

Clean and Unclean Meats

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Introduction

The law on clean and unclean animals in the Pentateuch divides all animals into two groups: clean which can be eaten, and unclean which are not to be eaten. This law has been followed by many Jews for thousands of years. It has also been accepted as a rule to follow by some Christians. Other Christians, undoubtedly the majority, believe that this law is not binding upon them in this era and that this law has been abrogated for Christians. It is the purpose of this study to evaluate the various texts of the Bible which address this matter and evaluate them to determine just what response should be given in this regard.

In order to live, every human being has to eat. Thus the consumption of nutritional elements is a very personal matter. As such it is also a matter upon which various and strong opinions are held. The Bible does not avoid addressing such matters, however, just because human beings may be opinionated about it. On the contrary, the Bible makes a direct address to the way in which human beings live in almost every area of life, including the nutritional one. Thus we find dietary laws in the Bible, and to the one who takes the Bible seriously, these dietary laws must also be taken seriously, regardless of what one ultimately does with them.

From these initial observations a number of questions arise. Some of these questions revolve around the origin, nature, and authority of these biblical dietary laws. Are they of divine or human origin? At what time did they originate? Why were they given? What was the motivation and purpose of these laws? Are they moral, ceremonial, or hygienic laws? Are they an outgrowth of some primitive religious customs which the Hebrews borrowed from

some other culture? Were these laws only for Jews, or should Christians also observe them? Did either Jesus or his apostles abolish these laws for the Christian Church? While time and space do not permit exhaustive answers to these questions, the more important of them are addressed below through the medium of the examination of the relevant biblical texts.

In terms of literature, I should give credit to a series of unpublished Seminar papers on file at Andrews University which I have employed outside of the standard reference works such as dictionaries and commentaries. These seminar papers include: (1) James Fisher, "A Critique of the Rationale for Laws of Clean/ Unclean as Applied to Animals in Leviticus 11," (1982); (2) David Merling, "Unclean or Unhealthful? Another Adventist Perspective," (1986); (3) George Bryson, "A Seventh-day Adventist Analyzes Five New Testament Passages Commonly Used to Justify the Abrogation of the Ban of Unclean Meats," (1976); (4) Jiri Moskala, "The Concept of Health and Holiness in Dietary Laws," (n.d., and 5) P. van Bemmelen, "The Nature and Authority of the Law on Clean and Unclean Animals in the Pentateuch." Because of limitations of time, these works have been employed to a considerable extent and credit is not always given to the individual papers from which the ideas presented below have come from. On the other hand, their use here has been selective, and the author retains the responsibility for the statements and misstatements made below.

With these introductory and qualifying marks made, we may turn now to an examination of the texts themselves. By and large they are treated in the chronological and literary order in which they appear in the Bible.

I. Principal Passages in the Hebrew Bible
Which Deal With the Subject of
Clean and Unclean Meats

A. Genesis 7-9: The Flood Story

In the instructions given to Noah for the way in which he was to prepare for the Flood which God was to bring upon the world, he was told to take animals into the Ark once he had constructed it. The purpose of this was to preserve alive the various kinds of birds and land animals. As a consequence they were to be brought in by pairs, male and female, in order that they might propagate on the earth after the flood. They were also to be brought in quantitatively according to whether they were classified as clean and unclean: seven pairs of clean animals, but only one pair of unclean animals (Gen 7:2). From this passage a number of points of interest can be made:

1. No explanation was given to Noah as to how he was to recognize them as either clean or unclean. In other words, either additional information was given to him about their characteristics of qualifications, or this was information which was already known to him as common knowledge.

2. The first statement about clean and unclean animals in the Bible comes here as an observation, not in legislation about their use. Legislation about their use comes only later in the laws of the Pentateuch.

3. The most direct comment on their use comes in terms of their use (or nonuse) as sacrificial animals (8:2), for indeed only clean animals and birds were sacrificed upon exit from the Ark. This does not necessarily mean, however, that this was the only purpose of the distinction made.

4. It is at this time that flesh food from animals was given to, assigned, or permitted for use in the diet of man. This contrasts with the original Edenic diet originally assigned to man

which consisted of nuts, fruits, grains, and vegetables (Gen 1:29-30; 2:9, 16; 3:2). Although it is not explained in the text as such, one evident reason for the use of flesh food being introduced at this time was the depopulation of the flora of the world with the destructive action of the Flood. In any event, one can say that the distinction between clean and unclean animals occurs in Scripture at the same time when flesh foods are introduced into the diet of man.

5. It should also be noted that this differentiation and its relationships were introduced long before the Sinai Covenant when the more specific legislation about such animals as made in greater detail. One can certainly say, therefore, that such a distinction goes back long before the more specific covenantal stipulations with Israel were made at Sinai. This distinction was made at a time when all of the ancestors of the human race, the 8 members of Noah's family, were still together in a group with those animals in the Ark.

6. Although the legislation about the use of these animals and their distinction is not made specifically in terms of diet at this time, one could say that it was implied. In providing seven times more clean animals in the Ark and for the postdiluvian world, God was also providing a sevenfold greater likelihood for having clean animals available for consumption after the Flood by Noah's immediate descendants.

7. The association of restrictions upon the use of blood in the diet was also made at this time. (Gen 9:4). The continuing nature of this association between clean and unclean animals and the prohibition upon the use of blood is spelled out in more detail in Leviticus.

B. Leviticus 11: The Major Law of the Clean and Unclean Animals

The most extensive piece of legislation on this subject in all the Bible is found in Leviticus 11. There is a definite sequence of animals treated in this chapter and it runs as follows: quadruped land animals, verses 2-8, water animals, verses 9-12, all flying animals, whether birds or insects, verses 13-23, and finally, the smaller animals that creep upon the earth, verses 29-31, 41-43. This order of the animals treated and their different categories are summarized in verse 46. Mixed in with this type of legislation is another type, that which deals with the touching of the carcasses of dead animals. This type of legislation shows up in the latter half of the chapter, verses 24-40. In particular these laws are found in verses 24-28, and verses 32-40. Here they sandwich or bracket the legislation about the creeping animals.

It should not be said, however, that the first half of the chapter deals with the issue of clean and unclean and the second half deals with the touching of dead animals. In the first section we can already find references to the second issue, and in the second section there are still references to the first. But the fact that these two issues are so closely intermingled should not lead us to overlook the difference between them.

The Hebrew terminology in this passage, and others that deal with the same subject includes: (1) *tahor* for "pure, clean," (2) *tame'* for "unclean, defiled," (3) *sheqes* for "abomination," and (4) *qadash*, a stative verb referring to the state of being holy. In a causative form it is commonly translated "to sanctify." The dictionaries ascribe three aspects to the word for "clean." It can mean pure physically, as in a state of "pure" gold. It can mean to be ceremonially clean, and it can mean to be ethically or morally pure or clean. Examples of all of these kinds of usages can be found in the Hebrew Bible. The noun for "abomination" mentioned above occurs 11 times in the Hebrew Bible and eight of those occurrences appear here in Leviticus 11. The three other occurrences are in Leviticus 7:21, Isaiah 66:17, and Ezekiel 8:10.

There are a number of aspects of this important passage which should be studied

individually.

1. Relationship to context. Leviticus 11 is the first of a series of chapters (11-15) which deal with the general subject of uncleanness. In these chapters various types of states of uncleanness are described and treated. This is the second main section of the book of Leviticus. The first main section covers chapters 1-6 which describe in detail the nature of the sacrificial system. The entire first half of the book of Leviticus comes to its climax in the Day of Atonement ritual described in Leviticus 16. Then the second half of the book of Leviticus deals with a new set of laws for living. These laws are frequently punctuated with the imperative statement, "Be ye holy for I am holy." In other words the second half of the book of Leviticus deals with holy living or sanctification while the first half deals with the problems of sin and uncleanness. Since the treatment for both of these problems was found in the sacrificial system where the offerings brought atonement, as described especially in Leviticus 4. The law of the clean and unclean animals thus introduces the second main section of Leviticus in the section that deals with sacrifice, atonement, and justification.

Different scholars have dealt in different ways with these two main topics of justification and sanctification as they are found in the book of Leviticus. E. J. Young, for example, holds that it deals with "the removal of that defilement which separates man from God," and secondly that it deals with "the restoration of the lost fellowship with God and man."- *Introduction to the OT*, 1954, p. 75. C. Erdman describes Leviticus as "a directory for divine worship" and characterizes it as the "provision for approach to God" and sees the word holiness as the key word of the book (*The Book of Leviticus*, 1951, pp. 7-8). That chapters 11-15 form a unit has been widely recognized. M. Noth sees a stronger coherence in chapters 11-15 than in the previous chapters (*Leviticus*, 1965, p. 11). He refers to these chapters as "cleanness regulations" (p. 89). C. Pfeiffer refers to them instead as the "Laws of Purity" (*The Book of Leviticus*, 1963, p. 32), while G. L. Archer collects them under the title "Separation from Defilement."-*A Survey of OT Introduction*, 1964, p. 227.

