

Man's Changing Food Culture

***“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.”
Genesis 1:29***

THE WORLD'S FIRST PAR-ents, Adam and Eve, were created perfect and placed in the garden of Eden which our all-wise and loving Heavenly Father had prepared for them. They were also provided with food to keep their bodies alive, and were thus sustained by the products of the soil, such as vegetables and fruit-bearing trees.

God's design in creating man was that they would enjoy an endless life span, but that wonderful gift was forfeited because of Adam's disobedience to the divine law. Generations of his offspring—closer to the original perfection—enjoyed greater longevity than those who became farther removed from it. The scriptural account records Methuselah living 969 years. (Gen. 5:27) After the flood of Noah's day, the average life span was greatly reduced and a more rapid decline was experienced, ending in the seventy years of which Moses wrote. “The days of our years

are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”—Ps. 90:10

ANIMAL FLESH SANCTIONED

It was not until after the flood that God sanctioned the eating of animal flesh for food. From the scriptural account, we read, “God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.”—Gen. 9:1-4

THE WORDS OF DAVID

David puts this whole matter in perspective. He first speaks of man’s fall into sin and death. “The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, and to do good. He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil.”—Ps. 36:1-4

The psalmist then continued by speaking of God’s continuing care and providence over his human creation. “Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy

righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light. O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart. Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me. There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.”—Ps. 36:5-12

Throughout many ages, the animal creation has been a source of food for the human family. However, even in our enlightened day with its improved economic, medical, and sanitary conditions in many parts of the world, mankind remains short-lived. In the writings of Job, we read, “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.”—Job 14:1-5

FOOD TRANSITIONS

The eating of food is a basic necessity of life, and without it no one could live. What is eaten, however,

and how it is prepared may change from one place to another, or from one time period to another. Traditional food cultures may be replaced with new ones. Changes may occur because of innovations in agriculture or industry, or from publicity. A new food habit will not only introduce new varieties to a particular population's diet, but also may introduce changes in lifestyle. During the twentieth century, transitions have taken place in many parts of the world. What we eat and drink today and how we consume these foods is a reflection of the food transition in a changing modern world.

What we do in our daily lives also helps mold, or shape, our culture. Soft drinks and fast foods are both reflections of our modern lifestyle. These food habits have also contributed to a growing 'pop culture' which defines the popularly accepted trends of belief, pattern, and behavior within our society.

OUR CHANGING CULTURE

Before the nineteenth century, carbonated drinks were usually sold commercially as a tonic or medicine. It was not until fruit syrups, and then later artificial flavorings and other preparations, were added to the soda water that made soft drinks more popular. Soft drinks, as opposed to hard or alcoholic beverages, were sold in soda fountains which became more prevalent during the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This resulted in the rapid rise of neighborhood soda fountains which were located in drugstores all over the country, and became accepted as places for social gatherings.

The popularity of soda fountains coincided with the growing temperance movement which encouraged the use of soft drinks instead of hard drinks. Prohibition laws against alcohol were passed, particularly in the southern states, and women's groups such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union supported the growth of soda fountains. Soon after World War I ended the 18th Amendment to the United States Constitution was passed that prohibited the manufacture and sale of hard liquors throughout the country. The 1920s was known as the prohibition era and, by the time the law was repealed in 1933, soda fountains and the drinking of soft drinks had become a well-established institution in the American way of life.

The relationship between soft drinks, soda fountains, and fast foods began with the rise of the first fast-food stands that began to appear during the 1920s. Its popularity grew until after World War II when the industry experienced explosive growth. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the tremendous growth in the American economy made the ownership of the family car possible for most middle class families. A major factor during this time was America's love affair with the automobile, and with the construction of an entire new highway system these factors encouraged the development of new and ever more distant suburban communities. Middle class families began to move away from congested cities in search of a freer lifestyle in the country. This also encouraged the fast-food industry to help feed those who lived there, and drive-in, fast-food restaurants were able to meet the new demand.

FAST FOODS

Initially, fast-food chains catered to automobile owners in suburbia. The concept of a readily available food outlet reflected the American culture which was now centered in speed and efficiency. More and more people prized the quality of the food and its unique preparation. Fast food and soft drinks not only reflected America's values, but also helped shape a new lifestyle.

However, quenching one's thirst by drinking a Coke or Pepsi was not the only matter of consideration. Advertisements associated soft drinks with new tastes and status symbols. Drinking a certain beverage would make you feel young, athletic, and fun-loving, and manufacturers of these products spent large sums of money on advertising to help fashion these images.

