

Spiritual Nutrition

Gord Schipper

In America recently, there has been a rising concern over what we as a country eat. Many schools have prohibited the sale of junk food before the noon lunch period. Doctors all over the country are warning us against the dangers of a poor diet. High cholesterol, sodium, and sugar in diets are associated with any number of diseases. These groups, however, are faced with a great problem, because they are attempting to change the American lifestyle. The prevalent lifestyle of overindulging in chips, soft drinks, hamburgers, pizza, and candy bars has created the curious problem of people being overweight but undernourished. One can easily see that this is surely an important problem, but I would like to call your attention to a similar problem with much more significance.

Spiritual nutrition. What is it? We could say that this is the process whereby we take in spiritual nutrients and utilize them. What are these spiritual nutrients? Without question, the most basic nutrient is the Word of God. The inspired Scripture, in its fullness, surely comprises the nutrient by which all others are judged. The Bible is supplemented, however, by various other nutrients. The preaching of the word is the principle means God has chosen to apply the words of Scripture to our hearts. Other sources are catechism, society, prayer, and others that are available to fill our spiritual needs.

With all these nutrients available to us, we should all be spiritually healthy persons. But sadly, we must admit that we do not use these means as we ought. More importantly, I think we are in danger of moving even farther away from these sources that supply our spiritual life. We are tempted on all sides with spiritual junk food. We have only to look around us to see the results. Some of the modern Bible versions that “read like a newspaper” are popular today. Many churches advertise not preaching, but special speakers, singing groups, athletes, and movies. Prayer by many is carried out not with the Most High God in mind, but with someone on a level with our friendly next door neighbor. Catechetical instruction in many circles is simply passed by. In the name of Christian liberty, dancing is being encouraged, women are ordained as office bearers, and “Jesus rock” is set forth as a legitimate Christian expression.

While the above symptoms may not be characteristic of Protestant Reformed circles, we are not free from spiritual malnourishment. I sense among young people a lessened desire to seek after the things of the kingdom of heaven. We must remember that any nutrition is an active process. Its goal is growth and development. An arrest of spiritual nutrients results in the retardation of spiritual development. We will cease to grow spiritually. The dangers of a poor physical diet are well known, but how much more significant are the dangers of a poor spiritual diet! We will not have the strength to fight that spiritual battle against the old man of sin in us. A lessened spiritual development can lead to spiritual stagnation, and even to spiritual death.

As covenant young people in the Protestant Reformed Churches, we have available to us the richest diet in the world. But, are we interested? Are we attentive to matters in the church world? Do we understand our doctrine and can we defend it? For instance, do we know the place reprobation has in our theology? Can we discuss infra-

and supralapsarianism? Do we appreciate the doctrine of the Covenant in all its richness? Are we actively engaged in becoming familiar with the Scriptures? Do we pray? Surely, we can use a lot of improvement.

We would think that a person who ignores his physical requirements is foolish. A much more serious matter is the ignoring of our spiritual needs. We have both the calling and the means to grow spiritually. We should never stagnate. Hebrews 5: 13, 14 tells us “For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belonged to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” We are called not to eat a children’s diet, but to partake of those things that support an older actively growing spiritual life. In this day, we need more than ever, good spiritual health. Let us resolve by God’s grace, to take advantage of the means we have to maintain our spiritual growth and development.

Originally published:
Vol. 40 No. 2 February 1981