

# The Little Understood Cheese Statements

It has come to my attention, upon studying the mentions of cheese in the writings of Ellen White, that something easily misunderstood has been added. Notice the two following quotes:

**First quote:** “Butter is less harmful when eaten on cold bread than when used in cooking; but, as a rule, it is better to dispense with it altogether. Cheese [TRANSLATED ‘STRONG, SHARP CHEESE,’ WITH ELLEN WHITE’S APPROVAL, IN THE GERMAN-LANGUAGE EDITION] is still more objectionable; it is wholly unfit for food.”—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 368:5. Also see *Ministry of Healing*, 302:1.

Notice the bracketed portion is not in the above English Ellen White quote in *Ministry of Healing*, 302. But you will find it in other articles, etc., that quote *Ministry of Healing*, page 302. It is in brackets, “[],” not parentheses, in order to show the fact that Ellen White did not write this.

Concerning this bracketed, capitalized statement, appearing in the German *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 368:5, the following is from the Ellen G. White Estate, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, in Takoma Park, Washington, D.C., on October 27, 1960. W.C. White wrote:

“When this book was being translated into German, the publishers wrote to Sister White, stating that cheese was much used in Europe and that there were many kinds of cheese that were healthful. In response to this, Sister White gave instruction how to reply; and on March 27, 1906, I wrote to Elder Conradi as follows: ‘In answer to your letter of March 7, I will say that I have given faithful study to the questions you raised. Mother has read your letter; and, in harmony with her instruction, I suggest the following for *Ministry of Healing*, page 302, second paragraph, last two lines: “Strong cheese is still more objectionable.” This leaves off the sentence. It is wholly unfit for food and gives cheese a qualifying [explains, making it less harsh or strict] adjective. If *strong* is not the term you use to designate the ordinary cheese of commerce, which is old and full of poison, please designate by the proper term.’ ”

In response to this advice, the German edition statement in *Ministry of Healing* reads: ‘Strong, sharp cheese should not be eaten.’ ”

**Second quote:** “The safeguarding of the purity of all foods of dairy origin is a matter of prime importance. While frequent testing of dairy herds, together with thorough pasteurization and refrigeration, serves to this end, such foods, if from uncertain sources, or if carelessly handled, constitute a serious menace to health; for, as stated in U.S. Department of Agriculture Farmers’ Bulletin No. 1705 by a government expert, Rowena Schmidt Carpenter: ‘The same chemical constituents and physical properties that recommend milk as a human food make it an excellent food for bacteria.’ The reader will understand that the reference to cheese does not include cottage cheese or foods of a similar character, which were ever recognized by the author as wholesome.”—*Publishers*.

The above publishers’ commentary affords misleading conclusions. For instance, it can be (and often is) insinuated that Ellen White only condemned “strong sharp cheese”; it is supposed she had nothing against the fresher, softer cheeses like Mozzarella. After all, she recognized cottage cheese as wholesome! Surely, softer “new” cheese would not be bad for the system then. By this train of logic, Ellen White (should she be alive now) would partake of pizza in moderation. Many of the “Italian” dishes adored by the younger generations would be acceptable as food, and concerns about their moderate consumption would be considered fanatical. This is not the case when we take note of the following statement:

“Some brought cheese to the meeting, and ate it; although new, it was altogether too strong for the stomach, and should never be introduced into it.”—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 369.2.

It could be argued that she meant the cheese was “newly purchased,” but any sincere reader will recognize this was not what she was referring to. Cheese was brought; and, even newly made, it was still “too strong for the stomach.”

The alternative view, that it was newly purchased, strikes against the ideas presented by the publish-

ers in the second quote. This information allows the reader to infer that Ellen White warned against its use because of the presence of bacteria. This would mean newly purchased cheese should have been safer for consumption; for it had less time to grow bacteria. This would also mean, with all our safety practices in the twenty-first century, this fear is unfounded. Therefore, cheese would be completely safe for consumption, if properly handled. But this is altogether not her reason for promoting abstinence (intentionally avoiding it). Note, in the first quote this phrase:

“Butter is less harmful when eaten on cold bread than when used in cooking; but, as a rule, it is better to dispense [do away with, do not use] with it altogether.”—*Ministry of Healing*, 302.1.