This section in particular was introduced by the end of chapters 8-10 which dealt with the installation of the priests, Aaron and his sons. At the end of that section the charge of the high priest and his descendants in office is, "that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, between clean and unclean, and that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken unto them by the end of Moses." (Lev 10:10-11). This passage in particular forms the theme for the next section of chapters 11-15 which is introduced by chapter 11 which we are considering here. This idea of the children of Israel as the holy people of God that is emphasized so strongly in Leviticus has been summarized by L. E. Toombs in the following way:

A pervasive principle of OT theological thought is that Israel should reflect in her community life the character and activity which she ascribes to God. . . . If Yahweh is pre-eminently a holy God, then his people must be peculiarly a holy nation (Exod 19:6, Num 15:40, Deut 14:21). Holiness and uncleanness are as incompatible as light and darkness-
Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. 1, pp. 647.

This statement on holiness has taken us over into another area which deserves a separate treatment below. Before leaving this subject, however, one might note the treatment or ways through which the unclean person could become clean again according to the legislation of Leviticus 11-15. There were three main elements in this process of purification: (1) There was a waiting period of 1, 7, 14, 40, or 80 days. (2) then there was a cleansing agent: fire, water, blood, or a complex mixture known as the "water for impurity" (Num 19:9). And (3) there was a sacrifice of the type for sin or guilt offering. How many and which of these elements were necessary for cleansing in any given case depended upon the nature of the uncleanness.

2. Technical content of the laws. As far as quadruped land animals were concerned, their suitability was determined upon the basis of herbivorous, ruminant animals that chew the cud and whose hooves are wholly cloven are "clean" (Deut 14:6). Then such clean animals are

identified in the Pentateuch: the ox, sheep, goat, deer, gazelle, roebuck, wild goat, the pygarg, antelope, and mountain sheep (Deut 14:4-5). Altogether 42 animals are identified as clean in the Bible. These could fail in either one or both of the specified characteristics. The camel is a ruminant but does not split the hoof, while the pig splits the hoof but is not a ruminant fail on one characteristic each.

Leviticus 11:13-19 lists 20 unclean birds while Deuteronomy 14:12-18 enumerates 21. All birds of prey are forbidden. The Bible does not list clean birds. Later Jewish law identified the characteristics necessary for a clean bird to be: (1) a crop, (2) a gizzard which can easily be peeled away, and (3) an extra talon. In Jewish practice, the eggs of unclean birds are considered unclean. The qualification for clean fish is twofold: fins and scales. Leviticus 11:21-22 permits the eating of four types of locusts as clean while all other insects are by and large considered unclean. (Lev 11:23). Given the difficulty in identifying the approved of classes of locusts, they generally are not eaten in practicing Jewish communities today.

3. The holiness motivation for observance. Leviticus 11:44-45 provide an excellent base from which to examine the motivation for observing this set of laws. At the conclusion to the final section on the creeping animals, the text concludes:

"You shall not defile yourselves with them, lest you become unclean. For I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls upon the earth. For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy" (Lev 11:43b-45).

It is well to note how emphatic this passage is. Twice the people are told not to defile themselves with these animals, in verse 43b, and again in verse 44b. Twice the Lord identifies himself as the Lord your God, or to be your God in verses 44a and 45a. Twice the people are charged to be holy because God is holy, in verses 44a and 45b. Finally, there is the reference

to the Exodus experience, in the statement that God is the one who brought them up out of the land of Egypt. Here cleanness and holiness are linked with redemption, the historical redemption from slavery and bondage in Egypt. Recall now that the Ten Commandments begin with the very same reference to God's redemptive activity, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exod 20:2). Only the redeemed person, ancient or modern, can maintain a full and right relationship with God and this relationship is expressed in holy conduct, as described in both the Ten Commandments and in the laws of Leviticus 11.

This idea of holiness and eating goes back to the covenant code where, in Exodus 22:31 it is stated, "you shall be . . . consecrated to me [= my people]; therefore you shall not eat any flesh that is torn by beasts in the field; you shall cast it to the dogs." Exodus 21-23 form what has been called the "covenant code," the laws given to amplify the Ten Commandments at the time when the Ten Commandments were given. This connection, spelled out in so much detail in Leviticus 11, is already present in principle there. Holiness is not just a spiritual state, it has physical ramifications down to and including what one eats. That principle is enunciated in the Covenant Code and it is elaborated in Leviticus 11.

The same principle of holiness and cleanness physically is elaborated in the illustrative law of Deuteronomy 23:10-14 where the person unclean from excrement was to have a place outside of the camp and there he was to cover the excrement, was to wash himself to become clean so that he could come back into the camp. We today would simply call this good public health hygiene. But the text does not say that he should do so to prevent disease, rather the motivation is given as "your camp must be holy" "because the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to save you" (vs. 14). The Lord was not bound to explain the term theory of disease to a people who would not understand it, but he was able to incorporate those principles into his overall program for ancient Israel and he gave the great underlying motivation for that program-even those parts which were hygienically and health oriented-in

terms of His holiness.

Not only are the laws of clean and unclean in Leviticus 11 given in the strongly positive context of God's holiness, our call to holiness, and God's redemption, but this strongly positive framework for these laws becomes all the more positive when they are compared with the rest of the Laws of Purification in Leviticus 11-15. As one compares the period of uncleanness, the requirement for purification, and the requirement for sacrifice, one finds the following distribution of these requirements in Leviticus 11-15:

Text	Type of Uncleanness	Purification	Sacrifice	Period
Lev 11a	Food	-	-	-
Lev 11b	Touch Carcass	+	-	1 day
Lev 12	Childbirth	+	+	40-80 days
Lev 13-14	Leprosy	+	+	till healed

Thus the eating of unclean animals is set off in a class by itself. This does not necessarily mean, however, that this is less serious than the others. On the contrary, the use of the word for abomination in this passage (see above) emphasizes how serious this type of offence was considered. This word, *sheqes* is used three times with the unclean fish (Lev 11:10-12), three times with the unclean birds and insects (Lev 11:13, 20, and 23), and three times with the unclean creeping animals (Lev 11:41-43). The only section in which this word does not appear is in the section with the quadruped land animals. This kind of language cannot be taken lightly, it is very serious. Thus the consumption of unclean animals was a serious offence in the view of the type of language used for it here.

Another aspect of this comparison is that of the connection with holiness, as stated in the text. At the end of Leviticus 11 it is stated twice that the people were to be holy in this regard

because God was holy. This type of admonition and motivation does not occur again in the laws of purity in Leviticus 12-15. Even the word holy does not occur in those passages. Yet here in Leviticus 11 it stands in the position of the summary and climax of the chapter. Furthermore, the reference to redemption from the house of bondage in Egypt does not occur again in Leviticus 12-15. It occurs in the laws of purity only here in Leviticus 11, again as part of the summary and climax of the significance to these laws.

4. Divine author. Leviticus 11:1 states that the laws concerning the clean and the unclean animals were given when "the Lord said to Moses and Aaron." (Similar introductions occur at the beginning of the next four chapters: 12:1, 13:1, 14:1, and 15:1.) The question here is, how should one view this kind of legislation here. This is a serious philosophical question. The difference can be expressed in this way: If one comes to this passage as a person who accepts the Bible as the inspired reliable Word of God then that person will not hesitate to acknowledge that the law of clean and unclean animals came from God. If, on the other hand, one comes to the Bible with the presuppositions of modern historico-critical scholarship and with an evolutionary viewpoint on the history of religions, especially as applied to the religion of Israel, then it would be natural to downgrade the instruction of this passage as simply human ideas of a certain time which may not be relevant to this present time and need not be taken any more seriously than any other ideas produced in the realm of diet and religion by other religious or health authorities of antiquity.

The Bible itself, however, presents the distinction between the clean and the unclean animals as divinely given. Not only does Leviticus 11:1 introduce the law with the distinctive phrase, "and the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying unto them" (KJV), but in Leviticus 20:25 the Lord speaks unto the children of Israel in quite authoritative tones, "ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which *I* have separated from you as unclean" (KJV). God himself has made the separation this passage tells us.

G. L. Archer has stressed the fact that "no other book in the Bible affirms divine inspiration so frequently as Leviticus. Under the heading of the verb 'to speak' (*dibber*) alone the concordance lists no less than thirty-eight occurrences of the statement that Jehovah spoke to Moses or Aaron."-*Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1964, p. 228. He continues by emphasizing the point that either this is a revelation of God or "otherwise no affirmation of divine origin is to be trusted for any statement in the rest of Scripture."-*Ibid*. Gispén appeals to the headings on the chapters in Leviticus 11-15 to remind us that "in the laws of clean and unclean we have not to do with the thoughts of the people of Israel but with divine revelation given through Moses and Aaron."-*Oudtestamentische Studien*, 1948, p. 192.

