

DIETARY LAWS (כִּשְׁרוּת) IN LEVITICUS 11: 1-19 AND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN SOUTH EASTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The dietary laws (כִּשְׁרוּת) in Leviticus 11: 1-19 deal with the foods the Jews are permitted to eat and the ones they are not allowed to eat. Food that may be consumed is deemed Kosher (כִּשֵּׁר) meaning “fit” (i.e. fit for consumption) and food that should not be consumed is deemed non-Kosher (i.e. not fit for consumption). Only certain types of animals, birds and fish meeting specific criteria are Kosher, i.e. permitted to be eaten by the Jews, the consumption of the flesh of any animal that do not meet these criteria, such as pork, frogs, shell-fish, etc. are forbidden. The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes in the dietary laws in Leviticus 11. The Church believes that they are the spiritual Israelites and as such, they diligently observe the Pentateuchal dietary laws. The major reason God gave the dietary laws to his children was for them to be holy even as he is holy. The Israelites were set apart by God to be his own people in the midst of other nations. The Adventists equally believe that the dietary laws have great health benefits and leads to longevity for those that observe them. It is therefore the thrust of this work that the diligence in observance of the dietary laws by the Seventh-day Adventist Church is examined in a view to recommend the commitment and obedience of the Adventists in keeping the dietary laws to contemporary Nigerian Christians.

Keywords: Dietary Laws; Leviticus; Seventh-day Adventist Church; eastern Nigeria

Introduction

Ritual practices are essential part of every religion and from time immemorial Israel has defined its values through ritual practices. Even the simple, daily practice of eating meals could be used as a means in which Israel learns the ways of God. The book of Leviticus is composed largely of the regulations of Israel's holiness code. In Leviticus 11: 1-19, the author repeats twice that Yahweh has called Israel to holiness because he is holy. Holiness encompasses dimensions of hallowedness, sacredness, purity, cleanliness and set apartness.

Israel was a nation set apart because Yahweh claimed ownership over them as his children. Purity or cleanliness stands between what is holy or sacred and what is unclean. Throughout the Pentateuch, the standard for purity is clearly built on the view of God's holiness. Obedience to ritual purity promotes a life blessed by God, while impurity points to death. Leviticus 11: 1-19 comprises Yahweh's criteria for holiness and cleanliness. The sanctions and prohibitions in Leviticus (most especially the dietary laws) are clearly handed down by God, and must be read with the divine perspective in mind. Yahweh permits no room for compromise, but requires absolute holiness.

Walter (1993) affirms that the dietary laws have taken a central place in the self-understanding of Judaism throughout its history. He further notes that while Jews have expressed their faithfulness to their God by the observance of all the laws, it is these laws, along with those of circumcision and the Sabbath, that have most conspicuously enabled them to express their identity as Jews over against their neighbours, to resist assimilation, and thereby to be faithful to the God who has called them to be 'his special possession among all the nations that are on the earth.' This power of the dietary laws arises not only from the fact that Jews draw attention to themselves among their neighbours by their observance of the dietary laws, but often they are ridiculed because of it.

Lockman (1997) notes that the dietary legislation is directed to both Moses and Aaron. The animals immediately excluded from the Hebrew diet were those hallowed in idol worship as enjoying a role in sacrifice, magic or superstitious practice; for example, the pig, used in sacrifice to the Babylonian god Tammuz. He also maintains that, it is not unlikely that other reasons, such as hygiene and natural abhorrence, also affected Hebrew custom and legislation. Lockman observes that only those animals that were split-hoofed and cud chewing could be eaten. This would permit beef, lamb and considerable wild game. He also notes that the rock badger and the hare could actually have been eliminated because they are not ruminants, despite the fact that their mastication process suggests the action of chewing cud. The prohibition extended to consumption as well as to contact with the dead animals, but simply contact with them while living was not forbidden.

Only aquatic animals having both fins and scales could be eaten. Contact with their dead bodies was also prohibited. There is no general norm governing the prohibition of birds, only an enumeration of the unclean species. The identification of some of these remains uncertain, since the exact meaning of the Hebrew terms cannot be determined. We are at loss to determine why they were rejected, the only possible clue being that they are preponderantly carnivorous. The motivation for avoidance of all these unclean animals is because the holiness of Yahweh himself demands it.

