

WHEN ADVENTIST PROPHECY REINVENTED BREAKFAST

Ada Prisco

ISSRM FOGGIA, ITALY

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ABSTRACT

In Battle Creek, Michigan, William Keith Kellogg (1860–1951) founded Toasted Corn Flakes in 1906, which was later renamed the Kellogg Company and became the WK Kellogg Foundation in 1930. The brand of the American multinational company, which specializes in breakfast foods, is known worldwide, has influenced the eating habits of millions of people for more than a century, and has an annual turnover of several billion dollars. Not everyone knows its history.

This article retraces some phases of his story and reconnects them to a specific phase of Adventism. This begins thanks to the intuition of Ellen Gould White and continues by internalizing the value of time and intertwining it with a global way of life, which includes the relationship with food. This union anticipates the contemporary trend and allows us to deepen the relationships between body, mind, and spirit, physical and spiritual nourishment. Furthermore, this episode expose show Adventism, a modern Christian denomination, has offered a specific and important contribution to the most common lifestyle.

The Adventist breakfast revolution

In Battle Creek, in the American state of Michigan, back in 1906 William Keith Kellogg (1860-1951) founded Toasted Corn Flakes, which subsequently changed its name to Kellogg Company and in 1930 became the WK Kellogg Foundation. The brand of the American multinational, specialized in breakfast food, is known throughout the world, has influenced the eating habits of millions of people for over a century and boasts a turnover of several billion dollars a year. Not everyone knows its history.

The company's original headquarters were located near the Western Health Reform Institute, also known as the Sanitarium. The institution had been established in 1866 and was subsidized by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The doctor John Harvey Kellogg, Will's brother, carried out research in the Sanitarium laboratory. The aim of the experiments was to identify foods suitable

for breakfast and in line with the indications of the Church born in the United States, in the climate of the millennial awakening, inspired by William Miller(1782- 1849).

In the first phase of its history this religious denomination awaited the imminent return of the Messiah. On the date indicated by Miller, however, October 22, 1844, nothing had happened. After the disappointment, the group of survivors in the faith reunited under the leadership of the spouses James Springer (1821-1881) and Ellen Gould White (1827-1915), born Harmon.

In the reorganization of the movement made necessary for its survival by the evident failure to calculate the date of the second coming, Ellen White's intuition identified the scope of the activation of the new spiritual energies necessary for purification.

For Christ's return to take place, it was necessary for the faithful to prepare adequately. The wait had to be filled with meaning: precise paths had to be followed. Ellen identified a very fruitful one in sanctification, capable of involving the body as well as the spirit. So it was that she urged John Kellogg to study the most appropriate diet for a believer determined to become a saint in order to be ready to meet the Messiah.

John Kellogg for his part was convinced that improving the quality of nutrition would defuse the cause of many diseases. And the fundamental goal of his research was to return to a natural diet. And he immediately turned to a vegetarian diet, welcomed by Ellen White and still practiced by Adventists.

The main obstacle in the diffusion of this eating style was represented by the morning breakfast. At that time the Anglo-Saxon population, and, consequently, also the Adventist Christians, were mostly accustomed to consuming eggs with bacon, coffee, toasted and buttered bread. John's job was to point out a viable alternative to eggs and bacon. So it was that he proposed cereals instead of scrambled eggs with bacon and replaced animal butter with vegetable peanut butter. And, finally, he preferred only fruit juices to coffee, comparable in his system to tea, alcohol, tobacco.

He subjected the cereals to a toasting process to make them crunchy, thus allowing the famous corn flake to come into being in 1897.

In John Kellogg's opinion, the consumption of cereals for breakfast produced a further important effect: it decreased sexual desire, which he estimated in very negative terms. On the contrary, he compared sexual abstinence to asceticism. John married and had over forty children, but he boasted that he had adopted them all and never consummated the marriage.

The fortune of the industry was evidently decreed by the business acumen of Will, whom he produced the new food and who came into conflict with his brother.

The fact is that after an initial period in which cereals characterized the breakfast of Adventist families, the new proposal reached an increasingly wider audience and broke away from its assumptions and spiritual purposes to the point of relegating them to oblivion.