5. Leviticus 20:22-26-Connection with the gift of the land. This passage is an important text for it puts the abstinence from unclean meat in a new light. That light is once again, redemption. But the reference to this type of conduct in connection with the Exodus is a reference to redemption past. God delivered his people from Egypt and then gave them laws and statutes in Sinai. These laws on unclean foods were a part of those laws and statutes which he gave there and then. The Exodus just recently past was a part of the motivation for their observance. God had been so gracious as to observe their trials in Egypt and He delivered them from those trials. Now in the basis of his graciousness on their behalf he appeals to them for their observance of these regulations.

Here now in Sinai a new element is injected into these regulations as they are appealed to in Leviticus 20. The appeal now is connected with the Gift of the Land. This was yet future. They were yet to enter the land of Canaan at the end of their period of wilderness wandering. When they were to enter the land, that gift of the land would illustrate once again the graciousness of God toward his people. The text in full reads:

You shall therefore keep all my statutes and all my ordinances, and do them; that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out. And you shall not walk in the

customs of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they did all these things, and therefore I abhorred them. But I have said to you, 'You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.' I am the Lord your God, who have separated you from the peoples. *You shall therefore make a distinction between the clean beast and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; you shall not make yourselves abominable by beast or by bird or by anything with which the ground teems, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean. You shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine (Lev 20:22-26).*

There are several interesting aspects to this passage beyond the mere fact that this legislation is now put in the context of the gift of the land. First, it is also connected with God's holiness in this connection too. Once again it is both God's holiness and his mighty acts on behalf of the people that are the motivation for this observance of this regulation. Note also the severity of the connection is emphasized once again by the use of the word for abomination connected with the people for what they would become by violating this principle. The separateness with which the peoples have been divided by God from the people of the land is emphasized three times over by the use of the verb to separate as applied to the people of God. In this passage the one Law of Purity selected out from all the rest of them in Leviticus 11-15 is the difference between the clean and the unclean animals for food. It is especially in this regard that the people of God become the special possession of God in their relationship toward them.

It is interesting to note the theological themes that are connected with this legislation in the Pentateuch. OT theologians have emphasized three great themes in the mighty acts of God in history in the Pentateuch. Those three are: the call of the Fathers (that is, the patriarchs), the Exodus or deliverance from Egypt, and the gift of the land in taking up the possession of the promised land of Canaan. It is interesting to see that of these three great themes of the

Pentateuch that have been emphasized by modern theologians in their reading of these books that two of the three are connected with the law of clean and unclean meats.

6. Summary on Leviticus 11. The importance of this passage with this legislation on the clean and the unclean can be emphasized by noting the following significant points from the contents and context of the passage:

a. It is the opening narrative of instructions for the laws of purity and as such it stands in pride of place in that overall passage. As such it is also most directly connected with the priestly charge in the preceding chapter to distinguish between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the unholy.

b. It is connected theologically with the Exodus from Egypt in terms of the motivation for its observation in Leviticus 11:44-45.

c. It is connected theologically with the future gift of the land in terms of the motivation for its observation in Leviticus 20:22-26.

d. With regard to both b and c above, this passage is unique in the laws of purity section of Leviticus 11-15 for none of the other laws given there are connected with either the Exodus or the conquest.

e. The law of the clean and the unclean is also unique among the laws of purity in terms of its connection with the charge to be holy for the God whom Israel served at this time was holy. This is repeated at the end of chapter 11 and it is repeated again when the clean and the unclean are given again at the end of chapter 20. None of the other laws of purity contain any such reference to the holiness of God as a motivation for its observation.

f. The contact with clean and unclean food in terms of their consumption was also handled differently from all of the rest of the laws of impurity. For all of the other laws of impurity there was a period of isolation, then a purification procedure, and finally a sacrifice. None of these are listed for the consumption of unclean food, which sets this passage apart from the other laws of impurity as far as the practices connected with them are concerned. Even within

the laws of impurity in Leviticus, this passage is unique.

As a suggestion for this significance of this particular set of laws, it might have to do with the universality of the applicability of the law with Israel. All Israelites had to eat to live and probably all or almost all of them ate meat. Thus every Israelite came under the purview of this law and they did that every day of most of their lives. The next chapter which deals with childbirth applied to a fair number of Israelite women, but at much less frequency in comparison with the number of times in one's life that one had to eat. The condition of the leper (or whatever disease is envisioned) in Leviticus 13-14 was obviously even less frequent than childbirth. The same seems to be relatively true for the laws of impurity dealing with discharges in Leviticus 15. Thus Leviticus 11 with its law for detection of the unclean that was not to be eaten receives the most emphasis in terms of its severity and importance perhaps in part because of its universal applicability in Israel.

g. Finally, it should be noted that there is a very strong side to the other face of the coin. Such usage of unclean meats was an abomination and the frequent use of this word in this passage emphasizes how seriously such instruction was meant to be taken.

C. Deuteronomy 14: Repetition of the Food Laws

It is quite evident from almost any point of view in literary analysis that Deuteronomy 14 is a condensation of Leviticus 11. Nevertheless there are elements introduced here which are different in emphasis than what is found in the presentation of this matter in Leviticus 11. A number of these comparisons can be pointed out.

1. Contrast with the other laws of purity not in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 14 still presents a full chapter collection of laws dealing with unclean animals, even though it is somewhat different and more brief than the passage in Leviticus. That is not necessarily true of the rest of the laws of impurity found in Leviticus 12-15. The treatment of Leprosy, for example, which receives such extensive treatment in Leviticus 13 and 14, receives only one verse or so in Deuteronomy (24:8). If one only had the book of Deuteronomy one still could tell quite well what one was supposed to do in the case of clean and unclean animals. In the case of leprosy, however, one would have had to have the book of Leviticus to have been able to treat the matter correctly. The information in the book of Deuteronomy alone would not have been adequate on this matter. The same can probably be said for the rest of the laws of impurity in the Laws of Impurity section in Leviticus. Once again this rather massive repetition of the entire law in Deuteronomy as opposed to the almost nonexistent references to the others shows the great importance of this particular uncleanness law in Leviticus.

2. The holiness motivation. In Leviticus the main motivation for observance of the uncleanness prohibition occurs at the end of the passage where the statement is made that God's holiness and his grace at the Exodus serve as motivations for the observance. In Deuteronomy the motivations are located differently. There is a statement at the end of the section about the holiness of God as motivation to its observance (Deut 14:21) but the motivation for the observance of the laws in this section is also drawn from the statement with which the very short and immediately preceding section ends (Deut 14:2): "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his own

possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth." Actually, these two statements about the holiness of God and his requirement for a holy people bracket this passage in Deuteronomy.

The great theological theme that has been added to the context here in Deuteronomy is that of election. Also one of the great theological themes of the Hebrew Bible, that election of Israel serves here as the motivation for the observance of the brief preceding instruction and the longer instruction here about unclean animals and their consumption. Of the four great theological themes that one might isolate in the study of theology from the Hebrew Bible-call of the fathers (patriarchs), the Exodus, the gift of the land, and the election of Israel-three of the four appear in the contextual motivations for the observance of the unclean food laws.

3. Difference in emphasis. In Leviticus 11 there was a strong intertwining of two different forms of uncleanness; that which resulted from the eating of certain animals, and that which resulted from the contact with their dead bodies. Which of these two points was the more important? Already from Leviticus 11 one could already say that the first presented was the more important and it was the distinction of the unclean animals and their non-consumption that was emphasized there. Deuteronomy 14 bears out the same point since the element of contact with the dead bodies is almost absent here. It is, once again, the non-consumption of unclean animals that is the great important feature here. The only places in which some element of the touching of the dead body is present in this passage is in Deuteronomy 14:8 and 21. But even in these verses in Deuteronomy, the emphasis is upon not eating the dead body's flesh, it is not upon being defiled by touching it.

4. Difference in context. Leviticus 11 is embedded in a larger context of laws which deal with the distinction between clean and unclean in other areas. These involve a cultic uncleanness and other ramifications. As has been pointed out already above under number 1, this is virtually absent in Deuteronomy. Not only is it not present in the context of Deuteronomy 14, it is almost entirely absent from the whole book of Deuteronomy. The

preceding context in Deuteronomy deals mainly with warnings against apostasy through the influence of pagan religion (Deut 13; 14:1-2). The contextual materials which follow deal with the tithe (Deut 14:22ff.).

5. A specific list of edible quadrupeds. In Leviticus 11:3 only the generally identifying characteristics of the edible animals are given. No specific animals are listed there. Deuteronomy adds here a list of ten quadrupeds which can be eaten. Deuteronomy has taken the list of animals prohibited and abbreviated it while it has expanded the principle of the clean animals only enunciated in Leviticus 11. Deuteronomy 14 can be seen, therefore, as a deliberate supplement to Leviticus 11. It would be more difficult to reverse the order of the two passages in terms of time and authorship.