It is pertinent to note that God gave the dietary laws to man in order for man to be holy and as such, maintain a good relationship with his maker. The crux of this work is to examine how the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Eastern Nigeria keep the pentateuchal dietary laws and how their obedience in keeping these dietary laws could serve as a lesson for other Christians, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church to keep other laws of God. This will enhance man's relationship with God and his fellow human beings.

The Origin of Seventh-day Adventist Mission Work in Nigeria

The Seventh-day Adventists believe that their roots in history go back a long way. Schwarz (1979) observes that it goes back, not only to the Millerite movement of the 1830s and 1840s, but father, to Wesley and the eighteenth-century Evangelical revivalists, to the great protestant Reformers and to such earlier dissenting groups as the Lollards and Waldenses. Back to the primitive Celtic church of Ireland and Scotland, the persecuted church of the first three centuries after Christ, back to Christ and the apostles themselves. Schwarz (1979) further notes that it is obvious that modern Adventism developed in the setting of the great advent awakening which took place in the early years of the nineteenth century.

The Seventh-day Adventist church sprang from the 'great second advent awakening,' which shook the religious world about the middle of the nineteenth century. That was when a re-emphasis about the second advent of Jesus Christ was rampant in Britain, and on the continent of Europe. Before long, many of the Old-world views of prophetic interpretation crossed the Atlantic and penetrated American theological circles.

Schwarz (1979) asserts that the Seventh-day Adventist global church had its roots in the Millerite movement (a religious movement in the United States of America) of 1830s and 1840s. This was during the period of the second Great Awakening. He further notes that following the chronology of Archbishop Ussher, and interpreting the 2300 days of Daniel 8: 14 as 2300 years, many Bible students of various denominations concluded that Christ would come back about the year 1843 or 1844. Schwarz affirms that, of this studious number was one William Miller, a Baptist minister who was raised by a deeply religious mother.

The great advent awakening movement which spanned the Atlantic from Europe was bolstered by a tremendous wave of contemporary biblical scholarship. Although Miller himself did not have academic theological training, scores of prophetic scholars in Europe and the United State espoused his view. Schwarz (1979) maintains that William Miller was only one more voice proclaiming the 184 – 1844 fulfillment of Daniel 8: 14 or the

2300 days period allegedly dating from 457 B.C. and ending in 1843 – 1844. Undoubtedly, the great Second Advent movement, which swept the United States in the 1840s, stemmed largely from the activities of this William Miller, who confidently taught in 1818, that in about twenty-five years (1843), Jesus Christ would come.

The Millerites experienced the first and later second or great disappointments. Jesus neither came in the spring of 1844, nor on 22nd October, 1844. That created a split within the rank and file of the Millerites. From 1845 onward, the majority of Adventists began to interpret the great disappointment as another failure in their time calculations. However, for a minority the mistake was not in the time setting but in the prediction of the nature of the event, which was to take place on 22nd October, 1844. From this minority the Sabbatarian Adventists emerged. This was the group that got the Seventh-day Sabbath message from a Seventh-day Baptist minister (William Miller), confirmed it in the Bible, and later by Ellen G. White vision, and started to observe the Seventh-day Sabbath.

Alalade (2008) observes that the Seventh-day Adventist work began officially in Europe in 1847; it was not until 1888 that the church gained its first entrance into West Africa. However, Arica was penetrated briefly in 1879 when Hart Ribon, an early convert in Italy, moved to Egypt and opened a school. But the project ended when riots broke out in the area. The Seventh-day Adventist Church first came to West Africa in 1888. It did not spread at once to all parts of the territory. It began in Gold Coast, which is now Republic of Ghana. He asserts that “from there, like the mustard seed to which Jesus had likened his kingdom (Matthew 13: 31, 32), it grew gradually, making a slow but steady inroad into various parts of West Africa, including Nigeria” (p.41).

Alalade (2008) further notes that the West African work was placed under the direct supervision of what was then known as European Division. Its headquarters was at Hamburg, Germany. The President of that Division was Leonard Conradi. In December 2-11, 1913, a missionary conference was convened by Conradi in Freetown, which was conducted by the President, Elder Conradi himself. This historic conference laid plans for the work in West Africa. It was recommended that British West Africa as it was called then, be divided into three separate fields: Sierra Leone and Liberia, Gold Coast, and Nigeria. After this reorganization, there was need for workers in these newly created fields. Conradi made calls for volunteers. The following persons honoured Conradi’ call: Lewis and his wife volunteered their service for the work in Gold Coast (Ghana), Greaves was appointed to be in charge of Sierra Leone field and David C. Babcock was appointed to pilot the work in Nigeria. The Dauphins and Samuel Morgue converts of Babcock in 1907 at “the Cape Coast crusade was to assist him in the leadership of the work in Nigeria” (p.50).

