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**FEATURE**

**CLEANLINESS AND HOLINESS: PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL  
WHOLENESS IN THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS**

*William C. Andress*

Old Testament theology is a portrayal of God's attempts to restore the broken relationship that exists between man and his Creator. Genesis begins with the Omnipotent proclaiming each act of creative reality to be "good," until in its completed totality it is declared to be "very good" (Genesis 1:31, KJV). As the crown jewel of that magnificent handiwork, mankind was included in this proclamation. Fashioned in God's "own image and after His likeness" (vs. 27), man was given dominion over the earth and its creatures (vs. 28). However, in an attempt to achieve equality with Divinity, (Genesis 3:5), Adam found himself instead to be separated and in open rebellion. He had surrendered his allegiance to a foe. His offspring quickly sank into degradation (Genesis ch. 3-6, KJV), a far cry from what Divinity had ordained in the beginning. Throughout the ensuing oracles of Genesis, numerous pen pictures depict God's efforts to reconcile lost humanity to Himself.

It was His intention that the reconciliation process be consummated by the nation of Israel. Prior to the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, Moses was reminded of the covenant relation that had been established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan. . . . Say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you . . . And I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a god: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you into the land concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and I will give it to you for an heritage, I am the Lord.

After 215 years of Egyptian exile (*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 184-186), the Abrahamic covenant was about to be actualized, both physically and redemptively. Bondage to Egypt was to be eradicated. The Israelite nation headquartered in Canaan was to be exalted as God's special people of the covenant.

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Geographically, Egyptian residency terminated with the crossing of the Red Sea. Yet figuratively, Egypt continued on with the Israelites. Physically, this was demonstrated by the mixed multitude. Spiritually, it was illustrated by an incessant craving for the pleasures of Egypt (Number 11: 4-6, KJV). If Israel was to be Yahweh's holy nation, (Exodus 19: 6, KJV), a holy, special people above all other nations (Deuteronomy 7:6, KJV), a holy people unto the Lord, (Deuteronomy 14:2, KJV), then it was mandatory that a sanctifying process, or cleansing, take place between the Red Sea and the Promised Land. Without it, Israel could never maintain her part of the covenant. Both Sinai (the proclamation of God's holy eternal law) and the wilderness wanderings (daily opportunity for character development) were key elements in God's plan to transform the seed of Abraham. His ultimate goal was that Israel, as the chosen people of God, would be holy, even as He was holy.

Nowhere is this concept more clearly expounded than in the book of Leviticus. "Be holy for I am holy," could accurately be termed the motto of this book (Gordon, 1979, p. 18). Holy (*qadosh*), together with cognate terms such as sanctify (*qadesh*), and holiness (*qodesh*), occurs 152 times in this short book (about 20% of the total number of occurrences in the Old Testament) (Wenham, 1979, p. 18).

What then was the essence of the meaning of "holiness" to the author of the Levitical laws? In marked contrast to the animistic "belief in which natural objects are invested with supernatural force," this earth-bound power is independent of the gods. "Holy" speaks of an innate quality understood to mean "that which is unapproachable or withdrawn from common use." Moses impressed the Israelites with the possessiveness of the term. It was more than something that was simply unapproachable or withdrawn. Rather "to be holy" became a positive concept, an extension of God's will. Fundamentally, it meant to live the life of godliness (Milgrom, 1963, p. 293). Holiness thus moved from being a rational idea to a condition, a personal quality. "The man or woman who belongs to God must possess a particular kind of nature, which by comprising at once outward and inward, ritual and moral purity, will correspond to the nature of the holy God" (Eichrodt, 1961, p. 137).

This matter of holiness was not an option for the Israelites. "Israel had to be holy, for her God, Yahweh, was holy" (Kaiser, 1978, p. 111). Included in the meaning of the word were the attributes of sanctification, cleanness, purity, being set apart, separation from sin. "In the Levitical context, *to be holy is to be whole*, complete; to be one-holiness in unity, integrity, and perfection of the individual" (Douglas, 1966, p. 4). To the children of Israel, it meant to live "a life entirely dedicated to God and to be set apart for His use" (Kaiser, 1978, p. 116).