D. Other Passages in the Hebrew Bible

1. Judges 13:14. This passage tells of the birth of Samson. In preparing for that birth his mother was not to "eat of anything that comes from the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, or eat any unclean thing." The fact that such special instruction would be emphasized when it should have been practiced by all Israelites of the time probably suggests that as a part of the general apostasy of the times in the era of the judges, there was also a weakening or laxity in the practice of distinguishing between the clean and unclean foods then.

2. Isaiah 65:4; 66:3; and 66:17. These passages at the end of Isaiah contain more comments about this type of practice than that of any other prophet. The first of the three passages refers to the practice in Judah of the cult of the dead and other apostate practices that went along with it, "a people who . . . sit in tombs, and spend the night in secret places; who eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels." God goes on to say through the prophet that these practices will be judged by him in no uncertain terms (vss. 5-7). Clearly, the practice of the consumption of unclean flesh was no more acceptable to God at this time than it was when his legislation concerning it was given earlier in Mosaic times.

The second of these three passages deals with God's rejection of His people. Their religious hypocrisy made even what appeared to be orthodox practices repulsive to him. Thus they are compared with unclean and unacceptable practices. Thus in this passage the unclean practice is used as a standard of comparison to show what was not acceptable. Once again this demonstrates that the standard that had been set up in Levitical times on this matter remained the unchanged standard of practice for the eighth century B.C.

The final passage in Isaiah which deals with this subject parallels the first, that in 65:4. In 66:17 the text refers to the same practices going on and they are evaluated in the same way and they will be judged in the same way. The false religious practices are identified as people trying to sanctify themselves when in actuality they were doing quite the opposite: ". . . [they]

go into the gardens, following one in the midst, eating swine's flesh and the abomination of mice, [they] shall come to an end together, says the Lord." In the earlier passage it simply says that the broth of abominable things is in their vessels while here it says that the particular abominable specifies involved was that of mice. In one instance they go into tombs for such rites while in the other they did it in gardens where the symbol of Asherah the Canaanite goddess was worshipped. In both cases the judgment was to come upon them by fire. The fact that so severe a judgment was to come upon them shows once again that this kind of practice was not to be taken lightly. This fact is emphasized once again by the use of the word for abomination in two out of three of these passages.

3. Hosea 9:3. This passage refers to the judgment that was soon to come upon the northern kingdom-the inhabitants thereof were to be deported into exile. When they arrived there one of the continuing aspects of the judgment upon them there was that they would have to eat unclean flesh.

4. Ezekiel 22:26; 44:23. Neither of these two passages refer directly to the practice of eating unclean animal's flesh, but they do refer to the priestly regulation of such a practice in regard to their function of determining what was and what was not unclean. The two texts provide a nice contrasting pair. In the first instance the priests of Ezekiel's contemporary period in Jerusalem are indicted for their profanation of the holy things, their inability or unwillingness to distinguish between the clean and the unclean and the holy and the common. In this way they had led the people of God astray. This situation was to be remedied according to Ezekiel 44:23 where a prophecy of the future state of the people of God in the restored land is given. In that great day the priests would be true to God and faithful to their duties in service and would lead the people aright. This passage is stated in terms which are reminiscent of the priest's charge in Leviticus 10 and is modeled after those responsibilities. In this way the present problem of the unfaithful priests who would not or could not recognize the distinction between the clean and the unclean would be rectified. resumably this included

distinguishing between the two types of animals involved in the laws of purity.

5. Summary of the rest of the Hebrew Bible on this matter. Texts which deal with this subject are not abundant in the Hebrew Bible beyond the Pentateuch. Nonetheless, the picture that they present is consonant on all counts with that earlier picture. Priests are condemned for failing to distinguish between the clean and the unclean. The practices of the people associated with their consumption of unclean animals in cultic practices are described and condemned. They were also to be judged by the judgments that God would bring upon his sinful and wayward people. One of those judgments was that they would be fed the unclean flesh in exile. All of these references are complementary to the initial descriptions of what God originally desired all the way back to the time of Moses and Israel at Sinai. The Hebrew Bible speaks with one voice on this subject. There is no variation from the standard originally set up by God when he instructed the people in how to distinguish between the clean and the unclean animals and which they were permitted to consume and which they were not permitted to consume.

II. Theories About the Origin and Nature of This Practice

Biblical legislation on the distinction between clean and unclean animals and their consumption is relatively clear, as are the spiritual motivations for observing these laws. What is not so clear, however, is the rationale behind the observance. This is not specifically enunciated in the biblical text. As a consequence, the number of modern commentators and observers have suggested the reasons which they see as lying behind these laws. The following is a brief survey of these views with passing observations on their validity.

A. The Allegorical or Symbolical Motivation

This theory says that the distinction between the animals of clean and unclean categories is based upon the fact that they symbolize or represent various virtues and vices; the clean animals represent the virtues and the unclean animals represent the vices. This theory is very old as it goes back to pre-Christian times for it is already present in the Letter of Aristeas (par. 145-148, 153). It is also found in the writings of Philo of Alexandria and various early Church fathers such as Barnabas, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Novatian. Since the allegorical method of interpretation was common in Alexandrine circles, it is readily apparent why both Jewish and Christian writers from that circle favored this interpretation. This theory came to its fullest fruition in the writings of Novatian.

The biblical text does not support this theory. If one takes the imagery developed from such animal figures in Scripture, one can see that both positive and negative images are developed from them. For examples see the scriptural use of figures developed from the lion and the eagle. For the lion compare Leviticus 11:27 with Revelation 5:5 and for the eagle, compare Leviticus 11:13 with Deuteronomy 32:9-12. Obviously, therefore, this theory leads to considerable inconsistency in its application and it is not, therefore, suitable as an adequate theory to explain the difference between clean and unclean animals. It is also interesting to

note how this theory was employed in the different communities where it was proposed. In Jewish circles this method of interpretation was employed to defend the validity of the dietary laws, while in Christian circles the same allegorical method was employed as a way in which to free them from the responsibility of observing those same dietary laws.

B. The Separation from Pagan Nations Rationale

This theory says that animals were worshipped by pagan nations, and for that reason they were declared unclean in Israelite circles. Some biblical evidence can be cited as possible support for this theory (Lev 18:1-3; 20:22-26). This idea was already found as early as the writings of Origen and is still favored by some modern commentators (cf. M. Noth). In view of our ever increasing knowledge of ancient cults, however, this theory cannot stand up under scrutiny. W. F. Albright characterizes this theory as "sheer nonsense" by pointing out that, "large and small cattle were even more generally sacred, so that it is quite irrational to single out the economically and religiously much less important pig and to explain its prohibition in Israel by its alleged religious significance"-*Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, 1965, p. 154.

C. The Death-Life Antithesis

The idea behind this theory is that the Hebrews in an early stage were thought to have attributed to certain powers the ability to bring about danger, disease, and death. These powers were then identified with certain animals who, as scavengers, were associated with the realm of death. Given these connections these animals were then pronounced unclean. The most prominent advocate of this theory has been Walter Kornfeld (*Kairos* 7, 1965, pp. 134-147). By way of contrast, the worship of the true God was centered in the hope of life, and therefore these things that had to do with death were to be avoided.

This theory can be criticized from several points of view. The first is that it basically no longer stems from the true God but from a type of demonism. The motivation is no longer a desire for holiness, in emulating the holy God, but a desire for self-preservation through an

avoidance of evil powers. The motivation found in Leviticus 11 would only have been added secondarily and anachronistically to these laws. This is certainly not the picture which the Bible itself presents of this matter. It is also not true that all of the unclean animals are scavenger types which would be associated with death. Even some domestic animals like the camel, the horse, and the ass, are accounted as unclean in the biblical legislation. Hence, the death-life antithesis theory is not an adequate explanation for these biblical laws.

D. The Arbitrary Command Theory

Some Jewish scholars have held that these dietary laws should simply be categorized with a group of laws that are considered irrational in that there is no particular explanation for their existence. The reason for this is that there are some of God's regulations for mankind that the human mind is not necessarily capable of understanding. Related to this is the idea that the dietary laws were given as a demonstration of God's authority and that man should obey without asking for a reason. These are "revelational" laws in contrast with "rational" laws which man can better understand or for which an explanation for their existence has been given. Thus these laws are binding simply because God has commanded them. To some extent this law becomes something like the test over the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden.

While it is certainly true that we should obey God's commands whether we understand the reason for them or not, the idea that God would give laws that were completely arbitrary and even "irrational" seems to be at conflict with the idea about the character of God revealed in the Bible (cf. Deut 4:5-8; Ps 19; Ps 111:7-10; Ps 119; Rom 1:19-20, etc.). As H. S. Stern has pointed out, "this approach is contrary to the spirit of Moses' speech to Israel in Deuteronomy 6:7, where he repeatedly emphasizes the proper understanding of the laws, implying, therefore, that they are open to human reason"-*Judaism* 6, 1957, p. 320.