Food and religions, plural connections

The story of the corn flakes is one of the examples in which it is clear how religious imagery loads the nourishment with meanings and is also led to renew them over time. Similar cases are represented by the norms of kashrut for Judaism, halal for Islam, by the Daoist dietary indications and by those of the Hare Krishna. Bread and wine in Christianity open up a world of meanings, without neglecting the egg, we then think of the cow in India, the ritual meal of the Sikhs. Food is connected to the sacred, it marks belonging and difference, it educates the spirit, it imprints and traces in the memory important meanings, identity traits, paths of communication with the divine, conduct to be observed in order to conform as much as possible to a canon of sanctity/health.

Food is sensitively linked to the calendar: many dishes are typical of important religious holidays. And the care, preparation and sharing of these foods are part of the heritage of knowledge and customs to be passed down from generation to generation so that collective memory and identity do not lose their thread. At the same time, it is common for the consumption of meals, especially community and festive meals, to be preceded by formulas of prayer, blessing, praise and gratitude to the divine, and the strengthening of mutual bonds.

The consumption of the meal, the refinement of the senses, required by the choice of foods, often accompany the narration of stories important for faiths. The eloquent example in this sense is the Pesah seder for Judaism, in which every food is taken as a symbol and consumed, while the story of the exit of the people of Israel from Egypt is told especially to children, but in fact, to everyone.

Food is an integral part, central. We could identify it with a narrative voice of the crucial passages of the salvific event. Therefore the consumption of the dishes of memory becomes a precept:

Give these instructions to the entire community of Israelites: on the tenth of this month, everyone should procure a lamb for the family, a lamb for the house. ...

From the evening of the fourteenth of the first of the month until the evening of the twenty-first you must eat unleavened bread...

Observe this order as a law! It will be valid for you and your children, forever! You will also

observe this custom when you enter the land that the Lord promised to give you. Then your children will ask you: "What is the meaning of this custom?"; and you will say to them: "It is the Passover sacrifice in honor of the Lord, who, when he struck the Egyptians, spared the homes of the Israelites and saved our families".

Changing environment, the case of the cocoa ceremony and the sacredness that surrounds cocoa and chocolate in different contexts comes to mind. The Aztecs considered cocoa sacred and reserved the chocolate drink for the emperor. The botanist Linnaeus defined cocoa as the food of the gods.

The structure of the sacrifice often coincides with a banquet, a set table, in which both the divine and the human find their place. In this context, food experiences its highest transformation, to the point of becoming worthy of the divine and, perhaps, to divinize the human, to place it in direct communication.

Food truly represents a crucial and sensitive point for human culture of all time. It is what you eat, what you think about eating, what you imagine while you eat, and, perhaps, at the same time, you remember stories of salvation.

In the kitchen and through the kitchen, society talks about itself, reflects itself, causes values and contradictions to be reflected.

Food is the recipient of reverential care, which is connected to the fundamental meanings of religions and their boundaries. Connected to the dimension of purity, and, consequently, to conduct, it also becomes away to orient and control individuals and connect to the consumer market, and, therefore, to the economy.

On its part, food conveys a character in common with the sacred, on the one hand it is necessary, on the other it attracts, because it represents pleasure, but it also contains the secret of the discovery of the other, finally, it terrifies because it contains in nuce the possibility of the power to subjugate individuals and communities.

Let's go back to the Adventist case.

The purist prophecy of Ellen Gould White

The sensitivity with which Elle White addressed issues related to nutrition and proposed them to the widest public qualifies her as a prophetess in her own right. Already from the mid-19th century in her writings she established and highlighted a close connection between diet and the overall well-being of the organism, and, consequently, between diet and spirituality. Her indications influenced the eating habits of Adventists and then spread the sphere of influence

beyond religious affiliation.

In 1926 several of his interventions on the topic were collected in a manual for use by students in the dietetics study course of the Loma Linda medical-missionary school with the title Testimony Studies on Diet and Food. Among the insights it is interesting to note not only how foods are presented and their specific effects on the organism, but also the importance attributed to appetite and its delicate mechanisms. Everything is placed in relation with the history of salvation, with sin, with Christian redemption. Voracity, for example, the desire to consume food and drink beyond necessity, are interpreted as a way through which Satan controls minds and the whole being. The immoderate satisfaction of the desire for food, according to Ellen White, is even the cause of fragile faith and a closed mind:

Some have never made a determined effort to control the appetite, or to observe proper rules in regard to diet. They eat too much, even at their meals, and some eat between meals whenever the temptation is presented. If those who profess to be Christians desire to solve the questions so perplexing to them, why their minds are so dull, why their religious aspirations are so feeble, they need not, in many instances, go farther than the table; here is cause enough, if there were no other.

