

# Biblical Counsel on Man's Food

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## **Biblical Counsel on Man's Food**

Few customs affect man more than his eating habits. The quality and quantity of food he eats are important. Everything that lives must take in nourishment. Without food, life cannot go on. Since eating is a necessity common to all, would it not be likely that the Creator would offer direction concerning man's eating habits?

A description of God's attitude toward man and his food begins in the first chapter of the Bible. Man was created in the image of God. This is because there are practices God wants man to adopt. They come from God, relating to man's well-being between Creator and creature.

### **God Provides Herbs**

*And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so (Genesis 1:29, 30).*

In analyzing the early chapters of Genesis,

caution needs to be exercised in arriving at conclusions. One must resist looking at a statement that appears all-inclusive and insist he has support for teachings that are found to be out of harmony with other Bible passages.

What appears to surface in this passage is that God provided a slightly different diet for man than He did for animals. Verse 29 suggests God gave man every herb bearing seed and every tree which has seed-bearing fruit. To the beasts of the field He gave every green herb. There is no mention of seed with the green herbs given to animals and fowls.

This has provoked some to propose that there were three kinds of vegetation referred to: fruit, vegetables, and grass. Man was given fruit and vegetables, and animals were to eat grass. Others conclude animals had access to every kind of herb and tree, while man was restricted from eating grass. These conclusions are unsound. There is no definitive means to separate "grass" from "vegetables." The latter often refers to any plant used for culinary purposes as a salad or entree, but not as a dessert. "Grass" refers to plants with bladelike leaves, usually used for grazing. Grains, such as wheat, oats, rye, and barley would fall into the category of grasses. There is no question about the propriety of grain in the human diet.

"Fruit" is also difficult to identify precisely. It is generally defined as the ripened ovary of a plant containing seed together with any adjacent parts, such as the pit and flesh of a peach or a pea and its pod. Thus, nuts are a type of fruit, and grain is the fruit of cereal plants.

Obviously, attempts to distinguish between herbs given to humans and those provided for animals promise only futility. The suggested division of herbs into fruit, vegetables and grass is arbitrary and without authoritative support.

It is also concluded that man may eat any kind of vegetation bearing seed, but he is restricted from all others. Accordingly, the mushroom would be unclean. It has no seed. It is a fungus, which is a type of vegetation that grows without leaves, flowers, or green color. It reproduces by means of spores.

This reasoning falters upon recognizing that yeast, a leavening agent, is also a fungus, reproduced by a spore. Except during special festivals, leavening was used by Israel without indication of God's disapproval. Certain hybrids, such as navel oranges and Thompson seedless grapes do not bear seeds. These would not qualify if bearing seed is required for fruit to be acceptable for food. The differences in biological developments between spores and seeds are technical and will hardly qualify as an unyielding standard to distinguish clean

herbs from the unclean. There is no adequate basis to uphold the contention that the words "bearing seed" in Genesis 1:29 are limitative.

### Every Living Thing to be Eaten?

Speaking to Noah after the flood, God said,

*Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat (Genesis 9:3, 4).*

This passage deserves careful comparison to Genesis 1:29, 30. In Genesis 1:30, God gave the green herbs specifically to the animals. Here in Genesis 9:3, God said,

**"EVERY MOVING THING THAT LIVETH SHALL BE MEAT FOR YOU; even as the green herb have I given you all things, but the flesh with the life thereof. . . ."**

Some see a correlation here between God's provision of herbs for food and His subsequent permission to consume flesh. Without question, the correlation exists, but of itself it is not limiting. The passages are synecdoches.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A figure of speech whereby a part is put for the whole, or the whole for a part. Example: "He's a good hand," meaning workman.

Were we to accept the words of these verses without qualification, we might presume that God actually wanted — not allowed — WANTED man to consume of every moving thing which lives. Hardly would such a Divine command be welcome! It's repulsive to even think about eating some creatures! When reading these passages, everyone realizes that part for the whole was intended. God never wanted man to eat of every moving thing that lives or of every herb known to man. Some are toxic.

The difference between clean and unclean animals was established early in man's history. Noah knew the difference. God gave him instructions concerning animals to be taken into the ark. *"Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female"* (Genesis 7:2). Genesis 8:20 provides further evidence of Noah's awareness. *"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar."*

### **Animals For Sacrificing**

Only animals designated as clean were used for sacrificing. A review of this practice will confirm the Bible's general attitude about the separation of meats.

