

THE PRESENT TRUTH

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Power of Appetite

One of the strongest temptations to man is upon the point of appetite. Between the mind and the body there is a mysterious and wonderful relation. They react upon each other. To keep the body in a healthy condition, to develop its strength, that every part of the living machinery may act harmoniously, should be the first study of our life. To neglect the body is to neglect the mind. God cannot be glorified by his children's having sickly bodies or dwarfed minds. To indulge the taste at the expense of health is a wicked abuse of the senses. Those who engage in any species of intemperance in eating or drinking, waste the physical energies and weaken moral power. They will feel the retribution which follows the transgression of physical law.

The Redeemer of the world knew that the indulgence of appetite would bring physical debility and deaden the perceptive organs so that sacred and eternal things would not be discerned. Christ knew that the world was given up to gluttony, and that this indulgence would pervert the moral powers. If the indulgence of appetite was so strong upon the race as to require a fast of nearly six weeks by the divine Son of God, in behalf of man, to break its power, what a work is before the Christian in order that he may overcome, even as Christ overcame. The strength of the temptation to indulge perverted appetite can be measured only by the inexpressible anguish of Christ in that long fast in the wilderness.

Christ knew that in order to successfully carry forward the plan of salvation he must commence the work of redeeming man just where the ruin began. Adam fell on the point of appetite. In order to impress upon man his obligations to obey the law of God, Christ began his work of redemption by reforming the physical habits of man. The declension in virtue and the degeneracy of the race were chiefly attributable to the indulgence of perverted appetite.

There is a solemn responsibility upon all, especially upon ministers who teach the truth, to overcome on the point of appetite. The usefulness of ministers of Christ would be much greater if they had control of their appetites and passions; and their mental and moral powers would be stronger if they should combine physical labor with mental exertion. They could, with strictly temperate habits, with mental and physical labor combined, accomplish a far greater amount of labor and preserve clearness of mind. If they should pursue such a course their thoughts and words would flow more freely, their religious exercises would be more energized, and the impressions made upon their hearers would be more marked.

Intemperance in eating, even of food of the right quality, will have a prostrating influence upon the system, and will blunt the keener and holier emotions. Strict temperance in eating and drinking is highly essential for the healthy preservation and vigorous exercise of all the functions of the body. Strictly temperate habits, combined with the exertion of the muscles as well as the exercise of the mind, will preserve both mental and physical vigor, and give power of endurance to those engaged in the ministry, to editors, and to all others whose habits are sedentary.

As a people, with all our profession of health reform, we eat too much. Indulgence of appetite is the greatest cause of physical and mental debility, and lies at the foundation of feebleness which is apparent everywhere.

Intemperance commences at our tables in the use of unhealthful food. After a time, through continual indulgence, the digestive organs become weakened, and the food taken does not satisfy the appetite. Unhealthy conditions are established, and there is a craving for more stimulating food. Tea, coffee, and flesh-meats, produce an immediate effect. Under the influence of these poisons the nervous system is excited. In some cases, for the time being, the intellect seems to be invigorated and the imagination more vivid. Because this is the result of these stimulants, many conclude that they really need them, and continue the use of those things which produce for the time being such agreeable results. But there is always an after result. There is reaction. The nervous system has been unduly excited to borrow power from the future resources of strength for present use.

All this temporary excitement of the system is followed by depression. In proportion as these stimulants temporarily excite the system, will there be a letting down of the power of the organs that have been thus excited, after the stimulus has lost its force. The appetite is educated to crave something stronger, which will have a tendency to keep up and increase the agreeable excitement, until indulgence becomes habit, and there is a continual craving for stronger stimulus, as tobacco, wines, and liquors. As the appetite is indulged, the demand will be more frequent, and the power of control more difficult. The more the appetite is indulged, the more the system becomes debilitated and unable to do without this unnatural stimulus, and the passion for these things increases until the will is overborne, and there seems to be no power to deny the unnatural craving for these indulgences.