Agboka (2001) notes that the name Seventh-day Adventist was chosen in 1860. On May 21, 1863, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was formed and the movement became an official organization. Prominent figures in the early church included: Hiram Edson, James Springer White and his wife Ellen G. White, Joseph Bates and John Andrews.

In Nigeria the work of the church began first in Yoruba land in 1914 with the arrival of the church's first missionaries that included Elder David C. Babcock and his family, with two other ministers of the gospel, a Ghanaian R.P Dauphin and a Sierra Leonean, Samuel Morhue. Babalola (1988) observes that the crew left Freetown in a boat in February 1914 and arrived at the shores of Lagos on March 7, 1914. He says that when Babcock arrived at Lagos with his crew, on travelling into the interior of Yoruba land came into Erunmu, while others in the company went to other places in Yoruba land.

Babalola (1988) emphasizes that Babcock took as his first missionary station Erunmu as a result of an invitation by the chief of Ibadan. This invitation led to an interview between the chief and Pastor Babcock yielding to the acceptance of Erunmu as a missionary field. The city was populated to about 180,000 people. Interpreters for Babcock in Erunmu included one of the sons of the chief of Erunmu (Baale of Erunmu), by name Samuel Onyeniya, who could speak Hausa, English and Yoruba languages fluently. After many months, Samuel Oyelese started keeping the Sabbath. Jacob Alao was another interpreter for Babcock and he helped to enhance the growth of Seventh-day Advent church missionary work in Erunmu. Babalola (1988) notes that "the Seventh-day Adventist church missionary works in Nigeria, in its inception, particularly in the Western Nigeria had formidable foundation" (p.88).

Alao (2004) observes that before the coming of the Adventist Missionaries in Nigeria, the country had hosted many Church Missionary pioneers. He says that among the top on the list of the Missionary pioneers were Thomas B. Freeman of the Methodist Church Mission who arrived in Badagry on 24th of September, 1842, followed by the Rev. H. Townsend of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in the same year. The Presbyterian Church began in Calabar led by Rev. Hope Waddel on the 10th of April 1846. Thomas Bowen of the Southern Baptist Mission also arrived in Abeokuta in 1851. Also, the Catholic Church was founded in Lagos by Father Francis Borghero on the 8th of September, 1863, etc.

Alao (2004) further maintains that the first Seventh-day Adventist Missionary in Nigeria, David C. Babcock was born in New Hampshire, Ohio in the United States of America on September 12, 1854. Under the leadership of David C. Babcock, the Advent message had its permanent roots in West Africa. He was directly in charge of work in Sierra Leone and

Ghana and administered them as a single mission until 1913. By the end of the year 1913, it became increasingly necessary to divide the West African Mission into smaller separate missions for a more effective and easy administration. On these notes, David .C Babcock and some national workers became in charge of the Nigerian Mission.

Agboola (1987) notes that Babcock arrived in Lagos in 1914 where he began his Adventist mission. He toured the interior part of Yoruba land and looked for a suitable location, while others were busy in the town gathering building materials together for mission houses. He came to Erunmu, a town in Egbeda Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria, where the Seventh-day Adventist Church recorded its initial successes in terms of planning, growth and expansion of Adventism in Yoruba land.

Agboola (1987) further states that from Erunmu Babcock proceeded to Ilorin. The people of Ilorin are predominantly Muslims. He was therefore, encouraged to go to Sao, a town about seven miles from Ilorin, where he obtained a suitable station. At Sao, he opened a village school, which later became in 1918 the first Seventh-day Adventist formal school in Nigeria where the early national workers were trained. Sao then became the mother church from which the gospel spread to other neighbouring towns and villages. Babcock said that calls were coming from many towns asking him to come and help them. The new believers made deep impression on the minds of the non-Christians around them. Agboola (1987) maintains that it was in 1915 that the gospel light was received at Odo-Owa, a town about a mile from Ipoti. No fewer than 78 people were baptized at one time in Ipoti. The outlook was cheering and within a short time, suitable buildings were erected.