The list begins with Abel.

And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his FLOCK and the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering (Genesis 4:4).

Authorities<sup>2</sup> agree that "flock" designates sheep or goats. Both of these animals are clean.

In Exodus 29:38-41, there is mention of offering two lambs. Leviticus 5:11 speaks of sacrificing two turtledoves and two pigeons. Turtledoves are a type of pigeon. These are clean.

Leviticus 23:18, 20 mentions offering lambs, bullocks, and rams in sacrifice. Each of these meats is clean.

Numbers 8:8 speaks of offering a bullock. Chapter 15:5 designates the sacrifice of a lamb; verse 6 of a ram; verse 11 of a bullock, ram, and lamb; and verse 24 of a kid goat. I Samuel 15:22 finds King Saul offering rams. Micah 6:6 asks,

*Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?*

These passages are but a fraction of more

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<sup>2</sup>Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible; Young's Analytical Concordance of the Bible; Adam Clarke's Commentary of the Bible, comments on Hebrews 11:4.



Scriptural evidence available. When animals were sacrificed to God, from Abel's time onward, they were always from among the clean.

The Bible also describes God's rejection of the sacrifice of unclean animals. On occasion, He reflected on the waywardness of His people. Willfulness and disobedience reduced their devotion to patronage -- an insolence God refuses to tolerate.

The Creator's message in Isaiah 66:3 comments on such a circumstance. There are impressive contrasts here.

*He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck, he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.*

God was not accusing His children of indulging in atrocities. To the contrary, it was their religious practice He denounced. Their rebellion caused Him to consider their killing of an ox to be *no better than* their slaying of a man; their sacrifice of a lamb had the validity of breaking the neck of a dog; the cereal offerings were as repulsive as offering swine's blood; and the burning of incense might as well have been offerings to idols. What severe disenchantment!

The offer of wheat or cereal offering,

called "an oblation," was as welcome as offering "swine's blood." God found both distasteful and repelling.

Does this passage reflect a bygone attitude? Does the Christian era enjoy new latitude? Isaiah 66 is mainly eschatological.<sup>3</sup> Its counsel must not be relegated to national Israel's past. It speaks of the future. Verse 15 mentions the coming of the Lord. The attitude reflected in this passage may correctly be regarded as God's until the Saviour returns.

### Our Bodies Are Temples

Why should we be concerned about the sacrifice of animals? This information enables one to perceive God's feelings toward certain creatures. He created them all; but He did not want each kind offered to Him in sacrifice.

Consider the New Testament attitude.

*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's (I Corinthians 6:19,20).*

If God wanted no swine's flesh and blood on the Old Testament altars, would He be

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<sup>3</sup>A religious term referring to events relating to the end of the world. Prophetic.

pleased with swine in temples He purchased and in which the Holy Spirit dwells?

*And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (II Corinthians 6:16-18).*

God hasn't wanted, nor does He want, swine or any other unclean flesh in His temple. The Christian's body is God's temple.

### **God Provides Only Clean Meat**

Little Biblical evidence is available describing the menu of God's people before the law of Moses was given. Genesis 18 describes a visit by three men to Abraham's home. In demonstrating hospitality, Abraham provided basins for the visitors to wash themselves. He had Sarah make cakes; and he butchered and prepared a calf. Calves' flesh is among the clean meats.

After the Exodus, the Israelites were en route to Sinai where Moses received the law. God provided food. Exodus 16:12 tells of God's promise to give bread in the morn-

ing and flesh in the evening. The bread was manna. The flesh was quail.

In Numbers 11, we read about growing discontent among the Israelites because they received only manna to eat. They wanted meat. God sent it. Again, it was quail, which is clean. God selected this meat for His people before Moses' law was given.

Once the law was given designating certain flesh foods as fit for human diet, there was little question about which foods were eaten. God wanted His people to consume only those meats which He said were clean.

Matthew 22 contains the parable of a marriage feast for a king's son. Invitations were issued. Response was disappointing. There was disinterest on the part of some. Others returned abuse, cynicism, or violent assault upon the servants who delivered the invitations.

The king was angry. Those first asked were destroyed. The servants went into the highways to invite whomever they could find; both good and bad.