Therefore, a critical question that needs to be addressed is: “How was God’s ideal, this elevated state of holiness, to be effectually realized?” During two centuries of Egyptian bondage, the minds of the seed of Abraham had become blinded and debased by slavery and heathenism (White, 1958, p. 10). Israel had adopted idolatrous practices (White, 1958, p. 333). To a great extent the knowledge of God’s holy law had been lost sight of and replaced with pagan customs and ideas (White, 1958, p. 334). The nation was utterly unprepared to be the holy people of the Abrahamic covenant. To bring them from a state of depravity and to make them worthy of being the recipients of His sacred precepts, Yahweh, the great I AM, spelled out in precise language the very procedures necessary for this transformation to take place. To be God’s chosen people Israel had to be holy, for the I AM was holy. To that end a process of cleansing or sanctifying had to take place.

In addition to religious instruction, Levitical statutes address a wide spectrum of human health issues. Examples include sexual morality, personal hygiene, quarantine of communicable diseases, burial of human excreta, measures for the prevention of the spread of fungal diseases, prohibitions against tattooing, and dietary restrictions. To understand those laws which had a bearing on the day-to-day physical life, it is helpful to conceptualize the conditions that existed in Egypt during the XVIIIth dynasty (*SDA Bible Commentary*, 1978, vol. 1, pp. 188-194). Archaeological records reveal that morality had reached the lowest depths of decadence. Marriage between siblings, especially amongst royalty, was common (Sigerist, 1951, p. 239). According to Ruffer, such consanguineous marriages were the rule rather than the exception (cited in Sigerist, 1951, p. 240). For example, Ramses II had at least 170 children (Sigerist, 1951, p. 241) and took a large number of his acknowledged daughters as his wives in order to beget with them “children like unto himself” (Thorwald, 1963, p. 90). Brothels were well-established institutions since prostitution was an accepted practice (Sigerist, 1951, p. 91). Such promiscuity resulted in extensive blindness due to gonorrheal infections passed on from mothers to their newborns (Sigerist, 1951, p. 334). The Canaanites were even more corrupt. Their vile practices included ritual prostitutes of both sexes, bestiality (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* s.v. “Chastity,” by T. G. Pinches), and human sacrifices, (Leviticus 20:2-5, KJV).

In marked contrast, Israel was to be a holy people. Not only were such abominable practices to be shunned, they were punishable by death (Leviticus 20:2-5). The apodictic law, thundered from Sinai, proclaimed “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14, KJV). To clarify, specific explicit instructions were given, detailing types of sexual relationships that were unholy, (Leviticus 18 and 20, KJV). The gonorrhea that afflicted the Egyptians would be a natural result of disobedience to the above commandment (Deuteronomy 28:27-29, KJV).

In fact, it is most likely that the plague that emaciated the Israelite camp after it had engaged in intercourse with the Edomites, was a particularly virulent strain of a sexually transmitted disease (Smith, 1950, p. 73).

It was by appeal to religious instinct that hygienic laws were also inculcated, (Wood, 1920, pp. 47, 48). Cleanliness was to encompass the whole camp, not just individuals. In the region of the Nile, the rudiments of personal hygiene existed. For example, daily bathing was commonplace, (Sigerist, 1951, p. 246). Nothing that was impure was allowed into the temple, especially into the “Holy of Holies” which was the dwelling place of the deity. Washing areas were even installed in the courtyards of the temples so that hands could be washed prior to religious ceremonies (Hurry, 1978, p. 166). However, such practices were nowhere near as extensive as those found in the Mosaic Health Code with its detailed emphasis on personal cleanliness.

#### **Incinerators outside the camp for waste disposal (Leviticus 4:11, 12)**

The skin of the bullock, and all his flesh, with his head, and with his legs, and his inwards, and his dung, even the whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn him on the wood with fire.

#### **Human excreta was to be buried outside the camp (Deut. 23:12, 13)**

Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whether thou shall go forth abroad: and thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee.

#### **The priests were to be examples; physically and spiritually (Lev. 21:17-21)**

Speak unto Aaron saying, “Whosoever be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God. For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous, or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded, or crookbackt, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy or be scabbed or hath his stones broken; no man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord.”

#### **Sterilization procedures (Numbers 31:21-24)**

Eleazar the priest said unto the men of war which went to the battle, “This is the ordinance of the law which the Lord commanded Moses; Only the gold, and the

silver, the brass, the iron, the tin, and the lead, everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make it to pass through the fire, and it shall be clean: nevertheless it shall be purified with the water of separation: and all that abideth not the fire ye shall make go through the water. And ye shall wash your clothes the seventh day, and ye shall be clean, and afterward ye shall come into the camp.”

Hubbard points out that *Young’s Analytical Concordance* lists 63 separate texts in the laws of the Pentateuch where the word “wash” is used. Washing preceded the eating of food, serving in the sanctuary, offering a sacrifice, and was to follow childbirth and sexual intercourse, (Hubbard, 1975, p. 27). Upon recovery from disease, an individual had to pass a purification test, (Smith, 1950, p. 32).