By the middle of 1917 Agboola (1987) testifies that the work had expanded considerably. It became increasingly difficult for Babcock to cope with the situation with the limited number of workers he had. He affirmed that he almost broke down because of the pressure of work from every direction. He wrote to Washington D.C. requesting for manpower. He further affirms that in June 1917, Elder David C. Babcock left Sao for Ipoti to help in laying the foundation of a new church building. He felt sick and had to be sent to Oshogbo in hammock. He left Oshogbo for Lagos and was compelled to return to England with his family because his sickness worsened. It was the period of the World War 1 and his journey was rough, his ship torpedoed and he only very narrowly escaped death.

David C. Babcock was a true missionary indeed, who labored for the cause of the gospel under difficult condition in Nigeria. Amidst seemingly insurmountable difficulties, he pioneered Adventist work in Nigeria. He constructed roads for many communities and contributed to a better living condition of the people he served. Like the other Christian Missionary pioneers, he advocated education and established schools. The contribution of

David Babcock to the development of modern Nigeria is best appreciated in the field of education. Babcock built schools mostly from the funds he brought with him from Sierra Leone and later from the funds raised in England and the United States. The Seventh-day Adventist Church named their University in Nigeria after David C. Babcock, i.e. Babcock University.

The Missionary Work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Igbo land

The missionary work of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Igbo land has made a lot of impact cutting across Abia State, Anambra State, Imo State, Enugu State and Ebonyi State. Alalade (2008) observes that in January 1923, the Eastern Nigerian Conference was established as a mission. Jesse Clifford of England, who had served in Sierra Leone and Ghana (Gold Coast), pioneered the Seventh-day Adventist work in Eastern Nigeria. He further notes that Jesse Clifford and his wife established the Aba mission station, which since then has been the headquarters of the church in Eastern Nigeria. He also states that this territory has been the most fruitful and progressive in the Nigerian field up to the present time.

Alalade (2008) asserts that the Eastern Nigeria Mission was formally organized in 1930. In the same year, a second station was opened at Elele with L. Edmonds of England in charge. He also affirms that in 1931, Edmonds was to be succeeded by Clifford, who was stationed at Aba. Because of the fact that Clifford could not leave Aba, Elele came under the direction of A.C. Vine, also from England. Alalade further emphasizes that the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Eastern Nigeria is a child of the Three Angels' messages, married to the Spirit of missions. He maintains that this precious message was proclaimed and people responded first in tens, and then in hundreds. Alalade (2008) notes:

In Igbo land, in South Eastern Nigeria as in no other place in our work in West Africa, there has been a mass movement toward the message. In two mission stations in this district there are more than a thousand baptized members and ninety-six Sabbath schools. (p. 60).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has impacted positively on their host communities in the South Eastern Nigeria. The church grew numerically through evangelism and establishment of schools. The church has two universities in Nigeria, i.e. Babcock University in the Western Nigeria and Clifford University in the Eastern Nigeria. The names of the two universities were the names of the pioneer Seventh-day Adventist missionaries in the two regions (Western and Eastern regions) in Nigeria. It is worthy to note that Ellen G. White, one of the pioneer members of Seventh-day Adventist Church maintains that wherever the church is planted, there should be schools there also. The

church in their effort to embark on missionary work has built schools, motherless babies' homes and had carried out so many community developments. The church has contributed in training and raising leaders in their host communities. A good example of this can be seen in Abia State where the immediate past governor and the incumbent governor are members of Seventh-day Adventist Church. So, members of Seventh-day Adventist Church are always encouraged by the church to perform their civic duties.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has contributed immensely in terms of healthy and moral living of their members. The church has contributed in the social welfare of their host community in the South Eastern Nigeria. They have youth ministries even in schools, women ministries who assist the needy in their communities when they go for evangelism just like the biblical Dorcas. The church equally has the men's ministry that reaches out to their fellow men in the society when they embark on evangelism.

A.C. Ezenwa (personal communication, 18th July, 2023), notes that in 1905 the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists voted to send Jesse and Catherine Clifford to pioneer the Church's work in West Africa. After ministering in Sierra Leone and Ghana, the Cliffords arrived at Ogboe-Hill, Aba, in the present day Abia State of Eastern Nigeria in 1923. Since then Aba has continued to be the headquarters of the Church's work in this part of the country.