Those summoned first and who refused represent the Jews. Those from the highways, both good and bad, represent the Gentiles. The marriage feast symbolizes the spreading of the Gospel. The king is an anthropomorphic<sup>4</sup> expression of God.

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<sup>4</sup>An interpretation of what is not human in terms of human or personal characteristics. Specifically, ascribing human characteristics to God.

Matthew 22:4 identifies the main dish of this feast. "*Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed and all things are ready: come into the marriage.*" The word "fatling" refers to fattened cattle.<sup>5</sup>

Luke 15 contains the parable of the prodigal son. A young man wanted his share of the inheritance. His father consented. The departing son found a high-spirited, fun-loving crowd, but he had to finance the parties. When the money ran out, the friends did, too. Only misery remained. There was but one sensible option left. He would go to his father — not as a son, but as a servant requesting employment.

On his way home, while still a distance away, he spotted his father. They ran toward each other and had an emotional reconciliation. The son, recognizing he had wasted his sonship, asked to be hired as a servant. To the father, the return home was the resurrection of his son. A feast was in order.

Here is another anthropomorphism. The father represents God and His willingness to allow the exercise of free moral agency, undergirded by willingness to forgive the contrite.

What was served at the feast?

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<sup>5</sup>F. Wilbur Gingrich: *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 198.

And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound (Luke 15:27).

Both directly and symbolically, God always offered clean meats. In no instance was He known to provide for food any meats the law designated to be unclean.

### **The Bible's Unflattering Commentary About the Unclean**

*"As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion"* (Proverbs 11:22). This is no compliment to either the pig or the imprudent woman. Beauty on a woman who loses her sense of discretion is as much a waste as placing a gold ring into the snout of a pig. The swine is the Bible's choice of animal to emphasize a pronounced waste!

Mark 5:1-13 and Luke 8:26-33 tell of a demoniac who was so violent he had to be banished to caves away from people. He couldn't keep clothes on. Chains failed to hold him. He would injure himself with his violent antics. He could be heard crying from some distance.

Having crossed Galilee by boat, Jesus approached him. The devils in this man, recognizing Jesus, called out, *"What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not."*

They begged Jesus not to send them into the abyss. "And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked" (Luke 8:32, 33). Mark 5:13 estimates there were about 2,000 berserk swine.

Was Jesus wasteful in allowing the destruction of so large a herd? Some have faulted Him for doing so. A man was relieved of a legion (multitude) of demons, and the countryside was relieved of 2,000 hogs at the same time. The Bible expresses no remorse at the disposal of either. This destruction of swine might well have represented Jesus' disapproval of maintaining them.

When his money and friends ran out on him, the only means of livelihood the prodigal son could find was to feed swine (Luke 15:14-16). Nothing could be more degrading. In certain eastern cultures, those who owned and herded swine were prohibited from entering holy places and were allowed to marry only those whose families had the same coarse livelihood. For the prodigal, it was miserable. No one would eat with him. He was left to compete with the pigs for food.

For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens, behind one tree in the midst eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord (Isaiah 66:15-17).

These verses refer to the second coming of Jesus. In this setting, the unclean swine and mouse are still looked upon with repugnance. Where it is mistakenly denied that there are prophetic implications here, it must still be recognized that eating swine's flesh remains linked with the self-righteous, mouse-eating group which is (was) headed for destruction.

Compare this passage to Isaiah 65:2-4.

*I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in the way that was not good, after their own thoughts; a people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat*



*swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels.*

These passages confirm the truth that eating swine's flesh displeased God.

II Peter 2:22 also describes the Bible's aversion to swine.

*But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.*

The Bible shows clearly God's willingness to offer beef, quail, and other clean meats for man's diet, while the swine is consistently referred to as a dirty, repugnant animal always associated with disgrace.

### **Was the Law in Existence Before Moses?**

Some feel the law of the clean and unclean existed before Moses' law. "Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Genesis 26:5). This verse forces us to acknowledge there were laws, statutes, and commandments enjoined before Moses. Abraham knew and obeyed them. For this reason, God offered him outstanding promises listed in the preceding verse.