If the problem was a matter of bacteria, would she not promote only the eating of thoroughly cooked butter? Why does she say it is better to eat it uncooked than when used in cooking? Ellen White must have spoken against it for a different reason. Why did Ellen White speak against cheese and butter?

“It is impossible for those who give the reins to appetite to attain to Christian perfection.... Flesh-meats, butter, cheese, rich pastry, spiced foods, and condiments are freely partaken of by both old and young. These things do their work in deranging the stomach, exciting the nerves, and enfeebling the intellect. The blood-making organs cannot convert such things into good blood. The grease cooked in the food renders it difficult of digestion. The effect of cheese is deleterious [harmful, damaging in an unexpected way].”—*Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, 46.3-47.0.

She warned against the use of such things for a much simpler reason than bacteria or refrigeration and processing. The body cannot convert cheese or butter to good blood. And since the life is in the blood, unhealthy blood makes a miserable and unhealthy life. Has the human body changed to better convert these things to good blood? Nope. Despite all this talk of cheese and its unfitness for human consumption, let us see her real stance upon the subject. There are many who condemn the use of cheese and condemn those who eat cheese; they call its consumption a sin. It is contrary to the writings of Ellen White to do this:

“Tea, coffee, tobacco, and alcohol we must present as sinful indulgences. We cannot place on the same ground, meat, eggs, butter, cheese, and such articles placed upon the table. These are not to be borne in front as the burden of our work. The former—tea, coffee,

tobacco, beer, wine, and all spiritous liquors—are not to be taken moderately, but discarded.”—3 *Selected Messages* 287.2. [*Spiritous liquors*: with alcohol obtained by distillation]

Note her statement about the blood-making organs; she says: “Flesh-meats, butter, cheese, rich pastry, spiced foods, and condiments are freely partaken of” (*Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, 46.3). Ellen White did not promote the free use of such things. She promoted moderate use or abstinence, if possible. In the same year, she made this statement about meat:

“In the beginning animal food was not designed to be the diet of man. We have every evidence that the flesh of dead animals is dangerous because of disease that is fast becoming universal, because of the curse resting more heavily in consequence of the habits and crimes of man. We are to present the truth. We are to be guarded how to use reason and select those articles of food that will make the very best blood and keep the blood in an unfevered condition.”—3 *Selected Messages*, 287.3-288.0.

Once again we see her reason to put away such things has to do with the promotion of good blood in our blood-making organs. Ten years later, she also said this:

“God is trying to lead us back, step by step, to His original design—that man should subsist upon the natural products of the earth. Among those who are waiting for the coming of the Lord, meat eating will eventually be done away; flesh will cease to form a part of their diet. We should ever keep this end in view and endeavor to work steadily toward it.”—*Counsels on Health*, 450.1.

While studying this topic, I found that Ellen White herself had difficulties with what appeared on her table:

“I have a large family which often numbers sixteen. In it there are men who work at the plow and who fell trees. These have most vigorous exercise, but not a particle of the flesh of animals is placed on our table. Meat has not been used by us since the Brighton camp meeting. It was not my purpose to have it on my table at any time, but urgent pleas were made that such a one was unable to eat this or that, and that his stomach could take care of meat better than it could anything else. Thus I was enticed to place it on my table.”—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 488.4-489.0.

Though Ellen White did not eat of these things, she allowed them, for a time, to be on her table until the meetings in Brighton during January of 1894.

“I have never felt that it was my duty to say

that no one should taste of meat under any circumstances. To say this, when the people have been educated to live on flesh to so great an extent, would be carrying matters to extremes. I have never felt that it was my duty to make sweeping assertions. What I have said I have said under a sense of duty, but I have been guarded in my statements because I did not want to give occasion for any one to be conscience for another.”—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 462.3-463.0.