Ezenwa observes that on arrival, with the assistance of Chief Nworgu of Umuola Egbelu, one of the villages in North-East Aba, they acquired a piece of land on lease for their house. Among the first converts was Benjamin I. Tikili who was baptized in 1923 and who became the first ordained minister in Eastern Nigeria in 1924. Closely following this was the conversion and baptism of Phillip E. Onwere, Robert O. Nwosu and A. E. Ukaumunna. These men later became the pastors of the first four districts that were created following the increase in membership and fast expansion of the Church. Benjamin I. Tikili (Aba District), Phillip E. Onwere (Umuocha District), Robert O. Nwosu (Umuobiakwa District) and A.E. Ukaumunna (Umuakpara District).

Ezenwa further asserts that Pastor Clifford started an Adventist Primary School in Aba. The hunger for Christian education led the Church to establish in 1948 the Nigerian Training College at Ihie, about 15 miles from Aba. The Church followed up in September 1953 with the establishment of Adventist High School, Ihie, on the same premises with Canadian-born Lawrence Downing as its first Principal. This high school started with 28 students, 19 of whom were Seventh-day Adventists. Out of the 28, only three were girls. It did not take long before the schools became household names and highly sought after in Eastern Nigeria.

Ezenwa affirms that these schools continued to operate till July 1967 when the Nigerian-Biafra civil war broke out. The war ended in January 1970, after which all the private hospitals and schools in Nigeria were taken over by the military administration without any compensation to the original owners. At that time the Adventist schools at Ihie were over by the military government. The denomination was only allowed access and management of the Adventist Church established on the premises which today is a district headquarters. The schools were later returned to the Church in September 14, 2012 when Nigeria had changed from military rule to democratic governance (May 29, 1999).

Meanwhile, the Church continued to establish other primary and secondary schools in various parts of Eastern Nigeria, for example, places such as Aba, Owerinta, Ohafia, Rivers area, etc. One of such school was the Adventist Secondary Technical College (ASTEC), in Owerinta, which began in September 1993. In June 2008, the Church agreed to establish a university, as a result of this, about 112.16 hectares of land was acquired at Owerinta for the proposed university which was named Clifford University. Although, the university started at Ihie where the Church had schools which was returned by the government. Ihie serves as the temporary site for Clifford University. The permanent site is located at Owerinta.

On this note, it is worthy to note that Babcock University in Western Nigeria (a Seventh-day Adventist University) was named after Pastor David C. Babcock, an American missionary who brought the Seventh-day Adventist message to Nigeria in 1914 and began work in Erunmu, Ibadan, in present day Oyo State. Pastor Jesse and Mary Catherine Clifford, a British missionary couple, brought the message to Eastern Nigeria in 1923 and settled in Aba, Abia State; while Pastor J.J. Hyde, another American missionary, took the message to Northern Nigeria in 1930 and settled in Bukuru, present day Plateau State. Ezenwa notes that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has three Conferences in Nigeria, i.e. the Western Nigeria Conference, the Eastern Nigeria Conference and the Northern Nigeria Conference.

Seventh-day Adventist Church and Observance of Leviticus Dietary Laws (כִּשְׁרוּת)

An integral part of the Seventh-day Adventists' 28 Fundamental Beliefs is making the distinction between clean and unclean food in order to avoid eating what is unclean, i.e., not fit for human consumption. In Fundamental Belief No. 22, entitled "Christian Behaviour," the Adventists believe that "along with adequate exercise and rest, members of the Church are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the scriptures." This statement was first included in the Fundamental Beliefs in 1981 but voted in 1980 at the General Conference Session in Dallas, Texas.

The Seventh-day Adventists believe that the biblical clean and unclean food laws (Genesis 7:2, 8; 8:20; Leviticus 11:1-23, 41-47; 20:25-26; Deuteronomy 12:15-16; 14:1-21) are built on the following regulations: (1) Clean land animals are those who chew and have a split hoofs; (2) unclean birds are only enumerated which means that birds of prey are forbidden to be eaten. (3) Fish with scales and fins are permitted for human consumption; (4) All swarmer (including sea food like crabs or oysters) and insects are in the forbidden category except for four kinds of locusts (Leviticus 11:12).