The distinction between the clean and unclean was known at least since Noah's

time, probably earlier. Abel sacrificed clean animals. This distinction would logically have been set forth by law. Commandments, statutes, and laws have to comprehend SOME regulations, and the discipline of the people during these times indicated their awareness of unclean meats. The conclusion that a form of law offering guidance concerning the clean and unclean was in effect at Abraham's time is solid and causes no breach of logic, nor does it unreasonably extend the meaning of the passage.

Nonetheless, many doubt this information gives enough evidence to conclude that a law established the distinction between clean and unclean flesh foods before the law of Moses was given. Whether one can prove there was an actual written ordinance setting forth the difference is not crucial. The Bible's distinction between clean and unclean meats was certainly in evidence by Abraham's time.

### **The Law**

The law distinguishing between those meats which are clean and those which are not is found in two chapters of the Bible: Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. The information given is easily understood.

The wording in parts of these two chapters deserves attention. The mention of clean and unclean meats has specific reference to man's diet — not sacrifice.

There is no indication that symbolic application is intended. Some meats are acceptable to eat; others are unclean and should be eliminated from the diet of God's people.

### "Abomination"

The prominent use of a certain word which tells how unclean meats were to be regarded is noteworthy. The word is "abomination." It is used in Leviticus 11:11, 12, 13, 23, 41, and 42, and the word "abominable" is used in verse 43. These meats were an "abomination." Their use as food was repudiated. They were detestable, abhorrent, and loathsome!

The reason God would not allow His people to contaminate themselves by eating unclean meats is given in Leviticus 11:44, 45.

*For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.*

Without question, God regards unclean meats to be contaminating. "Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing" (Deuteronomy 14:3). This verse introduces a lengthy out-

line identifying which meats are acceptable for food and which are taboo.

The risk of eating that which God calls "abominable" may be documented. "One of the characteristic infections, trichiniasis, results from the parasitic *Trichinella spiralis* found in raw or partially cooked pork or pork products, and in the developing stages the invasion and migration of the organism are typified by symptoms of malaise, febrile states, vomiting, edema of the face and legs, muscular pains, and urticarial rash. Botulism and other food poisoning result from infection due to contaminated pork products and in severe cases respiratory failure is a complication. At other times the ingestion of pork products issues in an allergic condition accompanied by malaise, some fever, and a rash. A more common infection is that of the *Taenia solium*, where the pig is the intermediate host and man the definitive host. The developed worm is about ten feet long with approximately one thousand segments, and is derived from the *Cysticercus cellulosae* parasite sometimes present in raw or improperly cooked pork. A rare degeneration of this condition is seen in somatic taeniasis, when nodules form in the muscles and in the brain to produce symptoms like epilepsy, or else become palpable subcutaneously.

"Yet another disease that can be contracted from ingesting improperly prepared

pork has come to the notice of medical research in recent years. It is called 'toxoplasmosis,' and in its symptomatic form resembles pneumonia. While the method of its transmission still is imperfectly understood, it is widespread among animals, particularly pigs and rodents. The toxoplasma organism in pork is unaffected by the periods of pork storage prescribed in occidental food laws, and seems to be able to survive the usual cooking temperatures. It occurs in a cyst-like mass called a 'pseudocyst,' the structure of which is resistant to freezing or the action of gastric juices, but it tends to be broken down when subjected to prolonged cooking at above average temperatures."<sup>6</sup>

*They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together (Isaiah 66:17).*

When our Lord returns, the swine's flesh will still be considered abominable.

*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murders, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their*

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<sup>6</sup>Roland Kenneth Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), footnotes on pages 605, 606.

*part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Revelation 21:8).*

Some may not agree that reference to "abominable" in this verse has anything to do with unclean meats, and this objection is not without foundation. The verse lists perversities of sinful mankind; however, it demonstrates nicely the context in which the "abominable" is placed in the Bible. What God calls abominable, He has fully and forthrightly repudiated.

### Summary

The difference between clean and unclean animals was known as far back as Abel's time. Abraham served clean meat when God came to visit. Moses' law did not establish this difference; it defined it.

God accepted only clean meats offered to Him, and whenever He provided flesh food to man, whether in reality or in symbol, it was always from among the clean. Without exception all references in the Bible to food designated as unclean are negative.

Both the offer of unclean meats on the altar or eating it by God's people were denounced. The Bible calls this food abominable, and so it is. Our bodies are the temples of God, and He was never pleased to have His temple defiled with unclean food.