“The question whether we shall eat butter, meat, or cheese, is not to be presented to anyone as a test, but we are to educate and to show the evils of the things that are objectionable. Those who gather up these things and drive them upon others do not know what work they are doing. The Word of God has given tests to His people. The keeping of God’s holy law, the Sabbath, is a test, a sign between God and His people throughout their generations forever. Forever this is the burden of the third angel’s message—the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.”—*3 Selected Messages*, 287.1.

This is a far more balanced view than I have ever heard presented. The very things she was careful not to do, many who follow the health message are not careful to avoid. Some have no problem being the conscience of another; this is a wrongful, evil practice. While many things have changed since the time of Ellen White, dairy is far more questionable; eggs do not come from healthy chickens; meat is more diseased than ever; and even fish have heavy metals. In the midst of all of this knowledge, there still largely remains an uninterested indifference in regard to Ellen White’s warnings, and even government warnings. Advocating for abstinence in the right spirit is now more essential than ever.

“The gospel of health has able advocates, but their work has been made very hard because so many ministers, presidents of conferences, and others in positions of influence have failed to give the question of health reform its proper attention. They have not recognized it in its relation to the work of the message as the right arm of the body. While very little respect has been shown to this department by many of the people, and by some of the ministers, the Lord has shown His regard for it by giving it abundant prosperity. When properly conducted, the health work is an entering wedge, making a way for other truths to reach the heart. When the third angel’s message is received in its fullness, health reform will be given its place in the councils of the conference, in the work of the church, in the home, at the table, and in all the household arrangements. Then the right arm will serve and protect the

body.”—*The Colporteur Evangelist*, 72.2-73.0.

There are many who seek to fight against the work of God. The corrupt appetites which have for so long ruled the body, take great offense at being challenged, stirring up withing many hearts a spirit of defiance. It is a spirit of loving humility alone that can properly bring home the message to hearts taken captive by Satan at his will. “The gospel of health has able advocates.” If one is struggling to maintain their personal diet, it is not a wise thing to act as if the victory is secure, lest someone see hypocrisy and turn with disgust.

I once worked at a place that advocated health reform; there was even a bit of a Pharisaical spirit with their teaching. It felt as if they thought themselves higher than others for their attainments. As a maintenance worker, I saw what was in their trash cans. Had I not already been following my convictions, from a love for the Truth, I would have stopped following the health message.

“Paul carried with him the atmosphere of heaven. All who associated with him felt the influence of his union with Christ. The fact that his own life exemplified the truth he proclaimed, gave convincing power to his preaching. Here lies the power of truth. The unstudied, unconscious influence of a holy life is the most convincing sermon that can be given in favor of Christianity. Argument, even when unanswerable, may provoke only opposition; but a godly example has a power that it is impossible wholly to resist.”—*Acts of the Apostles* 510.2-511.0.

“Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.”—Hebrews 12:13.

“Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.”—1 Corinthians 8:9.

*Notice U.S. 2024 events and of recent years:*

Since cheese is loved so much by Americans, how many of us know about the cheese news in the U.S. at this time?

Cheese is made from milk! Today, the United States produces more cheese than any other country!

*Where have people gotten sick from listeria?* In August 2024, it was known that over 30 people were sickened in 13 states, according to the FDA: Minnesota, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Maryland. And two people died.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is urging food service customers, in 15 states, to throw out or return bags of shredded cotija, Parmesan, Swiss, white cheddar, and other types of cheeses distributed by Sargento over concerns of listeria contamination.

The most heavily involved cheese products were

4 white cheddar cheese and cotija (aged cheese from Mexico), with more than 2,000 cases recalled per type.

According to the British Heart Foundation, cheese is a great source of protein and calcium, but is often high in saturated fat and salt. This means eating too much could lead to high cholesterol and high blood pressure, increasing your risk of cardiovascular disease.

