"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." So states the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution a statement widely interpreted as specifying the "separation of church and state." Perhaps we need an amendment mandating the separation of church and diet, too. Some advocates of certain vegan and/or "raw" diets claim to garner their authority from the Bible presumably one can gain brownie points in heaven by eating according to "God's plan" (but no brownies would be allowed, unfortunately). One example is the so-called "Hallelujah diet" espoused by the Rev. George Malkmus, designed to appeal to fundamentalist Christians.

Rev. Malkmus asserts that we should eat only those foods found in the Garden of Eden, as described in Genesis and most should be consumed raw. He states that during Biblical times, people who ate this way lived for 912 years. Not only will people live longer, according to Malkmus they'll be healthier. He claims that his dietary approach healed his colon cancer and can cure pretty much anything that ails humankind.

His website (http://www.hacres.com/articles.asp?stype=5) states that "The primary cause of nearly every sickness and disease is the deficiency of vital organic minerals, vitamins, and enzymes in our diet." And he says vitamin B12 supplements (which he sells, of course) are made necessary by the poor quality of our soil never mind the well-known fact that B12 is a product of microbes and is found only in animal-derived food products (and supplements, of course), not things that grow in the ground.

Like many in the raw foods camp, Malkmus claims that since our bodies are made of living cells, we need to support their health by eating uncooked foods in which the enzymes are still active. He neglects to note that when enzymes are subjected to the actions of the acid in the human stomach, they are inactivated as surely as they would be by heat during cooking.

While Malkmus' ideas of hewing to the "diet according to Gospel" may strongly appeal to believers, its unscientific premises may end up harming rather than improving the health of believers. We at ACSH think religion can be great for spiritual comfort, but for nutrition advice it's best to stick with science.

For more information about the Rev. Malkmus and his pronouncements, see the comments by quackbuster Dr. Stephen Barrett at: http://www.quackwatch.org/11Ind/malkmus.html

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