E. The Taboo or Totemism Motivations

This idea has developed from the application of the evolutionary concept of the history of religions to the dietary laws of the Bible. This idea has been propounded especially by William Robertson Smith (*Lecture on the Religion of the Semites*, 1927, pp. 152-155). According to Smith, both concepts of holiness and uncleanness developed originally from primitive taboos. In common with other tribal peoples, the Israelites, in the process of their cultural advancement, carried over their primitive concepts of forbidden or tabooed animals. This idea has enjoyed wide popularity in historico-critical circles because of the humanistic and evolutionary associations it is connected with.

The idea of totemism is related in that the animals selected as unclean and therefore banned were those animals which were originally utilized as totems by the various Hebrew tribes. Their use for food was later banned in order to foster a sense of Israelite national unity.

While this idea was popular for a time, especially between the World Wars, it has been fading in popularity because of a reaction in anthropological circles against the idea that all ancient rules and laws went back to totemism and animism. As W. F. Albright has pointed out, "it is being increasingly recognized that men have always learned from experience and observation. Especially in the ancient Near East, where sedentary culture began long before its origin in most other parts of the world."-Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, 1965, p. 153. H. Stern has noted that "the modern position that these laws are tribal taboos implies that they have not sound justification for a rational person" (op. cit.), being only relics of ancient men endeavouring to cope with a hostile world full of mysterious forces. Once again, this humanistically and evolutionary oriented concept is a considerable distance from the divine origin which the Bible itself posits for these laws.

F. The Ceremonial or Cultic Rationale

The main idea behind this theory is that the distinction between clean and unclean animals and their respective use is that these laws originated as ceremonial and connected specifically with cultic practices of ancient Israel. For the Christian, these laws of cultic ceremonies no longer applies and thus the laws distinguishing between clean and unclean animals is no longer operative. The dietary laws are thus subservient to their ceremonial function and significance. Part of the idea behind this theory is derived from the fact that in Leviticus 11-15 a considerable part of the picture of the distinction between all types of cleanness and uncleanness had to do with whether the person was fit for worship at the tabernacle/temple, hence the cultic connection of this type of experience.

In their research papers, Van Bemmelen and Fisher have both put together a number of arguments which indicate that these laws were not completely cultic in their entirety. This is not to deny that there were some cultic connections, but this is not by any means the entire explanation for these laws. These arguments include the following points:

1. Deuteronomy 14, the passage parallel to Leviticus 11 on clean and unclean animals, is not tied to the cultic. There is an absence of cultic consequences there. The emphasis is rather upon the animal as food. No mention of sacrifice is made there. In addition, in both Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 the context really is that of holiness more broadly, not just ceremonial fitness. This holiness extends into all areas of man's being, not just his worship in the cult.

2. Given the references to clean and unclean animals back as early as the time of Noah in Genesis 7:1, this distinction antedates the time of Moses when these more specific laws were drawn up. The reason why this kind of regulation was not given earlier before the Flood was that no type of flesh food was permitted by God in man's diet before that time.

3. The uncleanness of animals was permanent. There was no purification process by which this could be removed. This originated with the animal itself and its nature, it was not due to a

change in its condition which could be restored to a state of cleanness. Thus the realm of the uncleanness of the animal was outside of ceremonial functions.

4. Though the living unclean animal was not to be used as food or for sacrifice, it could be used for service as a domestic animal, like the camel or the ass, and no uncleanness resulted from touching it.

5. Both the laws of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 says that the animal could be eaten or not be eaten, but they say nothing in either place about whether they could or could not be used in the cult for sacrifice. It is only from other parts of scripture that we learn that unclean animals were not used for sacrifice.

6. This distinction fails to explain why unclean animals were not used for sacrifice and it also does not explain why some clean animals were not used for sacrifice. If the distinction between clean and unclean is a distinction between cultically usable and non-usable animals then there must be some other reason why all of the clean animals were not used cultically. That this was not the case probably indicates that this distinction was the reason why they were or were not used in this way.

7. This theory appears to put the cart before the horse. The animals were first determined to be either clean or unclean and then they were used accordingly in the cult. This is the proper biblical order of things. This theory advances the idea that certain animals were first selected for use in the cult and then they became clean thereby while the others that had not been used in the cult were then classified as unclean.

While it is quite true that there are direct and distinct cultic connections between the clean and unclean animals and the operation of the ceremonial function in the cult, this does not appear to provide an overall explanation for the reason why these animals were separated out and distinguished in this way. Two factors are going on here at the same time. One is the eating of the animals, and the other is the sacrificing of the animals. There are three possibilities here, that *A* is the reason for *B*, or that *B* is the reason for *A*, or that both go back

to a common source involved in the intrinsic nature of the animal. While one is more dependant upon theoretical considerations here than explicit statements of the text, the common source theory may ultimately prove to be the most reasonable.

G. The Psychological/Repulsiveness Rationale

Some commentators cite psychological reasons for natural repugnance as the principle behind the prohibition of unclean meat. This distinction between clean and unclean is based upon a natural reaction against animals of a predatory or scavenger nature which are therefore prohibited upon aesthetic grounds. According to this view, cultural preference becomes the deciding factor. The divine origin of this legislation as stated in the text is side-stepped. In its place the reason is given that, "the forbidden animals appeared either too bothersome or begot a spirit of cruelty in those who ate them."-J. D. Douglas, ed., *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1980, p. 301. While a number of the unclean animals are scavengers or dangerous predators, others are not so; this criterion for the distinction between them becomes somewhat arbitrary and inconsistent. It is also doubtful that ancient man would have been as concerned about the aesthetics of eating one animal and not another as modern more sophisticated man might be.

H. The Anthropological View of Conformity to Normality

A view proposed by the anthropologist Mary Douglas (*Purity and Danger*, 1966) and accepted by at least two commentators (G. J. Wenham, *NICOT*, and J. R. Porter, *Cambridge Bible Commentary*), is based on a definition of holiness. According to this definition, holiness (and therefore cleanness) involves the notion of wholeness and normality; conformity to a standard and pure type within the realm of creation-one to which the examples belonged at the time of Creation. In the case of animals, a clean animal is "a perfect specimen of the category of being to which one belongs." Likewise, "any creature which seems to diverge from its proper nature or proper sphere is therefore lacking in perfection and so 'unclean.'" -Douglas, p. 55, Porter, p. 84. Douglas would further specify that all animals are unclean which are

imperfect members of their class or whose class itself confounds the general scheme of the world.

This theory, too, has its deficits. First, there is no biblical distinction between perfect and imperfect members of any clean or unclean animal group. Second, it does not indicate why specific "pure" species are clean (cf. the sheep and cow) and other "pure" species (cf. the camel and the horse) are not. In addition, the concept of holiness probably has a broader range of usage than is posited in this case, as far as its biblical use is concerned.

I. The Ethical-Moral Rationale

In this case the distinction between clean and unclean animals is thought to teach us a moral lesson. This idea goes back as early as the Letter of Aristeas and it was also supported by the medieval commentator Maimonides who noted, "These ordinances seek to train us in the mastery of our appetites, they accustom us to restrain both the growth of desire and disposition to consider the pleasure of eating as the end of man's existence."-*Encyclopedia Judaica*, 6:43. Maimonides also, at the same time, held that the laws were also hygienic or health oriented. This idea of the moral or ethical dimension has received a fairly wide acceptance in modern times. Some of this is drawn from the reverence for life idea, "Of all the theories, only the ethical one fits best with the facts; to teach reverence for life through restricted access to animal life as food."-Stern, pp. 320-321. One could, of course, extend this idea to take in vegetarianism even more logically.

The problem with the ethical motivation is that it does not really explain why the animals were divided exactly in the fashion as we find it in the Bible. Why for instance, was the camel unclean from an ethical viewpoint? Or why is it more humane to slaughter a cow than a donkey? Milgrom speaks of "the seeming arbitrariness of the specific food prohibitions," and he confesses that "here we tread on uneasy ground." "To get behind the biblical sources and trace back each food interdiction to its separate origin" is a "sleuthing assignment," which

"cannot be fulfilled. The tracks lose themselves in the sands of unrecorded time."-J. Milgrom, *Interpretation*, 17, 1963, p. 294. This kind of view represents an interpretation of the literary sources which does not accord with the statements of Scripture itself. Even if one were to resolve that problem to the historical-critical scholar's satisfaction, the tension and contradiction between the different types of animals to be slaughtered for food and not to be slaughtered would still remain, hence this rationale does not adequately explain the biblical data dealing with clean and unclean foods.

J. The Hygienic/Public Health Rationale

By a process of elimination we have come down to this final theory as the most likely explanation for the presence of the health laws in the Bible on diet. On this basis it is suggested that the reason for the distinction of clean animals from unclean animals has to do with their fitness or unfitness for human food. This view has had strong supporters and opponents in both Jewish and Christian circles. A number of reasons may be proposed as to why this rationale seems to be the most adequate explanation for these laws:

1. The emphasis of the law as found in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 is distinctly on eating and not eating, which suggests that the distinction is made in regard to the effects that result from eating or not eating.