In March 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended avoiding eating soft cheeses unless the label clearly states that the product was made with pasteurized milk. And the FDA is responsible for protecting public health by ensuring the safety of specific foods and beverages sold in the United States, including all dairy and cheese products.

Listeria can survive in the refrigerator and easily contaminate other foods and surfaces. It is a bacterial infection most commonly caused by contaminated foods. Those most at risk are people with compromised immune systems; senior citizens; and pregnant women, who are ten times more likely to get a listeria infection than other people, according to the CDC. Signs of a listeria infection include fever, flu-like symptoms, headaches, confusion, a loss of balance, and seizures. In mild cases, symptoms may include fever, fatigue, nausea, muscle aches, vomiting, and diarrhea. Severe cases can result in headaches, neck stiffness, loss of balance, confusion, and convulsions. An estimated 1,600 people get listeria each year and, of those, about 260 die.

*So why did it take a decade to find the source of the recent deadly outbreak?* A listeria food poisoning outbreak led to the recall of 60 soft cheeses and dairy products under 13 brands. Northeastern University food safety policy expert, Darin Detwiler, says the real question should be What advances in science allowed government officials to connect the dots among cases first detected in June 2014? The answer is advances in its genetic testing, in particular, whole genome sequencing, says Detwiler, associate teaching professor of food policy. [Genome: the genetic material of an organism] The government knew about the different outbreaks, but didn't realize the listeria food poisonings were all part of the same family until sequencing proved it. Detwiler says. "These were previously considered to be separate incidents, but technology was able to connect them," he says. "This gives the CDC a completely new perspective on some of these pathogens [any organism which can cause disease in a person, animal, or plant]."

According to Detwiler, the sources of listeria food poisonings historically have been hard to identify because most people recover without going to the doctor and because symptoms—including fever, vomiting, and muscle aches—can take up to

70 days to show up.

Listeria is a type of bacteria that predominately "grows in soft cheeses and lunch meats," Detwiler says. Unpasteurized raw milk—from which many soft cheeses are made—is a common source, he says. "For the average healthy adult, listeria food poisoning is just a quote-unquote stomach flu," Detwiler says.

The CDC says 37 people were infected in 11 states with the outbreak strain of listeria between June 15, 2014, and December 10, 2023. Thirty-three were hospitalized and two deaths were reported—one from California and the other from Texas. Two people got sick during pregnancy and one suffered a miscarriage.

In his role as a national advocate for food safety, Detwiler has talked to women who have lost pregnancies to listeria outbreaks; and he finds they harbor a sense of guilt even though they were attempting to make healthy food choices. "They were eating a salad with cheese in it," he says. While most people who get listeria poisoning recover, other victims suffer lifelong medical complications, Detwiler says.

The FDA warns that previous listeriosis outbreaks in the U.S. have been traced to a variety of foods, including milk and cheese, ice cream, and deli meats. (Listeria are bacteria that contaminate many foods. The infection is called listeriosis / Deli meats: cooked meats that are sliced and prepared for sandwiches and other light meals, including school lunches.

As of February 16, 2024, E. coli infections have been reported from four states—California, Colorado, Utah, and Texas. These illnesses were started from about October 18, 2023, to February 5, 2024. Of 11 people with information available, 5 were hospitalized and 2 developed hemolytic uremic syndrome, a serious condition that affects the blood and blood vessels. It results in the destruction of blood platelets (cells involved in clotting); a low red blood-cell count (anemia); and failure of the kidneys and other organs, such as the brain or heart, due to damage to the tiny blood vessels.

The true number of sick people in this outbreak was likely much higher than the number reported, and the outbreak may not have been limited to the states with known illnesses. This is because many people recover without medical care and are not tested for E. coli.

As is the case with all things, change in a church starts with us. Our godly influence will affect others; they will become like what they see. If we are reflecting Christ, this is a good thing! But woe to those who are reflecting another spirit; their example will not escape the sharp eyes of the worldlings. Our example means far more than our words. —Jon Taylor