### Objections

There is no New Testament reference

dealing specifically with the subject of clean and unclean meats. It was referred to, but it was not at issue. There is no New Testament declaration concerning the propriety of eating those meats the Bible designates as being unclean.

### Mark 7:19

We examine Mark 7:19,

*Because it entereth not into his heart,  
but into the belly, and goeth out into  
the draught, purging all meats?*

Obviously, this verse is the closing of a sentence. It was spoken by Jesus in defense of His disciples. They broke a tradition. They ate food without observing ceremonial washings.

Before eating, the Jews washed their hands in prescribed ways, such as scrubbing with the fist and making sure they washed from the hands to above the elbows. Failure to do this would contaminate the food, making it "common."

The term "common" applied to what was considered "impure" — whether naturally or ceremonially. It was used to identify forbidden meats ". . . or such as had been partaken of by idolaters, and which, as they rendered the partakers thereof impure, were themselves called common and unclean."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>*The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary*, (Chicago: Howard-Severance Company, 1907) I, p. 446.

The word "common" in Acts 10:14, and the word "defiled" in Mark 7:2 ("... they saw some of his disciples eat with *defiled*, that is to say, with *unwashen*, hands . . .") are translated from the same Greek word, which in this usage identifies what is "common, ordinary, ceremonially unclean, impure."<sup>8</sup> The same Greek word is found in Mark 7:5 of most Greek manuscripts and is translated "unwashen" in the King James Version.

Jesus challenged the right of the Pharisees to enforce their complex traditions, which themselves were often in conflict with the laws of God. He said it is not what goes into a man's stomach that defiles him, but that which comes out of his mouth.

*. . . Do ye not perceive that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these*

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<sup>8</sup>F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, p. 118.



*evil things come from within, and defile the man (Mark 7:18-23).*

Jesus stated it is not what goes into the belly that defiles. It is vices and evil machinations that corrupt. Mark 7:19 ends with the three words, "purging all meats."

"Purging" refers to purification. This suggests to some that Jesus' statement purified all meats and made every kind of flesh acceptable for man's diet.

The key to understanding this passage is found in a precise definition of "meats."

All "meats" were purged. The Greek word from which "meats" is here translated is "ta bromata." It refers to edible foods. Other versions or translations use the word "food." Jesus declared to be clean the food eaten by His disciples who had not observed ritualistic washings.

Fitting it into context, the Pharisees considered the food the disciples were eating to be common, impure, contaminated. Without proper washing, the food they touched was not fit to eat. When Jesus challenged the tradition of the elders, He cleared the way for the disciples to continue eating the food. He declared it to be acceptable.

The passage indicates it was edible food Jesus considered purged. God never considered swine's flesh as acceptable food for humans. It would not have been included with what Jesus announced to be purified. Whether one may or may not eat pork or

any other unclean meats was not at issue here. Were unclean meats being eaten by Jesus' disciples, they would surely have been denounced for that. The passage contains no expression of disapproval of the kind of food being eaten.

### Acts 10, Peter's Vision

In a vision, Peter saw a sheet, tucked at its four corners, descending from heaven. It contained all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. Peter was told, "*Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.*"

Peter demurred, "*Not so, Lord. I have never eaten anything common or unclean.*"

The response was, "*What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.*"

The phrase in the latter part of Acts 10:15 gives the key to understanding this passage, "**WHAT GOD HATH CLEANSED, THAT CALL NOT THOU COMMON.**" The New English Bible says, "*It is not for you to call profane what God counts clean.*"

The real meaning of this vision — the lesson God taught Peter — is pronounced in Acts 10:28. Often it is suggested that God showed Peter it was all right to eat any kind of meat because He had cleansed it. These conclusions differ markedly from Peter's. He understood what this vision meant.

*And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man*

*that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean (Acts 10:28).*

Acts 10 opens by telling of a devout Gentile, Cornelius. He feared God, gave alms to the people, and prayed to God consistently. He had a right to hear the Gospel, but Peter would not have taken it to Cornelius because Peter was restricted by law from fraternizing with Gentiles. For this reason, God gave the visions. Peter had to be convinced he should not consider another man common or unclean.

*Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him (Acts 10:34, 35).*

What God *cleansed* man should not call common. Is there any evidence that God cleansed swine or any other unclean flesh? None. Peter was not led to eat food that was contaminated or unclean; he was urged to take the gospel to the Gentile, Cornelius.