Nichol (1978) notes that the Seventh-day Adventists believe that the principles set forth in Leviticus 11, were designed of God to protect those who love and choose to serve him against the use, as food, of those forms of animal life that would bring injury to their bodies. This measure of uncertainty, however, will not prove to be an insurmountable problem to any Christian who proposes in his heart not to defile the temple of God, but to do all to the glory of God. For such a person the fundamental principles as outlined in Leviticus 11 will prove to be a sufficient guide. Haskell (1903) underlined the biblical prohibition of Leviticus 11 in regard to eating unclean food in the following way: "in many things the Bible lays down principles and we are left to exercise our own judgment in the matter, while in many other matters a plain command is given. He further notes that in his infinite plan, God appointed a part of the animal kingdom to act as scavengers, in order that we might know those which feed upon clean food, he placed a mark or brand upon them. The eating of these things which God has forbidden is very grievous in his sight.

Graybill (1981) in the General Conference session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church summarized the development of Adventist thinking on clean and unclean food. He argued that the nineteenth century Adventists did not generally accept this distinction between clean and unclean meat based on Levitical law, even though they clearly condemned pork. In the same year, Brunt (1981) was instrumental in stirring Adventist thinking to be more consistent in their interpretation of unclean food. He further asserts that a hygienic rationale lies behind these regulations, and that the distinction between clean and unclean animals is natural. Brunt stresses holiness and redemption motifs as reasons for the observance of these food regulations by the Adventists.

Moskala (2000) demonstrates that for the Seventh-day Adventists, the main rationale behind this dietary regulation is theological, namely, respect for the Holy creator. His exegetical, theological and inter-textual study proves that under this umbrella other important aspects are included like health, respect for life, holiness, natural repulsiveness and a wall against the infiltration of paganism into the lifestyle Adventists. Moskala further demonstrated on the basis of the comparative study of all the Pentateuchal unclean laws that choosing uniquely the dietary regulations regarding clean and unclean food as

binding for Adventists is well founded in the nature of these laws because of the uncleanness of the unclean animals is permanent and falls into the category of the natural uncleanness, thus being a part of the natural universal law.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church considers these Pentateuchal regulations of the dietary laws to be important because not only careful exegesis and theological reasoning prove that these are God's requirements and were not revoked but that when observed, they express respect for the holy creator. The rationale for them points to health regulations as well as to maintaining holiness, being holy as our Lord is holy (Leviticus 11: 44-45). God desires that we give him glory in life's everyday activities, including eating and drinking, because we are accountable to him due to the fact that we are not on our own, our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and in our body, we should glorify our redeemer. Food on our tables should be a silent witness that God and His word have the ultimate authority in our lives.

It is pertinent to note that most Adventists follow the Levitical dietary laws. There is a difference between the moral laws and the dietary laws of God. The moral laws consist of the Ten Commandments, while the dietary laws deal with what people should eat and what they should not eat. This is to maintain holiness and to keep the body healthy. Therefore, the moral laws are holy and eternal, while the dietary laws of clean animals are transitory. Some Adventist had move over to advocate for vegetarianism, but eating the clean animals does not make one sinful. The clean animals are beneficial to the person that is keeping them. The moral law cannot be equated to the dietary laws of clean animals, although they all balls down to obedience. In order to support the idea of eating clean animals, Jesus Christ ate fish even after his resurrection. So the dietary laws of clean animals cannot make one unholy. Everything about God is based on faith, as people grow; they get matured on what God wants them to know. Therefore, the moral laws cannot be at the same level with the dietary laws. The Ten Commandments are sacrosanct, while the dietary laws of clean animals are personal.

With respect to the unclean animals, when someone eats them that persons' spirituality dwindles. The quality and quantity of people' blood is being formed by what they eat. When people eat what God asks them to avoid, it becomes disobedience. Even though that Jesus Christ said in the Holy Scriptures that it is not what goes into a man that defiles him, but what comes out of a man. There is no way you eat an unclean things and what will come out of you will be clean. Sin in Hebrew means חטא, which means "missing the mark," that is eternal requirement from God to men. And this is only embedded in the Ten Commandments.

