

L and A
10-G-4

AMUSEMENTS, such as card playing, chess, checkers,--taken from a letter written by Elder Delafield in April, 1978.
(To Gerhard Pfandl, April 24, 1978.)

About Mrs. White's statements in 1T 514 concerning card playing and checkers. This appeared as Testimony Pamphlet 12 in 1867 in the midst of an article titled "Recreation for Christians." Interestingly, this was, as far as I know the first statement on the necessity for recreation for Seventh-day Adventists that appeared in our literature. It can be seen that Ellen White is here speaking positively and that she is attempting to encourage our people to take time off for a change and not be so enmeshed and involved in the Lord's work that they do not come apart and "rest a while," --like Jesus said. This is a positive statement and needs to be viewed in that context.

We must remember that the year before, 1866, the Battle Creek Sanitarium opened its doors under the name Western Health Reform Institute.* At that time, we also had the publishing house in Battle Creek and the growing church.

Ellen White, when she speaks of amusements, "such as dancing, card playing, chess, checkers, etc." she speaks of them negatively indicating that she could not approve of them "because heaven condemns them." Now notice, if you will please, "these amusements open the door for great evil. They are not beneficial in their tendency, but have an exciting influence, producing in some minds the passion for those plays that lead to gambling and dissipation." It is the "tendency" that heaven condemns. It is the fact that these amusements "open the door for great evil." It is not that the amusements concerned are so evil in themselves. It is that they create an appetite for indulgences that are in themselves bad and destructive. All the way through Ellen White's counsel dealing with games, she deals with this matter of opening doors and creating tendencies toward certain things within themselves that are evil.

Here is a mark, I think, of genuine inspiration--Ellen White laying the ax to the root of the tree. She deals in the same manner with the question of intemperance, indicating that intemperance does not begin with the wine bottle, the whiskey bottle or the cigarette, but that it begins at the table where people eat too much, or eat heavily spiced foods. Thus an appetite is created for more stimulating indulgences.

Adventists, like John the Baptist are to lay the ax to the root of the tree. As John prepared the way for the first Advent, we are to prepare the way for the Second Advent. John was a reformer and his habits of life were very simple, both in a dietary way and insofar as his dress was concerned. The same should be true of all saints who are waiting for the coming of Jesus.

Our pleasures, as Jesus indicated, should be those of relaxation and change, "in a desert place." I do not mean literally a desert, but a place away from the city and the bustle and the hustle of life, in quiet, beautiful, natural surroundings. Young people should be taught hobbies, bird watching,

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astronomy, shell collecting, mountain climbing, swimming, etc. These are active, productive changes in pace that leave a good taste in the mouth and that do not stimulate interest in more exciting and harmful sports, etc.

* Ellen White was concerned that these popular amusements not enter our institutions,--nor our homes.