on close examination or argument that the person has recovered comparative health in spite of the drugs, and not through their influence.

Many people in Brigham Young’s day used coffee, tea and alcohol as medicines. When these people complained to Brigham Young that they could not “get through the day” without these substances, He told them they should go to bed and stay there until their systems had overcome the addiction to these substances. What might Brigham Young advise those of us who are addicted to pain killers, sleeping pills and countless other medications which we “can’t get through the day without?”

Other Poisons

Unfortunately, the problem of poisons isn’t limited to the use of drugs. We also spray mixtures of poisons on our crops to kill insects and weeds. Small amounts of these poisons remain on our food as pesticide
and herbicide residues. We are told that these small amounts of poisons won’t hurt us. However, there is growing evidence that these poisons are hurting us. First of all, these poisons tend to concentrate the higher up the food chain you go. That is why birds of prey are among the first creatures on the earth who are dying due to the effects of these poisons. If birds of prey are dying, what makes us think that we are immune? Many people get sick every time spraying is done. People have been severely crippled and even killed by the use of these substances.

We have an illusion of protection because each chemical is supposedly regulated. However, farmers get around this by using the maximum amount allowed for one chemical and then they switch to another chemical. Also, we import produce from foreign countries which are still using chemicals on their crops which we have outlawed due to their harmful effects. Hence, the overall dosage of poisons getting into our food chain is much more serious than it appears on the surface.

The major food manufacturers use small amounts of poisons in our food as preservatives, coloring agents, flavoring agents and so forth. We are told that the amounts of these substances are so small that they will not hurt us, but the average American consumes a couple of pounds of food additives each year. What are the cumulative effects of these poisons?

We even add poisons to our drinking water. I know one of the top water quality specialists in the country and have learned that there is abundant evidence that chlorine is a major factor in heart disease and cancer. Chlorination of the water kills bacteria and parasites that cause diarreha and other acute diseases, but chlorine gas is a poison and after about 20-30 years of drinking it, it begins to poison the body. Furthermore, there is widespread concern because various chemicals from our modern industrial society are seeping into the ground water and poisoning our water supplies. Already, there have been areas of the country where these chemical contaminants have caused cancer, birth defects, infertility and other serious degenerative diseases.

Have we been deceived into thinking that all these poisons are safe and beneficial? Let us not forget the story of Amalickiah in the Book of Mormon. This wicked man conspired to be the king of the Nephites. When he failed in that attempt, he gained the favor of the Lamanites and “laid the plan in his heart to dethrone the king of the Lamanites.” (Alma 47:4) He became second in command of the Lamanite armies and “caused that one of his servants should administer poison by degrees to Lehonti,” the leader of the Lamanite armies until he died. (Alma 47:18)

Amalickiah was practicing sorcery when he poisoned Lehonti. Is it possible that the enemy in the secret chambers planned to bring about our destruction by sorcery, that is by poisoning us by degrees? Remember the Book of Mormon says that those who are building up this secret combination seek to “overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations and countries...” just as Amalickiah sought to overthrow the freedom of his people. Let us also remember that the Lord warns that the plans of these wicked men are designed to bring “to pass the destruction of all people...” Are the “magic” chemical formulas of modern science (wonder drugs, vaccines, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, artificial fertilizers, food additives, preservatives, flavoring agents and so forth) really all that miraculous? Or are they unnatural ways of trying to avoid the law of the harvest? Do we honestly believe that we can violate the laws of God and avoid reaping the prophesied consequences (disease, crop failure, etc.) through the use of poisons?

In the Revelations 18:12-13 we read a list of the merchandise which the Mother of Harlots has bought and sold. The last item on the list is the “souls of men.” Conspiring men do not care about the effects their merchandise might have on others. They will sell anything, even men’s souls, if it brings them a profit.

Until the day comes that every man esteems his brother as himself, we are in danger from the actions of conspiring men. Therefore, we must awake to a sense of the awfulness of our situation and recognize the evil that exists in the hearts of men in our own land. We must treasure up wisdom, especially God’s Word of Wisdom, in our hearts lest the wicked plans of these conspiring men speak in our ears with a voice louder than that which will shake the earth. If we have prepared then we will not be afraid of
the destroying angel for we will have obeyed God's law of "temporal salvation" for all of His Saints in the last days.