### **Romans 14:14, Nothing Unclean of Itself**

*I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing*

*unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean (Romans 14:14).*

Romans 14 deals with *doubtful disputations*. Verse 2 says, *"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."*

Doubtful disputations are known as "gray areas." They involve issues not easily resolved, because no clear-cut regulations define what is right.

Whether or not it was proper for Christians to eat meats offered to idols was a doubtful disputation. Whether or not it was proper to eat meat at all was another doubtful disputation.

*As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and there is none other God but one. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom*

*Christ died?* (I Corinthians 8:4, 7, 10, 11).

The eating of meats offered to idols had become a sensitive issue. Gentile converts had always been accustomed to buying meat in the markets; however, much of this meat consisted of remnants of animals (after the priests had their share) slain as sacrifices. The market was stocked with meat which had been connected with idol worship. A Christian who was intent upon staying away from the meat of animals involved in sacrifice in an idol's temple could never be sure of any meat he bought. His only alternative was to eat no meat at all.<sup>9</sup> This precautionary measure was considered by others to be too severe.

In this setting, Paul observes that nothing is unclean of itself. Food allowed by God for human consumption is not necessarily made unclean because it was involved with idol worship. The idol had no power to turn clean meat to unclean.

On the other hand, Paul conceded that a man's own attitude toward a food, even though clean, could make it unacceptable to himself. A man's conscience could condemn him for eating while doubting the propriety of his indulgence. It would be better to avoid meat than to feel condemned eating it.

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<sup>9</sup>*The Pulpit Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), XIX, pp. 262, 263.

In I Corinthians 8, Paul urges that the feelings of the brethren be regarded. This was the primary consideration. Romans 14:14-17 contains the same advice. There is no question here about whether or not unclean meats such as pork may be eaten. The dispute is over the propriety of imposing vegetarianism onto the Christian community.

### **I Corinthians 10:25-27, What is Sold in the Shambles**

*Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake (I Corinthians 10:25-27).*

This passage appears to allow the purchase of whatever is sold in the market without raising questions. The same would hold true when responding to an invitation to join others at a meal. Taking away the need to raise questions about whether the food bought or served might be unclean meat or contain unclean byproducts would go far toward erasing any meaningful difference between clean and unclean meats.

A convincing explanation is available in the following verse:

*But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof (verse 28).*

Since eating meats offered to idols was a "doubtful disputation," Paul urged that this sensitive matter should not be raised voluntarily when purchasing meats or in accepting invitations to a feast. Having someone identify meat as having been offered in sacrifice to idols would be cause to cease eating it. Whether or not it is proper to eat unclean meat is not at issue here.

### **I Timothy 4:4, 5, Every Creature is Good**

*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the*

*word of God and prayer* (I Timothy 4:1-5).

This chapter opens with a warning. In the latter days some will depart from the faith. They will give attention to doctrines of devils. What are these Satanic teachings? They are identified in verse 3. One false doctrine teaches it is wrong to marry. Despite its poor success, this teaching survives. It is always being preached by someone.

The second evil doctrine is: "*Commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.*" They attempt to impose vegetarianism as an essential Christian doctrine.

What *kinds of meats* are these false teachings advising we must abstain from? The Bible says, ". . . from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

Did God create all meats to be received? No. Righteous Noah knew the difference between clean and unclean meats. God described unclean meats as abominable. Some meats which God created can never be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. Those who know truth know that God provided some meats to be eaten and others to be rejected. They know the difference.

"For it is *sanctified by the word of God*



and prayer." "Sanctify" means "set apart." Some meats have been sanctioned for food by the Word of God.

If God permits us to eat all meats without restriction, He has set none apart. This passage informs that *some are set apart* by the Word of God. Meats set apart are distinguished from other meats. They are acceptable for human diet. Meats God created to be acceptable for man's diet may be received with thanksgiving.

*"Every creature of God is good, IF it be received with thanksgiving."* It can be received with thanksgiving only if God created it to be received. Those who believe the truth know which meats are sanctioned by the Word of God.

I Timothy 4:1-5 harmonizes with other Biblical teachings. It refers to foods set apart by the Word of God. We used God's Word to see which they are. The Bible identifies them. God's Word is Truth.