2. The suggestion has been made that clean animals are better for food than are the unclean animals. It has been noted above that the scavenger and predatory type animals more commonly fall in the unclean group. This extends through the classes from the lion to the vulture, to the bottom-dwelling sucker type fish. Considering the type of flesh which they themselves may be ingesting, they would make more ready conduits for the transmission of disease. Time and space prevent going into this subject from a scientific viewpoint, but a few popular articles of an older period might be mentioned here while awaiting more up-to-date study of this subject from a scientific viewpoint:

a. D. I. Macht, "A Scientific Appreciation of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14,"

Ministry 26 (Sept 1953): 26-28.

b. L. E. Harris, F. L. Marsh, and E. S. Booth, "The Question of Clean and Unclean

Meats," *Ministry* 27 (March 1954): 37-38 (a response to the article by Macht).

3. A number of unclean animals have been shown to be carriers of dangerous diseases, both bacterial and parasitic. For example, rats are the carriers of the fleas which are the vectors for *pasturella pestis*, the causative agent of bubonic plague. This does not, of course, mean that one would get plague from eating a rat which was a carrier, but it does mean that one would come in contact with the disease by handling that kind of rat. No attempt has been made here to quantify this observation, it is only made in passing. This subject, plus the preceding one, would make the appropriate topic for an independent research paper on the subject.

Though a number of questions and problems remain in this area, this theory currently appears to account for the data better than the other theories discussed above. It is also harmonious with the broader definition and biblical usage of the concept of holiness, a holiness which extends even into the area of the physical nature of man. Milgrom notes the connection between holiness and abstention from unclean meat in this way: "this exalted concept of holiness is given as the reason for these restrictions in all four sources where the prohibited foods are enumerated (Exod 22:30; Lev 11:44ff.; 20:22-26; Deut 14:21)." He also notes that "relatively few individual statutes of the Bible are coupled with the demand for holiness. And none of these have the demand with the same staccato emphasis and repetition as do the food prohibitions." (Milgrom, pp. 291-292).

4. Within the framework of Leviticus 11-15, the Laws of Purity, the law regarding clean and unclean animals is associated with other regulations governing conditions which have recognizable hygienic implications, that is, sexual or other conditions causing genital discharges, and quarantine measures for contagious conditions.

To conclude on this particular theory it may be emphasized once again that the concept of

holiness also involves a call to physical as well as mental and spiritual health. Based on this connection, "what we call sanitation, God calls, in a sense, physical sanctification. . . . All moral authority rests just here, in that the thing condemned as immoral will eventually produce baneful physical results."-T. H. Nelson *The Mosaic Law in the Light of Modern Science*, 1926, p. 37. This concept which would view health and holiness as part of the same larger whole finds support from many sources. "The dichotomy between spiritual and material is foreign to the Bible, especially to the OT."-*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 1, 1975, p. 884. "For the ancient Semite, . . . no sharp distinction is made between soul and body. The person is simply a body that lives. He is a feeling body."-Stern, p. 323. "The body is the instrument of the soul's actions and the quality of these actions depends on the personality structure of man which, in turn, is influenced by his food, his body and soul during the life of man on earth are interdependent and interconnected."-I. Grunfeld, *The Jewish Dietary Laws*, 1972, vol. 2, p. 213.

III. The Association With Blood in the Dietary Laws

A major passage in Leviticus 17, and subsidiary passages in Deuteronomy 12, take up the theme first announced in Genesis 9, that man is not to eat the blood that is in the flesh of the food animal with that flesh. The major statement on this, in Leviticus 17:10-14, reads as follows:

If any man of the house of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood. Any man also of the people of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them, who takes in hunting any beast or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust. For the life of every creature is the blood of it; therefore I have said to the people of Israel, You shall not eat of the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.

There are several notable features of this passage. First there is the all inclusive nature of the application of this legislation. Three times over it is emphasized in this passage that it applies to "any man of the house of Israel" and to "the stranger who sojourns among them." Even in the clean and unclean food laws there is no reference to the non-Israelite being affected by that legislation. Any blood consumed in the land of the people of God, whether by an Israelite or a non-Israelite is specifically and emphatically prohibited by this legislation. Four times over it is said that the life of the flesh is in the blood and this is the reason why the blood should not be consumed with the flesh. It is also said that blood has been given for

atonement, therefore, blood should not be consumed by man. In the latter part of the passage there is a reference to the animal taken in hunting, that it should be of the type "that may be eaten." This sounds like a cryptic reference to the law of the clean and unclean animals, although that feature is not spelled out any further. Thus man should only hunt for clean animals for food, and when those clean animals are taken their blood should not be eaten with them when they are consumed.

The same broad features that are mentioned here are referred to in passing in Deuteronomy 12:16 and 23-25. So Deuteronomy backs up this same type of legislation, the prohibition against consuming the blood of the clean food animal.

IV. The New Testament Passages

Our intent in examining these NT passages is not to be exhaustive but it is to be at least illustrative. A number of NT texts have been brought to bear upon the question of whether Christians should or should not use unclean foods which have been judged so by OT standards. The following is a brief review of those texts that have received the most attention in this connection. Before embarking upon an examination of those texts in particular, however, some general remarks might be made upon the relation of the OT to the NT and of the general thrust of NT teaching:

A. Relation of the OT to the NT in This Matter

Although it is especially in Leviticus that the legislation is given which has differentiated meats into clean and unclean, that by no means identifies this teaching as merely ceremonial or ritualistic, as has already been pointed out above in the OT section. A comparison of other such laws should be brought in here. Leviticus 19:29, for example, prohibits the making of daughters into prostitutes, Leviticus 19:31 cautions against dealing with familiar spirits, and Leviticus 18:23 bars sexual relations with beasts. One might argue that if Christians are going

to frown upon prostitution, sex with animals, or communicating with spirits, then they should adhere to all of the instructions in Leviticus. In other words, just because clean and unclean meats are mentioned in Leviticus, that is not reason enough to absolve the Christian from observing them. At least some of the type of legislation found in Leviticus still is binding upon Christians even though they are found among the Levitical laws.

Leviticus 19:29 mentioned above as concerned with familiar spirits also receives NT amplification. Jesus dealt with the unclean spirits (*Gr akathartos*) on a number of occasions (Mark 1:23-26; 3:11, 30; 5:2, 8, 13, etc.) and from this it is clear that we still are to have nothing to do with them. If one were to adopt the thesis that the NT abolishes the distinctions between clean and unclean then our conclusion could be that all of the "uncleans," spirits including foods, became clean in the Christian era. But since this would mean that there would be no more unclean spirits, these would no longer be a factor of evil in the world. Unfortunately, this is not yet the case, and the prohibition against dealing with familiar or unclean spirits is just as valid for the Christian as it was not OT times.

B. The General Thrust of NT Teaching

The NT concern for man's holiness in a wholistic sense is consistent with that of the OT. In his work of "teaching," "preaching," and "healing" (Matt 4:23), Christ ministered to man's mental, physical, and spiritual needs. In the same way Paul indicates the importance that one's "spirit and soul and body be kept . . . blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:23). Peter counsels, "But as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet 1:15-16). It may be significant to note that Peter quotes here from Leviticus 11:44, 45, which is provided in that OT passage as the motivation for keeping the dietary laws of that chapter.

The NT specifically expresses concern for health of the body. John expresses the wish that the beloved Gaius may "be in health" (3 John 2). Paul appeals to the Roman believers to

present their "bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God" (Rom 12:1). Speaking within the context of an appeal against immorality, he reminds the Christians of Corinth that their bodies are "the temple of the Holy Spirit" and of the necessity to "glorify God in your body" (1 Cor 6:20). He later counsels them in another context, "whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31). Obviously this emphasis upon the health of the body, too, along with the spirit, should include what is taken into the body as nourishment. For the Christian who is endeavoring to follow this practice and aims at this standard, only the best should do and that includes the foods that are taken into one's body. As an inferior class of nourishment by OT standards, one would expect this broad general viewpoint of the NT to include an affirming view upon the distinction between clean and unclean flesh from animals as food.

C. The Texts

1. Mark 7. The specific issue in this passage is, it should carefully be noted, the ritual washing of hands before meals. In this discussion Jesus says, "there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him." Verses 17-18 are of interest here for when Jesus' disciples did not seem to understand this he added, "Then are you also without understanding?" One question here is, is Jesus instituting some new ordinance or principle of practice for the Christians here? Note that this does not occur at the time of his death but rather during His ministry when he is still considered, to outward evaluation, a practicing Jew. In addition, at the time when this event occurred, Jesus strongly implies that the disciples already had, or should have had knowledge of this matter. This is not then a change in OT legislation at the time of Jesus' death and the founding of the church.