The fast-food industry also targeted consumers who came to appreciate the whole new experience that included drive-thru facilities along with toys and movies that were available at the checkout counter. Advertisements often portrayed popular sports figures to encourage potential customers to take advantage of their services. The experience of eating at one of these facilities was a whole new way of life which was based on an intrusive and subtle ideology of consumerism.

NUTRITION AND HEALTH ISSUES

From fried onion rings to double-sized and loaded cheeseburgers, fast food is becoming one of the world's fastest growing food types. It is estimated that about half of all restaurant profits in the United States are now derived from the consumption of

fast foods, and the industry continues to expand. Both here, and in many other countries of the world, it is radically changing the way people eat.

The eating of fast foods has become a significant part of the younger generation's diet in the United States, and increasingly throughout the world. However, the nutritional value of these products is being questioned. Studies indicate that consumption of some of these foods may be related to an increasing health risk, especially in children. A particular hazard is the E-coli bacteria that meat products are susceptible to. Because of the long supply chain through which the fast-food industry operates, the handling and sourcing of meat is very hard to monitor.

The consumer buys fast food because it is cheap, quick, and heavily promoted, but its benefits are often deceptive. Foods that are eaten in the car, or at a desk, are replacing home-cooked meals that were once enjoyed with other family members or friends. Around the world, the more traditional meals and recipes are yielding to soft drinks, sodas, burgers, and other highly processed and standardized items. Many fast foods are fried which facilitates quick preparation. They are high in fat content and salt, and low in fiber, vitamins, and some minerals. This high level of consumption is fueling a global epidemic that may lead to obesity, and other more serious and chronic illnesses.

ADDED VALUE OPTIONS

Customers may be enticed to eat more than their daily requirements with the 'added value option' that some fast-food restaurants offer their patrons. For a small additional charge, people can order a

larger size of certain products. This adds considerably to the calorie intake along with the other factors. A typical meal from a fast-food restaurant containing a serving of fries and a cheeseburger amounts to approximately 1,000 calories. This is about half of the recommended daily allowance for the average person. However, a 'supersized combo meal' may provide a person's entire daily recommended intake of calories, but it will probably include very few of the essential nutrients.

The consuming of fast foods may be equated with bad eating habits. An extra large portion of a certain item may seem like a real bargain, but such features add excessive amounts of empty calories to the daily diet. This is due mainly to the large portions that fast-food restaurants are accustomed to serving. The tendency is for people to enlarge their appetites by eating far beyond their required limit.

PORTION RELATED PROBLEMS

A new type of health problem has arisen in recent years known as the 'portion distortion syndrome.' Along with the ever-increasing size of fast-food portions, the average waistline of the American consumer has also grown. According to recent studies, more than half the people are now in a weight range that increases the risk of developing health problems. These include heart disease, stroke, cancer, type-2 diabetes, and osteoporosis. Further, it is also reported that about one third of this number were considered to be overweight.

Part of the weight issue is linked to an increase in the size of the portion. With the gradual increase

in the amount of food consumed, people have lost touch with reality and what should be considered a healthy amount of food to eat. During the last fifty years, North American portion sizes have increased dramatically without consumers even being aware of it. The *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* reports some interesting statistics. In 1955, an average order of French fries weighed 2.4 ounces, while today it has risen to 7.1 oz. In 1961, Americans consumed 2,883 calories per person per day. By the year 2000, it had risen to 3,817 calories. A muffin had 200 calories and weighed 1.5 oz. Now it is 5.0 oz. with 500 calories. A bagel used to be 3 inches in diameter with 140 calories. Today it is 6 inches with 350 calories. Many convenience stores now sell soft drinks in 64 oz. containers.

One well-known restaurant now offers a sandwich that is bun-free. It features two chicken filets in place of the buns, with two pieces of bacon and two slices of melted cheese inside, and a mayonnaise laden sauce spread over it. It contains 540 calories and has 32 grams of fat. People have become gradually accustomed to the larger size portions and eat more whether they need it or not.

THE FIRST LADY'S CAMPAIGN

In February, 2010, United States First Lady Michelle Obama announced a new program "Let's Move" that she has directed at one of the most serious threats to the future of America's younger generation. Her intention is to help solve the staggering epidemic of childhood obesity that now affects one-third of all children. In her campaign, she

will consult athletes, farmers, doctors, the fast-food industry, and the media.