Chapter Fourteen Footnotes

2. An excellent book to explain this problem is *Empty Harvest* by Dr. Bernard Jensen and Mark Anderson.
6. This was taught to me by a speaker, Charles Morton, at a National Health Federation Convention. You can find reference to pharmacology being derived from a Greek word for poison in *Health & Healing* by Andrew Weil, M.D. pp. 96-97
7. *History of the Church* 4:414
Chapter Fifteen

Be Ye Doers

We began this book with a simple premise—health is a blessing which, like all blessings, is received upon obedience to the laws upon which it is predicated. We have explored these laws as they have been taught by the scriptures and the prophets. We have also looked at validating data from more secular sources. The promises for obedience to these precepts are great.

For starters, we are told that obeying these laws will cause us to receive “health in the navel” and “marrow in the bones.” These promises suggest that our digestive organs (found in the navel or belly) will be strong and vigorous and that our blood-building bone marrow will be vital. I have been told that these are the two major systems that are destroyed by exposure to radiation. Perhaps we need these blessings for our future survival.

We recall from the first chapter that the Lord promised His ancient people that none of the diseases they had known in Egypt would come upon them if they heeded His commandments. Today we know that the diseases of ancient Egypt were the same diseases that plague modern America. From examining mummies, scientists have learned that the Egyptians suffered from tooth decay, impacted molars, arthritis, smallpox, dysentery, appendicitis, gout, tumors, diabetes, leprosy, conjunctivitis and disorders of the stomach and liver. According to an article in Reader's Digest, “Almost every ill we suffer plagued ancient Egypt.”

Clearly, we could use the blessings of health the Lord has promised. With the prophesied plagues which have and will come upon this generation, perhaps we can’t afford to be without these blessings.

Mental Health

We are also promised “wisdom and great treasures of knowledge.” The first thing I noticed when I started improving my diet was a greater mental alertness. I felt like I was coming out of a mental fog. My mind and senses became sharpened. I can truly testify that my mind has been opened to “great treasures of knowledge” since I began to live these laws.

Elder George Q. Cannon recognized this connection between the health of the mind and the diet.

Man requires food to build up his body. He requires food that is adapted to the development of bone, muscle and sinew; but this is not all. He requires food that is suitable to feed his brain and to supply the waste sustained in consequence of the use of his mental faculties. There is a necessity, therefore, for us to take these things into consideration.

There is evidence that many of the mental and spiritual problems of our day are linked to poor nutrition. In her book, Why Suffer?, Ann Wigmore relates the experience of a pet shop owner which demonstrates this problem.

One of my stock items was white mice. I raised them by the thousands and sold them all over the world. Health inspectors said that mine were the most sanitary cages they had ever seen...

But I am a Scotchman. Perhaps that is what made me alter their diet. I had been feeding these hundreds of mice seeds, grass and various grains, but a good friend of mine who ran a boarding house, sold me on the idea that the table leavings from her kitchen [were] the ideal mouse food. As the change meant a large savings in cash, I began to try it. Oh, the mice went for this new fodder ravenously. They loved it, and I believed I had struck the proverbial bonanza. But the effect was soon apparent. My mice became sluggish...Then they began to sicken. A few died and I noticed a change in the community life. They became quarrelsome and soon there were battles all over the place. Some mornings I would remove as many as ten half-eaten bodies. The baby mice became victims of cannibalistic adults.
What made this change? Drugs? Ill-treatment? Starvation? Hardly! This all stemmed from merely eating the food human beings ordinarily consume...³

Parents with teenagers may be interested in learning of the work of Barbara Reed, a parole officer working with juvenile delinquents. In her book, Food, Teens and Behavior she relates the following:

I discovered that a huge proportion of the people who were getting into trouble were junk food junkies. Many were alcoholics or heavy drinkers, and were simultaneously living on booze and sugared snacks. The connection seemed obvious to me: If these men and women were living on processed foods and snacks, how could they get any nourishment? If they were undernourished, how could their central nervous systems be functioning properly? Finally, if their brains and nerves were malfunctioning, how could one expect them to behave sanely in society?⁴

In her book, Barbara discusses how hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), malnutrition (deficiencies of vitamins, minerals and amino acids), food allergies, heavy metal poisoning and other toxins can contribute to delinquent and criminal behavior. She has had incredible success in rehabilitating young criminals by getting them to adhere to a good nutritional program. Youth who avoided sugar, white flour, sodas and other processed snacks in favor of fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains never had any further trouble with the law. Perhaps some of our teenager’s problems are simply due to the junk food our children are eating.

Barbara Reed is not alone in these observations. Dr. Lendon Smith has found that many behavioral problems in children (hyperactivity, shyness, etc.) are related to food allergies, nutritional deficiencies and hypoglycemia. His wonderful book, Feed Your Kids Right, shows how good nutrition is vital for physical and emotional health in children. Of course, it doesn’t take a doctor to figure out that nutrition has an impact on the emotional health of children. Ask any school teacher how long it takes to bring kids “off the walls” after consuming all that candy at Halloween.

Many times a “bad” child is not one whose spirit is unwilling, but rather one whose “flesh is weak” due to the poor nourishment they have received from the parents. You would be surprised at how much better behaved children are who are fed good food and love.

Even serious mental disorders may have nutritional roots. In testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs in 1977, Dr. Michael Lesser, a California psychiatrist stated: Over the past six years, I have treated over five hundred cases of schizophrenia, gradually becoming more sophisticated in my biochemical workup and therapy... Today I can state, without reservation, that orthomolecular [nutritional] psychiatry is definitely helpful in the treatment of schizophrenias. While I am not claiming a complete cure, in about 85 percent of my patients I found it significantly improved their condition.⁵

Dr. Lesser goes on to state that he found “that fully 67 percent of my psychiatric practice is suffering from hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). Indeed, a recent study of blood sugar on 5,000 allegedly healthy young men being inducted into the military found that nearly 25 percent had blood sugars consistent with the diagnosis of low blood sugar. It is apparent that low blood sugar is a very common and generally undiagnosed condition, which is impairing significantly the health of a large percentage of the American population.”⁶

Run and Not Be Weary

Over and over again I hear people complain that they have no energy. Fatigue seems to be one of the greatest problems we have today. With fatigue comes discouragement because we see all of the tasks we feel we should be doing, but we simply do not have the energy to press forward. Here again, these principles come to our rescue. Let us not forget that part of the promises we will be able to “run and not be weary.”

There are those who have actually achieved these promises in this life, such as Arnold Ehret. These people have testified that they could run many miles without fatigue. If we are lacking in energy, perhaps we need to consider again the wonderful promises of God for obedience to His laws of health. There
is no need to be lacking in energy unless we are lacking in faith.

**No Shortcuts**

The promised blessings are great, but few of us want to pay the price for them. We are interested in short cuts. We are seduced by the promises of pills, elixirs, miraculous therapies and magic bullets which promise us relief from our ailments without having to repent and change. These things provide us with temporary relief from our symptoms, but as we have shown in this book, they cannot produce lasting health.

We cannot alter our God-designed nature. Our Father in Heaven organized our bodies and He knew what was best for them. Hence, He has given us instructions (commandments) which teach us how to care for our bodies as well as for our spirits.

The Word of Wisdom indicates that it was given for the “temporal salvation of all saints in the last days.” According to the prophesies found in the scriptures we are going to face many hardships in the years which lie ahead. We will not be able to endure these hardships unless we have obeyed these commandments. We will lack the physical health and vitality to endure the trials of the last days. If we want the “destroying angel to pass by [us] as the children of Israel and not slay [us]” then we will have to obey, just as the children of Israel had to obey anciently.