The primary controversy which Jesus had with the teachers of the law here was over legalistic, technical acts. They were seen as absorbed in doing "things" while Jesus was trying

to call them to a heart religion. Jesus' point here is not eat what you want, but rather be most concerned about what is in your heart. He made the same point in the Sermon on the Mount where he took up a number of OT commandments, not for the purpose of abolishing them but rather to show that they all went down to heart motives, not just external acts. The same point is being made here. Is it the act of adultery that defiles, or the heart rebellion against God's plan? The outward act is only the fruit of the heart. Is it the eating of pork that defiles, or the heart-rebellion against God's plan?

Mark's parenthesis, "Thus he declared all foods clean" (vs. 19) has been interpreted to mean that from this time onwards for the Christian there was to be no distinction between clean and unclean meats. If that interpretation is correct, then Mark is adding to the local issue discussed by Jesus, an issue which he did not deal with himself. What was the local issue under discussion? It was the ceremonial washing of hands before partaking of a meal. Jesus is saying, in essence, this is unnecessary. It might be good from a hygienic viewpoint of today, but it was unnecessary from the standpoint of ceremonial defilement in ancient times. The food that they were going to eat was already clean, it did not have to be ceremonially cleansed again by the washing of hands before partaking of it. This was the issue that Jesus was dealing with and this is what Mark's parenthetical remark was directed toward. To add in the issue of the distinction between clean and unclean meat here is to add in an issue that was extraneous to the discussion and the conclusion of the discussion.

The word used in this word is the Greek word *bromata*, which refers to food of any kind, flesh or nonflesh in nature. This simply emphasizes the point that the issue here is not whether clean or unclean flesh should be distinguished, rather it is all kinds of food that are involved. If flesh meat was the subject under discussion the word for flesh (*sarx*) or even a reference to the animals as its source would have been more appropriate and distinctive. But since that was not the issue involved, that kind of vocabulary was not employed.

2. Acts 10. This passage contains the story of the vision which God gave to Peter in which

he saw a great sheet let down from heaven with all kinds of animals, birds, and reptiles in it. Peter was instructed, when he saw the vision, to rise, kill, and eat. Peter objected three times to His Lord, that he had never eaten anything unclean. The instruction was then given, "What God has cleansed, you must not call common." The obvious lesson which was taught in this way, as is evident from what follows in the narrative, was that God was trying to show Peter that Gentile converts were acceptable to God and should be received by the believers. The reason why Peter was soon going to encounter Cornelius and God was showing him in this way that Cornelius, and the larger class that he represented, should be accepted by Peter and the believers. That Peter got the point is evident from his remark, after encountering Cornelius, that, "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality," etc. (vs. 34). The point of the vision was thus not about whether formerly unclean meat was not clean, but rather about the fact that God had accepted the Gentiles and the believers should, too.

There are a number of points that can be made about this narrative. The first has to do with its relation with the passage examined above, Mark 7. If Jesus really was teaching at that time that the unclean meats had become accepted as clean, then this story of Peter in Acts would have a somewhat curious relationship to it. Why didn't Peter get the message of that earlier occasion, if that really was what was taught there, that there was to be no distinction of clean and unclean meats after that time? On this later occasion he unyieldingly argues that he has never eaten anything unclean. After three repetitions of the vision, Peter still doubts what it means. We might say to Peter, "You are dense; five years ago Jesus showed you that unclean meat was not clean and you still haven't realized that fact. Now God has tried again and you still don't understand." But Peter, an on-the-scene observer of the episode described in Mark 7 (cf. Matt 15:10-20) had not changed his practices to conform with this supposed new standard. The fact that he did not gives evidence of the fact that that was not really what Jesus was talking about on that occasion. Nor was it what he was talking about on this occasion either.

There is not just the question of temporary defilement here in Acts 10. It is not just a question of whether a rite had or had not been performed over these animals. The problem was, as Peter well knew, these animals were permanently defiled or unclean. That was their nature. They had been identified as unclean in nature by God Himself in Leviticus 11.

As far as the main teaching of the vision itself, an important question here is, how was the answer given to Peter to be understood? The answer was, "What God has cleansed, you must not call common." Did this answer have symbolic meaning, or was Peter being informed that henceforth such forbidden meats as swine, etc., were now clean and no longer unacceptable? Would not such a literal understanding indicate a change in the very nature of the animals involved, in their eating and sanitary habits? And yet, there was no evident and apparent change in these animals or their physiological habits as the vision is described. They were simply recognizable as belonging to the various species involved by their appearance.

Peter does not seem to have understood this statement in a literal way, for immediately after the vision it is stated that "Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision which he had seen might mean" (vs. 17). The Greek word from which perplexed has been translated means "to be greatly perplexed, at a loss in one's own mind." It was at this moment that the messengers from the Gentile Cornelius arrived at his door. By the time that he had arrived at the home of Cornelius, Peter had apparently discovered the meaning of the vision, for he said,

You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or visit any one of another nation; but God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean (Acts 10:28).

When he was later charged with violating the Jewish ban upon such an association, Peter defended himself by relating the experience of his vision. After hearing his defense "they were silenced" and they glorified God saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18).

The language of this passage should also be noted a bit more carefully. The vision does not say that the sheet was full of unclean animals. On the contrary, the all inclusive language indicates that there was a mixture of animals, both clean and unclean. It is of interest, therefore, to see that two words are used to identify the animals in the sheet: *koinos* or "common," and *akathartos* or "unclean." These are not identical in function or meaning. The unclean animal is clearly one that was such by definition and by nature, it belonged to one group or another which was identified as such in the OT. The common, on the other hand, was a clean animal that had been contaminated or defiled by contact with an unclean animal. This word does not occur in the LXX of the OT, it is a word which first appears in intertestamental literature, in 4 Maccabees 7:6. In the narrative itself the Voice never mentioned "unclean" but inevitably reprimanded Peter for declaring creatures to be "common;" he was never directed to consume an unclean animal; here he was told to desist from calling "common" creatures that had been declared to be "clean." The cleansing that was involved here was not, therefore, a cleansing of the unclean animals to now make them clean, thus changing their nature. It was rather a cleansing of the clean animals which Peter thought had become unclean ritually, not in their nature, through their contact with the animals that were unclean in nature. God says he has cleansed these and they are clean not common from such an association.

For all of this kind of language to make sense to Peter, let alone in the present, the concepts of clean and unclean must still exist in the NT Era. The point at issue was how he, Peter, could go with Gentiles and eat with them and not be defiled. The vision definitively demonstrated to him that just as the clean creature could co-exist within the sheet and not be defiled, so he too could associate with Gentiles without fear of contamination and pollution. Peter clearly saw that all creatures and they came from the two main classes of creatures, clean and unclean. The Voice responded, in essence, that the Jew would remain a Jew, the Roman a Roman, etc., but that now the divine command for free social and spiritual

interaction cannot defile in the nature of such contacts.

3. Acts 15. The conclusion of the General Church Council in Jerusalem. The issue at stake here was how many regulations which were specifically Jewish in nature should be imposed upon Gentile converts. The conclusion of the council, after considerable discussion, was that, they should "abstain from pollutions of idols and from unchastity and from what is strangled and from blood" (v. 20). Obviously, in this case, there were many other aspects of moral and ethical conduct that Christians, whether Gentile or Jewish, were to observe. Only a small representative section from a more narrowly defined issue has been presented here.

Since most of the first Gentile converts were generally from the "God-fearer" group, those who had previously been attending the synagogue even before they heard the gospel, they would in all likelihood have known about the Jewish dietary restrictions. Most likely they were already avoiding unclean meats. The Council in Jerusalem included in its directive the prohibition against eating blood and things strangled, issues which come from the dietary laws of the OT. The fact that the matter of unclean meats was not mentioned may merely indicate that particular issue was already understood. In the Laws of Leviticus 17 the prohibition against eating blood was already linked with clean animals, as described above. In terms of broader issues, the fact that the council did not advise the converts not to steal did not, obviously, mean that it was now acceptable to steal.

The issue of the eating of blood should be emphasized more than it previously has been. Clearly here is a directive from the General Church Council of the Earth Christian Church in which this prohibition, already known from the OT, was held as binding upon Christians. If a Christian who is desirous of doing so on the basis of the abolishment of the regulation dealing with the distinction of unclean meat category at the cross, he should at least observe this regulation which was held as binding upon Christians in the early church. This naturally carries with it the indication that such meat should be prepared in the generally kosher manner. I am not personally aware of any Christian groups which follow this instruction from

this Early Church Council.

4. Romans 14:2, 3, 14.

"One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. . . . I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for any one who thinks it unclean."

One issue that needs to be addressed here is, what situation among the Roman believers led to this counsel which he addressed to them? If Paul was trying to say here that all things were now clean he would be guilty, at least, of an inconsistency. In 2 Corinthians 6:16-18, he quotes from Isaiah 52:11 and says in verse 17, "Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you."