Many separate themselves from God by their indulgence of appetite.

The eating disorder favors the waste of vital energy, which, on the contrary, in the spiritual perspective of faith, is aimed at reaching the stature required by God in the revealed texts. Preparing for the meeting with the Lord involves a continuous and coordinated work of purification. Appetite must be ordered in this same perspective, which requires, according to Ellen White, a real reform:

God requires of His people continuous advancement. We need to learn that indulged appetite is the greatest hindrance to mental improvement and soul sanctification. With all our profession of health reform many of us eat improperly. Indulgence of appetite is the greatest cause of physical and mental debility, and lies largely at the foundation of feebleness and premature death. Let the individual who is seeking to possess purity of spirit bear in mind that in Christ there is power to control the appetite.

Ellen White's world was already modern, but still far from the explosion of eating disorders and the immoderate passion for the gastronomic galaxy. Her speech appears all the more profound in intuiting the profound connection between nutrition and personal balance, spiritual well-being.

In the relationship with food, White distinguishes a spiritual test and also a sign of how to experience any other kind of relationship. The disorder resulting from excessive indulgence with

respect to appetite also causes effects in the cognitive sphere, as well as in the moral one. Somehow it would be able to negatively influence the mind and its abilities. Heaviness in the stomach numbs the mind, anesthetizes the moral sense, clouds knowledge, to the point of making it more difficult to recognize the truth.

The opposite excess is also not recommended, that of those who have avoided food beyond measure and have thus weakened their organism and undermined the strength necessary to commit adequately to carrying out their mission in the world.

By exposing the various arguments that connect the sphere of appetites to the spiritual one, the Author establishes a predictable comparison between the desire for food and lust. In both cases it is easy for the human being to slip into dependence, which will focus more on what satisfies her pleasure and less on what nourishes her spiritual relationship with God and truth.

The strength that the person needs does not come from the body, from the flesh, from matter, but from God: human thirst should turn to that source.

Origins of health care reform

Ellen Gould White repeatedly refers to her dietary recommendations as health reform. In one of her writings she explains her origin, which includes it in the broader picture of Ellen's vocation and mission, and, through her ministry, of Adventist Christians, who want to prepare for the second coming of the messiah. The altered relationship with food denounces yet another form of suffering that mankind is destined to experience due to its own infidelity to God and to his Word, in particular to the ten words. Health reform, the intuition of well-being achieved through a fair and balanced diet, allows human beings to become fully aware of their distance from God and the consequences of sin. Therefore the message relating to food conversion, defined as health reform, with non-random emphasis on the health achieved in the body and soul simultaneously, comes from God through the intervention of the third angel.

As for the immoderate appetite, Ellen even traces it back to Adam and Eve, the first to give in and become slaves to it, until the redemption that took place in Christ, who, resisting Satan's temptations, demonstrated that the human victory over desire is possible. Giving into an immoderate appetite alters the entire organism, from the ability to listen and love to the prowess of the organism, which, if abused, is more exposed to diseases.

Altered behavior towards food reveals man's lack of self-control and this is the terrible consequence of Adam's sin. No spiritual progress is possible by ignoring this fact. Human conversion necessarily passes through there-appropriation of self-control, evident in the relationship with integral health, and, therefore, also with nutrition.

Biblical framework of the mission

The healthcare reform fits into the broader framework of Ellen White's vocation and the mission she receives for the benefit of Adventist Christians. She receives a lot of attention, requires studies and in-depth analysis, comes true in the consistent choice of practitioners, but she is never isolated from the theological context, which has its roots in biblical revelation. The image of the third angel also dates back to a portion of the text of the Apocalypse, the book that concludes and seals the New Testament:

Then I saw another angel flying high in the sky bringing the happy news, valid for all time, to be announced to every nation and race and language and people. He said in a loud voice: 'Give God respect and obedience, praise him, because the time has come when he will judge the world. Kneel before him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs.'

Another angel appeared after the first, and said: 'The great Babylon has fallen, she who had made all the peoples drink the intoxicating wine of her prostitution.'

A third angel appeared after the other two, saying in a loud voice: 'Whoever worships the monster and his statue, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured pure into the cup of his terrible judgment, and will be tortured in the presence of the Lamb and the holy angels with fire and brimstone. The smoke of their torment ever ends. Who ever worships the monster and his statue and whoever receives the mark of his name has no rest day or night.'