The only safe course is to touch not, taste not, and handle not, tea, coffee, wines, tobacco, opium, and alcoholic drinks. There is double necessity for the men of this generation to call to their aid the power of the will, strengthened by the grace of God, in order to withstand the temptations of Satan, and resist the least indulgence of perverted appetite. The present generation have less power of self-control than those who have lived several generations back. Those who have indulged the appetite for these stimulants have transmitted their depraved appetites and passions to their children, and greater moral power is required to resist the indulgence of intemperance in all its forms. The only perfectly safe course to pursue is to stand firmly on the side of temperance and not venture in the path of danger.

The great end for which Christ endured that long fast in the wilderness was to teach us the necessity of self-denial and temperance. This work should commence at our tables, and should be strictly carried out in all the concerns of life. The Redeemer of the world came from Heaven to help man in his weakness, that he might become strong in the power which he came to bring him, to overcome appetite and passion, and might be victor on every point.

Many parents educate the tastes of their children, and form their appetites. They indulge them in eating flesh-meats, and in drinking tea and coffee. The highly seasoned flesh-meats and tea and coffee which some mothers encourage their children to use are preparing the way for them to crave stronger stimulants, as tobacco; and the use of tobacco encourages the appetite for liquor. The use of tobacco and liquor invariably lessens nerve power.

If Christians would have their moral sensibilities aroused upon the subject of temperance in all things, they could, by their example, commencing at their tables, help those who are weak in self-control, and almost powerless to resist the cravings of appetite. If we could realize that our eternal destiny depends upon strictly temperate habits, and that the habits we form in this life will affect our eternal interests, we should work to the point of strict temperance in eating and in drinking. By our example and personal effort we may be the means of saving many souls from the degradation of intemperance, crime, and death. Our sisters can do much in the great work of the salvation of others by spreading their tables with only healthful, nourishing food. They may employ their precious time in educating the tastes and appetites of their children, and in forming habits of temperance in all things, and encouraging self-denial and benevolence for the good of others.

Notwithstanding the example Christ has given us in the wilderness of temptation by denial of appetite and overcoming its power, there are many Christian mothers who are, by their example, and in the education of their children, preparing them to become gluttons and wine-bibbers. Children are frequently indulged in eating what they choose, and when they please, without reference to health. There are many children who are educated gormands from their babyhood. Through indulgence of appetite they are made dyspeptics at an early age. Intemperance in eating and self-indulgence grow with their growth and strengthen with their strength. Mental and physical vigor are sacrificed through the indulgence of parents. A habit becomes established for certain articles of food from which they can receive no benefit, but only injury; and as the system is taxed, the constitution becomes debilitated.

Ministers, teachers, and students should become intelligent in regard to the necessity of physical exercise in the open air. They neglect this most essential duty for the preservation of health. They closely apply their minds to books, and eat the allowance of a laboring man. Under such habits, some grow corpulent because the system is clogged, while others become lean, feeble, and weak, because their vital powers are exhausted in throwing off excess of food; the liver becomes burdened and unable to throw off the impurities in the blood, and sickness is the result. If physical exercise were combined with mental exertion, the blood would be quickened in its circulation, the action of the heart would be more perfect, impure matter would be thrown off, and new life and vigor would be experienced in every part of the body.

When the minds of ministers, school teachers, and students, are continually excited by study, and the body is allowed to be inactive, the nerves of emotion are taxed, while the nerves of motion are inactive. The wear is all upon the mental organs, and they become overworked and enfeebled, the muscles lose their vigor for want of being employed, and there is not an inclination to exercise the muscles by engaging in physical labor because exertion seems to be irksome.

As our first parents lost Eden through the indulgence of appetite, our only hope of regaining Eden is through the firm denial of appetite and passion. Abstemiousness in diet, and control of all the passions, will preserve the intellect so that men may have mental and moral vigor to bring all their propensities under the control of the higher power, and to retain clearness of intellect to discern between right and wrong, between sacred and common things.

The controlling power of appetite will prove the ruin of thousands, when, if they had conquered on this point, they would have moral power to gain victory over every other temptation of Satan. But slaves to appetite will fail in perfecting Christian character. The continual transgression of man for six thousand years has brought sickness, pain, and death, as its fruits. {The Health Reformer, August 1, 1875}