It is not enough to simply not drink or smoke. The positive aspects are also part of the requirements. We must learn to eat fresh fruits and vegetables in their proper seasons. We must also use whole grains as the staff of life and eat meat sparingly. We must labor and work “by the sweat of our brow” so that our bodies will be strong and healthy. Only by following these and God’s other commandments can we expect genuine health.

**Improving our Nutrition**

How do we begin to make these changes? The best way is to change gradually, one step at a time. We should not berate ourselves for past behavior either. Instead, we should focus, as the Lord did, on the positive. We should strive to include more wholesome foods in our diet which will crowd out the less wholesome ones.

As we feed the body more wholesome food, it becomes stronger and more discerning. The taste buds change and we gradually come to both crave and enjoy wholesome fruits, vegetables and whole grains. When we go back to eating meals high in refined sugar, fat, salt, white flour, meat, etc. we notice a drop in our energy and our health. You will notice that you don’t feel as good after you eat meals that contain refined sugar, fats, lots of meat and dairy foods, white flour and so forth. Gradually, you will come to associate these foods with negative, rather than positive feelings. You will no longer crave these foods because you will know them for what they are, energy and health robbing substances.

Here are some practices to adopt which will help you focus on the positive aspects of changing your diet.

**Fruit First**

First, learn to eat fresh fruit instead of refined sugar and sweets. Start by eating at least one piece of fresh, raw fruit each day—whatever fruit happens to be in season at the time. The best time to consume this fruit is on an empty stomach and with no other foods. Squeeze the juice of a lemon into a glass of water and drink it first thing in the morning. Sweeten it with a little bit of honey or real maple syrup if you like. Or eat an apple, orange, pear, peach or other piece of fresh fruit before breakfast or before lunch. Wait at least 15-20 minutes after eating this fruit before eating any other foods.

Eating fresh, raw fruits provides the body with sugars in the form that they are needed by the body. If you still have cravings for sugar, try taking the herb, licorice root. This herb helps balance out blood sugar levels and has helped many people overcome their craving for sugar. If you have high blood sugar (diabetes) golden seal and/or cedar berries may help you tolerate the fruit better.

Of course, you will probably still want a sweet treat now and then. So, for baking, cooking, etc., obtain some high quality raw honey that has not been
pasteurized. You might also use any of the following: C grade real maple syrup, barley malt, date sugar, freeze-dried sugar cane juice or blackstrap molasses. You will need to obtain some cookbooks and learn how to substitute these items in your recipes, but it is really not that hard.

Eat these natural sources of sugar first; then, if you still crave that candy bar or donut, indulge yourself once in a while. As you become more and more accustomed to obtaining natural sugars in foods, the way God intended our bodies to get them, you will find your craving for unnatural sweets will diminish. You may even find one day that the thought of eating a candy bar will make you feel sick. (It has happened to me and many others as well).

**Salads and Vegetables**

The second healthful dietary practice is to make vegetables a major portion of your lunch and evening meals. Start here by eating a good tossed salad once per day. Always eat some raw salad any time you consume a meal containing meat. This tossed salad should utilize dark green, leafy vegetables, not iceberg lettuce. Make your salads with romaine, red leaf or green leaf lettuce or use shredded cabbage, napa cabbage, kale or spinach. Include other raw vegetables like grated carrots, radishes, green onions, fresh garden tomatoes (not store-bought, winter tomatoes, however), broccoli, cauliflower and green peppers. There are many wholesome weeds growing in our gardens which can also be added to salads. These wild vegetables are very nutritious, but take some getting used to. They include young dandelion greens, marshmallow, purslane, plantain, shepherd’s purse and dock. Learning to eat these foods may come in handy for survival purposes, too.

In addition to your salad, eat at least one and preferably more raw or lightly steamed, fresh vegetables such as green beans, spinach, chard, beets & beet greens, zucchini, parsnips, etc. every day. The Lord begins the positive aspects of the Word of Wisdom by emphasizing “all wholesome herbs.” As we have discussed, this means wholesome vegetables (vegetative matter). Hence, vegetables should be a major portion of our diets. Also, include the herbal vegetables, the herbal seasonings and spices: such as garlic, parsley, basil, majorum, capsicum (cayenne pepper) and so forth. Used in moderation, these are also wholesome herbs. Many have proven medical benefits. Research has demonstrated, for example, that people who regularly consume garlic and onions have much lower levels of blood fat and cholesterol. Onions and garlic also tend to lower blood pressure. So, these kitchen spices often have beneficial medicinal effects as well.