Her initiative aims to rally families, communities, schools, urban planners, politicians, and the media to help confront the growing problem. She pointed to the urgency of taking action today, at a time when there are already three times more obese children in the United States than there were even 30 years ago. Because of obesity and the many illnesses and chronic conditions related to it, health experts now proclaim that this generation of American children will be the first to have shorter life spans than did their parents.

Judith Palfrey, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, stated that the alarming rise was due to lack of exercise and a diet that is too heavy in fat and sugar, and too light on fresh fruits and vegetables. She said that the United States has the highest number of obese children in the developed world. One out of every five children aged 6 to 19 are obese, and are at greater risk for a whole host of maladies, ranging from high blood pressure to diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

Palfrey also points to the fact that military leaders confirm that obesity is now one of the most common disqualifiers for military service. Economic experts report that large amounts of money are needed to treat obesity-related conditions, and that medical costs associated with excessive weight have soared in recent years.

One man who attended the inauguration of the First Lady's campaign pointed to America's inner cities that are home to many of the nation's poorest people. He said eating healthful food is rare, and

many families live on cheaper processed meals that would not be recognized as being food by our grandmothers. Among steps to control obesity are an initiative to bring grocery stores that sell healthy food to inner cities, a rewards system for schools that offer healthy meals, and regular physical education classes.

Mrs. Obama has set a healthy example herself by planting a vegetable garden on the White House grounds, which local schoolchildren helped to cultivate. Private industry has backed the First Lady's campaign which helps serve meals daily to school children in the United States, pledging to include more fruit, juice, vegetables, whole grain, and milk options in lunches. Grassroots environmental organization The Sierra Club, praised the First Lady for her commitment to create community gardens and parks, and safer outdoor spaces for children. President Obama has signed an executive memorandum to set up a task force that includes members of his cabinet and other officials to draw up a master plan to combat childhood obesity.

THE KINGDOM PROSPECT

The human family will become acquainted with a healthful and wholesome way of life under the administration of Christ's future kingdom. They will eat natural foods and return to conditions much like they were before sin and death were introduced to the earthly creation. Mankind will receive the proper nutrition from the fruits, vegetables, nuts, and other wholesome foods that will be abundantly provided by a perfected earth that is no longer under the curse. (Gen. 3:17-19; Rev. 22:3) Even

those who are in their graves will come forth and be given opportunity to walk on the highway of holiness. (Isa. 35:8) All who willingly obey the laws of the kingdom will attain everlasting life. "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it."—Mic. 4:4

THE BREAD OF LIFE

On one occasion during Jesus' earthly ministry, he was asked to give proof concerning whether he had been sent by God. "They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat."—John 6: 30,31

John recorded the Master Teacher's answer wherein he made clear to the people that he was greater than Moses. "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."—vss. 32-35

Jesus explained that the Heavenly Father had indeed given manna to his typical people Israel when they were in the wilderness, but had now sent a Savior into the world. He was the 'true bread from heaven,' and could offer them the bread of eternal life. He stood before them as that true gift from heaven.

MANNA FROM HEAVEN

Looking back to that time when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years, their diet consisted mainly of manna that had been miraculously supplied to them by God. It is recorded, "They took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no."—Exod. 16:1-4

Manna cannot be easily identified with any known foods today, but it was evidently a white substance, something like coriander seed. It was either ground, or pounded into cakes, and then baked. It tasted like a honeyed cake and was made available to Israel every day except on the Sabbath. They were required to gather enough the day before to facilitate their observance of the Sabbath.

SPIRITUAL FOOD

Throughout this present Gospel Age, the faithful followers of our Lord have been feeding upon

him and receiving the spiritual food of Truth. Even as fleshly Israel needed the manna which God provided for them, so also do we require spiritual food as our daily sustenance. It gives us strength to continue the journey of our consecrated walk toward the heavenly kingdom. The Truth must be sought daily if we would receive its special benefits. It requires searching the Scriptures and putting forth painstaking effort to gather our daily portion.

During their wilderness journey, the Israelites became thirsty for water, and cried unto Moses who, in turn, cried unto God for the life-sustaining water. It was granted to them through the smiting of the rock, which typified Jesus. "Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also." (Num. 20:9-11) The grace which flows to the Lord's people during this present Gospel Age comes through Christ as a result of his being smitten for us.

THE WATER OF LIFE

Under the administration of his glorious future kingdom, Jesus will be manifest to the poor groaning and sin-sick human creation as the real bread of life. All the obedient who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be given opportunity to feed upon the true bread from heaven. "He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding

out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”—Rev. 22:1,2 ■