One approach to the situation involved in Romans 14 is to be found in examining some relatively similar counsel in 1 Corinthians 8. There Paul writes to the church at Corinth concerning food offered to idols. "We know," he says, "that an idol has no real existence, and that there is no God but one." But, "not all possess this knowledge" (1 Cor 8:1, 4, 7). Paul's line of thought here runs as follows:

But some, through being hitherto accustomed to idols, eat food as really offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idols temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died (1 Cor 8:7-11).

This letter of Paul's was probably written shortly before the letter to Rome, and it is a reasonable assumption that 1 Corinthians 8 and Romans 14 are probably dealing with

essentially the same problem. Who is strong, who eats all things? He is the man of knowledge, strong in the knowledge that the idol has no real existence. Therefore, whether the food has been offered to an idol or not makes no difference to him. Who is the weak man who eats only vegetables? He is the recent convert from paganism, who has still not entirely overcome his fear of his former gods, and therefore, to eat meat offered to idols would defile his conscience. To him the food is common and defiled.

According to Romans 14 it is not common in and of itself, it is only so because of the weak man's residual fear of his former god. The difference does not exist within the nature of the particular food in question, rather the difference lies in the minds of the persons concerned. Paul, therefore, appeals for mutual charity and forbearance.

The vocabulary which Paul uses in Romans 14:14 should also be noted carefully. Paul does not really say that he is persuaded that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for any one who thinks it unclean, as it has been translated in the RSV, for example. What he really says is, I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is common in itself; but it is common for anyone who thinks it is common. The word used here is *koinon*, "common, defiled," not *akathartos*, "unclean." He is not referring to foods or meats which were unclean in their essential nature, as was the case with the animals in the unclean class. He is referring to clean meat from clean animals which have been defiled or have become common by contact with idols or unclean meat also offered to idols along side of the clean meat. The vocabulary and its significance is the same as that described above with the case of Acts 10. The true categories of clean and unclean remain here.

5. 1 Corinthians 10:25-28.

"Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. 'For the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.' If one of the unbelievers invites you to a dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any

question on the ground of conscience. (But if some one says to you, 'This has been offered in sacrifice,' then out of consideration for the man who informed you, and for conscience' sake-I mean his conscience, not yours-do not eat it.)"

From the context and contents of this passage it is evident that it is referring to the same issue of eating meats that had been offered to idols. It relates therefore, to the matter discussed above under 1 Corinthians 8 and Romans 14. The point at issue is a concern for the conscience of others. The issue in particular involves whether the meat so treated was ceremonially defiled, not the question of whether it was clean or unclean meat from an animal of that type.

6. 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith . . . who forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving; for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer."

The heresy here prophesied is one that forbids marriage and requires abstinence from foods that God has created for man from which to receive his necessary nutrition. The Bible identifies the foods that God gave at creation for man's nourishment. Genesis 1:29 reveals the original diet that God created and assigned to man and the animals. In Genesis 3:18 the plants of the field were added. Immediately before the Flood a distinction between clean and unclean animals was made or noted, probably in preparation for the permission to eat flesh meats as food, which was to be eaten without blood (Gen 7:2; 9:4).

The heretics described by Paul in the above passage are guilty of forbidding man from partaking of two of the very things that God has given to him at creation for his good,

marriage and food. It is likely that Paul sees here a Gnostic type heresy, which viewed dualism in which the higher values were associated with mind-soul-spirit, and the inferior values were associated with matter-body-flesh. In spite of God's declaration, it is not good for man to live alone (Gen 2:18). Ascetic Gnosticism would forbid marriage as an institution of the Demiurge, because it viewed it as an act of imprisoning previously pure and innocent souls in impure bodies (*Lange's Bible Commentary*, s.v. 1 Tim 4).

In the same way, in spite of God's gift of food to man at creation (Gen 1:29), the Gnostic would deprive man of the necessary foodstuffs for nutrition. According to *Lange's Commentary*, "the command probably arose from the Gnostic fancy that the materials which nourished the body were not the work of the Most High God, but that of the Demiurgus, and thus from the evil principle."-Ibid. Such asceticism, which minimizes the body often to the neglect of health, is entirely opposite to the true spirit of health that is enunciated by the Bible. This view which regards the proper care of the body as a part of good religion stems from the God designed view that sees man in a wholistic manner, as an unbreakable unity of body-soul-and spirit, as it is expressed in 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

7. Revelation. The last book of the NT contains several references to the clean and the unclean. These are taken, on occasion, as applied to people, or to their moral acts. Nonetheless, the language has been taken over quite directly from the language employed in the Laws of Purity in Leviticus, including the food laws in Leviticus 11. In one specific case the imagery borrowed has been directly derived from those food laws, and that is the passage in Revelation 18:2, "And he called out with a mighty voice, 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! It has become a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul [unclean] spirit, a haunt of every foul [unclean] and hateful bird.'" While this text obviously is not talking about literal birds, the unclean birds that are mentioned here to provide this image obviously are those that are categorized as such in Leviticus 11. While it is possible that this legislation might not be in effect at the time this reference was written, at the end of the 1st century C.E.,

the force of the illustration obviously would be that much greater if this distinction still was in effect. At the very least one can say that still at the end of the first century Christians were quite aware of the distinction between clean and unclean meat, regardless of how observant or nonobservant they may have been.

The same type of language was extended far into the future by the writer of Revelation for when he came to describe the new earth and the New Jerusalem that would be the capital of that paradise the writer pointed out that "nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." Clearly, there was a distinction between the clean and the unclean in the mind of the writer. While he may have been applying this more to the moral qualities of those who enter there, this language still is derived from the OT distinctions that were laid down in this matter and this case still has overtones of those practices.

V. Summary

The distinction between clean and unclean animals begins in the first book of the Bible, with the Flood story of Genesis. That same distinction can be traced all the way through the rest of the OT, it can be traced on into the NT, and it is found there as late as the last great narrative of the last book of Revelation, in the description of the new earth and the New Jerusalem. There is no dichotomy between the OT and the NT in terms of recognizing these two great categories as applied to the fourfold spheres of the animal world: birds of the air, fish of the waters, and walking and creeping animals of the earth. The distinction between these two groups in these four categories applies, therefore, to both the Jewish and Christian Eras. The question is, should there be a distinction in practice between these eras in regard to these two major groups of animals as far as food use is concerned?

Once again on this matter the OT is quite direct and clear. The distinction was made early on at least in terms of animals to be used for sacrifice and probably in terms of their use for

food, this type of legislation was made more specific at Mount Sinai, and the distinction and the proscription on the use of the unclean remained in effect throughout the OT. The book of Judges implies that there were times when lapses from this practice occurred but it still remained as the ideal, and the prophets Hosea, Isaiah, and Ezekiel all upheld this distinction in use and indicted those who violated it as offensive to God.

When we come to the NT the first thing that we should keep in mind is that at the outset Jesus and the apostles were all practicing Jews who undoubtedly regarded these OT proscriptions as binding. The question then is, is there any specific biblical evidence that any change in these regulations were made for Christians. It should be noted that these laws are more than ceremonial or liturgical, indeed the laws themselves, especially as announced in Deuteronomy 14, make this more a matter of eating rather than sacrificial connections. In addition, this distinction and its implied use was already laid down a long time before the legislation on this subject was given in detail to the nation of Israel at Sinai. It stems from the time of the Flood at least when all the living and surviving representatives of the human race, Noah and his family, were entrusted with that distinction and the animals involved in a quantity to match. This is not just a localized and limited type of legislation limited to Jews and their practices.

Does the NT invalidate such a practice for Christians? We have found no texts in the books of the NT that do so, and we have found some evidence to the contrary. It cannot be said that this legislation was set aside at the time of the cross for Christians, because the Church Council of Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15 employs other laws-specifically dietary laws-for Christians from the same source of Jewish laws in the OT. By practice we can see Peter still maintaining such a distinction in his own practice well after the cross as recorded in Acts 10.

The other texts dealt with that have been used-one should rather say misused-to void the continuing OT obligation in this matter, actually deal with a series of special cases. The episode described in Mark 7 involved a dispute between Jesus and some of the teachers of the

Law over the matter of ceremonial washings, not the distinction between clean and unclean animals and their meats. The cases described in Paul's instruction in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 involve meats-whether clean or unclean-that were offered to idols. The point involved here dealt with whether the clean meat had been made common or defiled in these cases, not whether the unclean meat utilized in that context was now changed in nature to become clean. The case involved in Paul's instruction to Timothy probably represented the Gnostic heresy which minimized the flesh-even to the exclusion of marriage and some foods-and maximized the spirit, in contrast to the order which God created during the Creation week.

We have not found, therefore, any NT teaching or text which has voided the responsibility to distinguish between clean and unclean meats from animals of those particular types. It should remain as a continuing obligation of Christians.