**Whole Grains**

Three, gradually change from using white flour and white rice to using whole grains. Many people start this process by mixing whole grain with white flour, half and half. If your bowel is not used to whole grains, this switch may “clean you out.” That is why it is best done gradually. There are many fine cookbooks available which will help you to learn to bake with whole grains instead of white flour. Most recipes can be converted to whole grain by just adding a little extra liquid. If you use honey instead of sugar as a sweetener, then the honey adds the extra liquid for you.

It is best if you can get your own grain grinder. Once ground, whole wheat flour rapidly loses its vitamin E content and becomes less nutritious. If you have your own grinder, then you can store your whole grains and rotate them as we have been commanded. However, don’t just store and use wheat. As we have seen in this book there are many other nutritious and tasty grains which can be used such as brown rice, whole corn, rye, oats, barley, millet and so forth. For cookies, cakes and treats, you can obtain pastry wheat, which keeps these items from tasting heavy. We often mix wheat and brown rice flour to produce a lighter flour for these purposes. We often use other grains as well to increase the nutritional value of our baked goods.

As you become more accustomed to whole grains, you may wish to try sprouted grains, Essene bread or even wheat or barley grass as discussed in the chapter on grains. These forms of eating grains are even more nutritious.
Vegetarian Dishes

Fourth, obtain a couple of good vegetarian cookbooks and experiment with fixing some meatless meals. *Laurel's Kitchen* by Laurel Robertson, Carol Flinders & Bronwen Godfrey was one of the first vegetarian cookbooks we used. It is excellent, especially the philosophy Laurel gives about preparing meals as an act of divine service. However, there are numerous other equally useful books on the market today. Check your local health food store or book store and pick out a couple.

In recommending vegetarian cooking, I am not suggesting that you give up meat altogether. Rather, we are talking about learning to enjoy some main meals that do not include meat. For many people, meat is the focus of the meal and they do not know how to fix a meal that does not contain meat. It seems incomplete to them. Don't plunge into this thing in a radical manner. Instead, once per week try out a new meatless meal. If your family likes it, then you have a new menu item that does not include meat. If your family does not like it, you can always go out for hamburgers. After about a year of doing this, you should have 10 or 20 dishes that your family loves.

Of course, you don't need to get fancy to cook meatless meals. You'd be surprised to find how filling a meal of nothing more than baked potatoes and tossed green salad can be. You simply eat two baked potatoes instead of one. You can also experiment with meals that use less meat or smaller portions of meat. And, of course, you can focus on eating healthier forms of meat as discussed earlier.

Fats and Oils

Fifth, diminish intake of processed fats and oils and replace them with good fats. Good fats include extra virgin olive oil, butter from pasture-raised cows (including clarified butter or ghee), high quality coconut oil and the natural fats in foods like avocados, nuts and seeds. The fats in deep-ocean fish supply critical omega-3 fatty acids and important fat soluble vitamins.

Here are some other substitutes that may help you:

Substitute organic whole milk yogurt for sour cream (or mix them half and half)

Avoid deep fried foods, margarine and shortening and partially hydrogenated vegetable oils.

These five steps are sufficient to get anybody started on the road to eating healthier. Additional information and help can be had by reading some of the books recommended in the bibliography.

Other Health Laws

In addition to these dietary changes, we may also need to work on some of God's other laws of healing. Many of us are too sedentary and need to get some regular exercise. Many of us need to ensure that our bodies receive the rest they need. Becoming less concerned about the "things of this world" and more concerned about spiritual affairs will greatly assist in these matters. Dr. Bieler found that only those people who had a sense of purpose in life were able to make these changes.

