

Thoughts on Ministry of Healing

(19) In Contact with Nature (pages 261-268)

Summary:

The Garden of Eden provides the model for the healthiest kind of environment. Nature and experiences with nature have great healing power for the sick.

Thoughts:

In this period of Ellen White's life her writings articulate a pair of initiatives that need to be read in balance with each other. On the one hand, there is the emphasis of this chapter on staying in close touch with nature as a fundamental principle of healing. On the other hand, there is a strong emphasis in many places on engagement with the large cities and the great needs there that would draw believers out of country settings. The danger of cities and the need of cities are both emphasized and the choice is left with readers as to how best to balance the two imperatives. (Whole chapter)

In today's world this counsel needs to be read in the context of "all other things being equal." All other things being equal, the counsel of this chapter offers helpful guidelines to healing. But major changes in the world, such as massive urbanization, require one to balance this counsel with the requirements of a very different world than the one she originally wrote to.

All other things being equal, the sick need to be brought into close contact with nature. The great cities concentrate pollution, the spread of disease, confinement in surroundings that are often unlovely, and exposure to temptation. More natural settings provide fresher air, more access to sunshine, more availability of exercise, and uplifting landscapes. All other things being equal, the latter is more conducive to healing than the former. (261-266) Natural settings are often more conducive to encounters with God as well. (267-268)

Counsel like this needs to be balanced with an awareness of God's love for the cities. While the garden is the ideal at the beginning of the Bible, when Eden is restored it ends up as the Holy City. In 19th Century America, people generally thought of the country as the ideal. There was a romantic notion of nature. But many people are inspired by the city. In the broadest sense, nature includes humans. Human beings are the apex of creation, and at their best cities reflect the creativity and organization that God has placed in humans. Not only that, in today's world it is "greener" to live in cities, you use more resources being spread out in the country.

If you are going to work in the city, you need to love the city or you won't be effective. God's people can do little things that improve the urban environment around them, like putting flowers in pots on the front stairs or in window boxes outside the apartment. While Ellen White loved nature, she didn't make a god out of nature. She also counseled that cities needed to be worked because that is where most of the people are.

Quotable Quotes:

"The Creator chose for our first parents the surroundings best adapted for their health and happiness. He did not place them in a palace or surround them with the artificial adornments and luxuries that so many today are struggling to obtain. He placed them in close touch with nature and in close communion with the holy ones of heaven." (261)

"Institutions for the care of the sick would be far more successful if they could be

established away from the cities. And so far as possible, all who are seeking to recover health should place themselves amid country surroundings where they can have the benefit of outdoor life. . . . The pure air, the glad sunshine, the flowers and trees, the orchards and vineyards, and outdoor exercise amid these surroundings, are health-giving, life-giving.” (263-264)

“To the chronic invalid, nothing so tends to restore health and happiness as living amid attractive country surroundings. Here the most helpless ones can sit or lie in the sunshine or in the shade of the trees. They have only to lift their eyes to see above them the beautiful foliage. A sweet sense of restfulness and refreshing comes over them as they listen to the murmuring of the breezes. The drooping spirits revive. The waning strength is recruited. Unconsciously the mind becomes peaceful, the fevered pulse more calm and regular. As the sick grow stronger, they will venture to take a few steps to gather some of the lovely flowers, precious messengers of God’s love to His afflicted family here below.” (264)

Tweets of Healing:

The plan of life which God appointed for our first parents has lessons for us. (261)

The sick need to be brought into close touch with nature. (262)

When patients are kept out of doors, they require less care. (264-265)