The Adventists believe that people's spiritual perfection is interwoven with what they eat, what they wear and everything about them. If people eat what is right, wear what is right and be in the environment that is right, they will live longer and eternal life is sure. So people cannot separate holiness from eating what is right and avoiding unclean meat. Anyone that defaults in this cannot live a holy life and it defiles such a person's spirituality. Therefore, just like a man that drinks alcohol becomes physically tipsy, unholy food makes one spiritually tipsy.

Any unclean animal from human observation is spiritually inclined. Be it the cat, dog, pig, etc. it is termed to be spiritually inclined. But what spirits are they inclined to, is unknown to man. It is worthy to note that because they are wild and can attack human beings, such a spirit they are inclined to, can't be from God. So all animals that can harbor evil spirits are termed by God as unclean. Most of the unclean animals are carnivorous and can attack man, but the clean ones are not as harmful as the unclean ones. Everything people do in this world is by choice. The Adventists' explanation of great controversies cannot be understood ordinarily, this can only be understood by divine revelation, including the dietary laws (i.e. what we should eat and the once we should not eat). God has given man choice. Everything is in pair or two. For example; life and death, heaven and earth, male and female, clean and unclean, etc. This is why the dietary laws are equally a test. The moment you make right use of your choice the better for you. God is the one that in his infinite wisdom put all things in two.

The teaching concerning clean and unclean meats has been a remarkably enduring element of Seventh-day Adventism. If one asks most Adventists what makes them special, diet will be on the list. It is not at all unusual to hear someone who has been absent from the church for decades to say, "But, in all these years, I have never eaten pork." If people that are not Adventists know anything about the Adventists, they are also likely to identify diet as something that sets the Adventists apart.

The Seventh-day Adventist rules regarding food as they practice them now are more about spiritual defilement than health. Their spiritual identity in this area is not about caring for their bodies intelligently, but avoiding what they think God considers being impure foods. Therefore, if intelligent care of the body is the goal, the case for vegetarianism as made by Ellen G. White, backed up as it is by moral, economic and scientific arguments, is much stronger than the biblical case for clean meat. But even vegetarianism is far from a total health regimen. For good health you have to exercise, limit sugars and fats and add a heavy dose of fruits, nuts and vegetables, plus a host of other constantly evolving discoveries by health researchers.

After studying Mary Douglas theory of Dietary laws, it is obvious that fussing about food misses the point anyway. Douglas shows that the reason clean-unclean food rules have so much power is not their value to one's physical body, but because the human body serves as an image of the social system. On this note therefore, the Seventh-day Adventist diet is a diet plan promoted by members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is mostly plant-based diet that avoids substances that they consider unclean or harmful.

Hermeneutical Application of Leviticus 11: 1-19 to Contemporary Christians in South Eastern Nigeria

By some it is thought beneath the dignity of God to stoop to give directions in regards to man's diet. Such people ask why God should be concerned about what people eat. Nichol (1978) agrees that we might enlarge that conception by inquiring why God should be interested in man at all. Christ answered that question, informing us that God is interested not in man alone but in many things of even less value (Luke 12:7). He further notes that man is made in the image of God. Sparrows are not. Man is said to be precious in the sight of God, and of more value than "fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir" (Isaiah 13: 12; 43:4).

It is worthy to note that the measure of God's estimate of man is shown in the fact that He identifies Himself with man. The further fact that God paid such a tremendous price to redeem man is, to the Christian, indicative of the value God places on him. Human beings may therefore be confident that anything concerning them is of interest to God.

Nichol (1978) maintains that God's dietary laws are not, as some suppose, merely negative and prohibitory. God intends that man shall have the best of everything, the "finest of the wheat" (Psalm 81:16; 147: 14). He who created all things knows what is best for the creatures he has made, and according to his knowledge he gives counsel and recommendations. "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. What God forbids is not withheld in arbitrariness, but for the good of man. Men may disdain God's counsel, but experience and results ever demonstrate His wisdom.

God gave man a wonderful body with almost unlimited possibilities, and also with many delicate parts that must be carefully shielded from abuse if they are to function properly. Some people insist that God is more interested in the soul of man than in his body, that spiritual values are superior to the physical. This is true, but it should be remembered that body and soul are closely interrelated, that the one powerfully affects the other, and that it is not always easy to tell where one begins and the other ends. Though we agree that the spiritual man is of supreme importance, we do not think that therefore the body is to be neglected. Such, indeed, was the philosophy of certain medieval "saints" who mortified

the body for the benefit of the soul; but that was not God's plan. He put body and soul together for the mutual benefit of each.