Over the years I have found that a patient must have a sort of mission in life—something very important that he hopes to accomplish to the best of his ability—before he is really motivated to seek a cure. I can only stress the fact that he must cure himself...the cure comes from within, and in the end it is Nature that does it...But the average person does not have any real mission in life; his off-work hours revolve about the conviviality of group eating and drinking—and as a result the undertakers are kept busy.7

As Saints, we have a great mission in life. We are to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth. Hence, we have every reason to want to preserve and extend our lives so that we can accomplish the work of our Father.

We may also wish to change the way we treat ourselves when we are sick. Perhaps we should exercise less faith in medicines and more faith in the Lord. When we are sick with minor ailments, we can obtain a priesthood blessing and trust more in the innate healing power of our bodies. We can rest, allowing nature time to gain advantage over the illness. We may also partake of some "mild food." Some fresh fruit or raw fruit and vegetable juices could be con-
sidered mild food. Maybe a little vegetable broth or chicken soup could be considered mild food, as well.

We might also wish to learn a few simple herbal remedies. Keep in mind that the Lord has counseled us to nourish our bodies with herbs when we are sick. The best herbs to nourish a sick person with would be those which are suitable for food use such as garlic, capsicum (cayenne pepper), ginger, thyme and parsley.

Garlic, for example, is available as a food in every grocery store. Yet, this simple herb helps to fight infection, lower high blood pressure, reduce cholesterol and blood fat and help expel phlegm from the body. During World War I, the British dressed thousands of wounds with the juice of fresh-pressed garlic. None of these wounds became infected. Studies suggest that garlic helps fight both bacterial and viral infections. In our family, we have used garlic successfully to relieve respiratory congestion, sore throats, earaches, colds and fevers. We have probably saved dozens of trips to the doctor through the use of this herb alone.

A knowledge of herbal remedies may also be valuable during the last days. I became interested in herbal remedies because I was concerned that we may not have access to modern medical technology during some of the prophesied events of the last days. Hence, a knowledge of herbal remedies may be a useful survival skill. To learn more about herbal remedies you may wish to obtain one of the herb books listed in the bibliography for more information. One of these is a short booklet which outlines the principles of Thomsonian botanical hydrotherapy, which we have used in our family for over twelve years.

Health Is Within Our Reach

Let us remember that these are not hard things. The recommendations in the Word of Wisdom were adapted to the capacity of the “weak and the weakest of all Saints” as the following statement by George Q. Cannon suggests:

... and when you come even to the very weakest, it may be said, of the revelations, or that which is the least obligatory upon us, that which was given merely as a word of coun-
Chapter Fifteen Footnotes

2 *Journal of Discourses* 12: 221-222.
5 *Diet Related to Killer Diseases, V: Nutrition and Mental Health*, Hearings Before the Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs of the United States Senate, June 22, 1977, p. 23
6 Ibid.
7 Bieler, *Food Is Your Best Medicine*, p. 24
8 *The Scientific Validation of Herbal Medicine* by Daniel Mowrey is an excellent source of references on scientific studies of garlic.
9 *Journal of Discourses* 24: 143
10 Ibid., 12:54-55
11 Ibid., 12: 209
Health is a Blessing

Health, like all other blessings, comes from obedience to God’s laws. Our body’s are sacred temples for our spirit and should be treated as such. This book examines the laws upon which good health is based starting with the Word of Wisdom, a revelation given to the prophet Joseph Smith for “the temporal salvation of all Saints in the last days.” I believe that this means that we will not physically survive the last days if we do not follow the principles of the Word of Wisdom. Although this book was written for originally for Mormons (members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints), it’s message and teachings are useful for anyone who has faith in God and wishes to learn and obey his laws.

About the Author

Steven Horne, is a professional herbalist and natural healer. In a personal spiritual experience at the age of 15, he became convinced that God had prepared medicines growing naturally upon the face of the earth to heal all the ailments mankind is afflicted with in this mortal life. He used herbs and the principles found in the Word of Wisdom to find healing from the many health problems he suffered as a child and makes his living by teaching people about health and alternative medicine.

This book, and other similar writings and teachings can be found on his website: http://stevenhorne.com.