Here the constancy of those who belong to the Lord, put God's commandments into practice and remain faithful to Jesus must be shown.

Ellen White reported the message of the first angel to 1843 and the message of the second to 1844, while she believed she was living precisely in the period of implementation of the third message. Each conveys divine mercy and has an urgent nature.

In the third phase, adoration becomes central: Christians must choose who to adore and demonstrate that they adore him in deeds, in concrete choices. According to White, the angels of the Apocalypse express the voice of human beings and they forcefully proclaim the presence of God in glory. The announcement is not limited to words, but is expressed in actions, choices and lifestyles.

The prophetess presents this biblical page with the immediacy of a message addressed to the Christians of the time. And the third message is associated with an era of spiritual awakening, of interior choice, of mature belonging to God. Assimilating the content of the messages represents

authentic protection against Satan's temptations:

These messages were presented to me as an anchor for God's people. Those who they understand and receive them will not be swept away by Satan's many deceptions.

In Ellen Gould White's understanding, a balanced relationship with food, capable of guaranteeing and manifesting integral well-being, is an authentic and important way to express one's choice of God, to ensure the balance necessary to recognize who God is and to adore him. The right value of the human being also corresponds to the right adoration, the theological and anthropological discourse are connected and the ecological one in the broad sense cannot be excluded, which also includes the whole world relating to food.

Adventist heritage

The connection between mind and body, between natural food and spiritual nutrition is not new and was not even proposed by Adventists for the first time.

It is undeniable, however, that the habit of considering cereals for breakfast has spread widely and far beyond Adventist communities.

On the Kellogg website, also in its local versions, the founder and the values that motivated that first research are remembered. Naturally, the paths of research are continuous and new needs gradually arise, but certainly Ellen White's intuition, which began with the updating of a biblical page, still has an authentic prophetic flavor today and makes us think.

Concretely, it marked a turning point in recognizing the value of breakfast and in undermining consolidated Anglo-Saxon habits and then spreading beyond national and confessional borders.

And all this started from the interpretation of an angelic message with in a book that most mistakenly associate with destruction, relocated by White to the right frame in the biblical message of salvation.

References

1. Exodus12,3.18.24-27.
2. Cf. Claude Lévy-Strauss, L'origine des manières de table, Plon, Paris 1968, tr. it. The origins of good table manners, Il Saggiatore, Milan 2010.
3. EnzoPace,Sociologyofreligions,EdizioniDehoniane,Bologna2016,p.290.
4. The text is divided into chapters which can be consulted in English on the page [Testimony](#)

[Studies on Diet and Foods–4eAnge](#).As a single document it can be downloaded at [Testimony Studies on Diet and Foods \(1926\)\(egwwritings.org\)](#).

In Italian it can be found on the site [Advice on Food and Nutrition — Ellen G. White Writings \(egwwritings.org\)](#)(last accessed 6 January 2024).

5. Some have never made a determined effort to control their appetite or to observe proper dietary rules. They overeat, even during meals, and some eat between meals whenever temptation presents itself. If professing Christians wish to resolve the questions that make them so complicated, why their minds are so dull, why their religious aspirations are so weak, they need not, in many cases, go beyond the table; here is a sufficient cause, if there were no other. Many separate themselves from God by satisfying their own appetites in [4eange.com - Testimony Studies on Diet and Foods - 44.Overeating and Control of Appetite](#)(last accessed 6 January 2024).

6. God requires continuous progress from His people. We must learn that satisfying the appetite is the greatest obstacle to mental improvement and sanctification of the soul. With all our health reform profession many of us eat improperly. Indulgence in appetite is the main cause of physical and mental weakness, and largely underlies weakness and premature death. Let the individual who seeks to possess purity of spirit keep in mind that in Christ there is the power to control the appetite in [4eange.com - Testimony Studies on Diet and Foods - 6. Reasons for Reform](#)(last accessed 6 January 2024).

7. Revelation 14,6-12.

8. Cf. [Themessagesofthethreeangelsintheirbroadercontext|EGWWritings](#)(last accessed 6 January 2024).

9. Cf. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, Ellen G. White and the three angels' messages: content and responsibility, July 2021 in [Rodriguez-Ellen-White.pdf\(letteraperta.it\)](#)(last accessed 6 January 2024).

10. Ellen Gould White, Last Days, p.451.