The statement that as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7) touches the fundamental issues of life. A man is what he thinks. Whatever thinking may be, it determines conduct. If a man thinks along right lines, his conduct is likely to be right. If his mind dwells on evil things, his deeds will likely be evil. Does the body have any influence on a man's thinking? Most decidedly all know that the use of intoxicating liquors affects a man's thinking as well as his actions. It warps his judgment and tends to make him irresponsible. His mind does not function as when he is sober, his faculties are not working normally, and all his reactions are retarded.

Most men admit that drinking has bad effects. May wrong eating habits have similar effects? Yes, even if not in the same degree as alcohol. Food affects a man's behaviour as well as his thinking. Does food affect the mind? Do eating and drinking affect the spirit? Most assuredly a sour outlook on life often comes from a sour stomach. Right eating will not necessarily produce a sweet disposition; but wrong eating makes it hard to measure up to the standard set by God.

It is worthy to note that God's dietary laws are not arbitrary enactments that deprive people of the joy of eating. Rather, they are sound, sensible laws that human beings will do well to heed if they wish to retain health, or perhaps regain it. On the whole it will be found that the food God approves is the same food human beings have found best, and that disagreement does not come in the things approved, but in the things forbidden.

These dietary statutes were given to Israel of old, and were adapted to their conditions. Most Jews still adhere to them, and they have served well for more than 3,000 years. The physical condition of the Jews bears witness to the fact that these rules are not obsolete and outdated, if their purpose is to produce a people singularly free from many of the diseases that plague men today. Despite the persecutions and hardship suffered by the Jews, above those suffered by any other nation on the face of the earth, and over a longer time, they are, generally speaking, a virile race. This fact is at least partly explained by their obedience to God's dietary laws set forth in Leviticus 11.

Conclusion

In the book of Leviticus 11: 1-19, the dietary laws (כִּשְׁרוּת), indicate what foods may or may not be eaten. Only food that is *Kosher* (fit) may be eaten; anything that is not *kosher* is to be avoided. The uncleanness of food is derived from several sources. The principal source is the characterization of certain animals as unclean by nature. Thus any land animal that is not cloven-hoofed and does not chew its cud is unclean, any fish or other

water creature that does not have scales and fins is unclean; and all birds of prey and most insects are also unclean.

It is worthy to note that the reason why these animals are so regarded is not known with certainty. But there is, most probably, a connection with ancient religious sacrificial practices and taboos. Thus, anything that was connected with an alien god or cult was considered to be unclean. It is known that the pig was a Canaanite domestic and sacrificial animal. Mice, serpents' cats and hares were regarded as effective media of demonic power. However, God is holy and he demands that his people must be holy. He had separated them from other nations. The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes and diligently practices the dietary laws in Leviticus 11. The Adventists believe that they are set apart by God and as such, are the spiritual Israelites.

On this note therefore, obedience, purity and holiness cannot be separated. The dietary laws were given to human beings by God in order for them to be holy. There are foods one can take into his body and the body system will be corrupted. More so, observance of the dietary laws has great health benefits. There are certain sicknesses that are common with people who eat carelessly. And when someone eats healthy, it could lead to longevity. Research shows that people that observes dietary laws (to be precise, the Adventists) are among people who live longer than the average.

It is pertinent to note that keeping dietary laws are highly commendable because right from the Garden of Eden, God gave food restrictions to man. It was because of disobedience to this food restriction that Adam was sent away from the garden and was punished. Man was however, asked to eat vegetables, grains and nuts. The instruction to eat clean animals and avoid the unclean animals was given after the flood, during Noah's time.

It is therefore important to note that, as testimonies abound on the benefits of observing dietary laws by the Adventists and other Sabbatherians, people should with greater commitment strive to diligently obey and observe the moral laws of God (i.e., the Ten Commandments), including the Adventists. All the laws of God are summarized in the Decalogue, which is eternal. When people keep the dietary laws which benefit their health and failed to keep the moral laws of God, they have failed in all. Therefore, obedience to these moral laws of God guarantees people's spirituality or holiness, health, peace of mind and strengthens their relationship with God. So, observing the Pentateuchal dietary laws are very good, but such obedience should be extended the more to obeying the moral laws of God that will guarantee holiness, peace, progress and all-round development of every individual and the society at large.

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