The above examples provide strong evidence that cleanliness was associated with holiness, uncleanness with unholiness. Thus cleanliness and godliness were very much akin to each other. Spiritual cleanness could not be attained apart from physical purity. No filth, whether physical or spiritual, could be tolerated by a holy God. And so God declared that as His chosen people, Israel should be “holy even as He was holy.”

The book of Leviticus knows of nothing that is beyond God’s control or concern. Every aspect of life, religious (ch. 21-24), sexual (ch. 18, 20), neighborly relationships (ch. 19, 25), atonement for sin (ch. 16), and even our diet (ch. 11) is of importance to the Covenant Redeemer.

## EXAMPLES FROM THE MOSAIC HEALTH CODE

PRINCIPLE	TEXT	DISEASES PREVENTED
Sexual Morality	Ex. 20:14. Thou shalt not commit adultery Lev. 18:22. Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind Lev. 19:29. Do not prostitute thy daughter	STD's AID's
Burial of Human Excreta	Deut. 23: 12, 13. When thou wilt case thyself abroad, thou shalt dig . . . and cover that which cometh from thee	Gastrointestinal Typhoid Cholera Other vector-borne diseases.
Incineration of Waste	Lev. 4: 11, 12. Even the whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp unto a clean place, . . . and burn him on the wood with fire .	Vector-spread diseases
Sterilization Procedures	Num. 31:21-23. . . . everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean. . . and all that abideth not the fire ye shall make go through the water.	Various infections
Personal Hygiene	Lev. 15:13. He shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in running water.	Communicable diseases

Quartile or Communicable Diseases	Num. 5: 2, 3. Put out of the camp every leper every one who hath an issue. . . without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps.	Communicable, infectious diseases, especially leprosy and skin diseases.
Tattooing Forbidden	Lev. 19: 28. Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead.	Hepatitis, Tetanus
Prevention of Fungal Disease	Lev. 13:47-59. Care of clothing Lev. 14:38-42. Treatment of houses	Allergies, Spore-borne disease
Exercise and Rest	Ex. 20: 8-11. Six days shalt thou labor, the seventh day is the Sabbath . . . in it thou shalt not work.	Stress related illness. Maintenance of physical fitness
Low Fat and Cholesterol Diet	Lev. 3:17. Eat neither fat nor blood. Lev. 7: 23-26. Eat no manner of fat of ox or sheep or goat	Heart disease Cancer Diabetes

Because Seventh-day Adventists have emphasized chapter 11 more than any other chapter in the book of Leviticus, with the possible exception of Leviticus 16, I would like to address the issue of clean and unclean meats in some detail. First, it must be recognized that it is within the context of holiness that the distinction between clean and unclean foods is made. After explicitly defining what is clean and what is unclean the following proclamation is made:

For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy. . . . For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. Leviticus 11:44, 45.

Again it must be emphasized that “holiness” meant entire separation from heathen, worldly practices. Israel was to exemplify to the “nations” God’s holy ideals for sexual purity, personal hygiene, control of environmental pollution, disease free environs, and obedience to God’s commandments and statutes. But why should diet have anything to do physical cleanliness, not to mention sanctification? What difference would partaking of a pork chop versus a beef steak make in one’s relationship to God? Why should certain aquatic life be clean and acceptable while other creatures swimming in the same waters be relegated to uncleanness?

Wenham (1979) cites four possible underlying reasons for the Levitical distinction between clean and unclean meats (p. 166). A fifth possibility is suggested by “The Biblical diet laws as an ethical system” (Milgrom, 1963, pp. 288-301). Following is a brief evaluation of each position. Since the hygienic stance is the usual one of Seventh-day Adventists, I address it last.

**Arbitrary.** This position assumes that the rationale behind the distinction is known only to God. If He made a distinction then it must be regarded as so, whether or not there is any logical moral or physiological explanation, (Bonar, 1966, p. 209). Though this was the view of some of the rabbis, Wenham (1979) recommends it only as a last resort, (p. 166). Jehovah is reasonable and He puts reasonable demands upon His people. Because of who He is, He does have the right to be arbitrary, but such a label should not be automatically attached to that which is obscure to man’s intellect. In this instance the weight of evidence is so great as to deem arbitrariness to be implausible.

**Cultic.** There appears to be some tenability for this explanation. In support of Noth, a contemporary theologian who supports cultic as the basis for the restrictions (Noth, 1965, pp. 91-96), it is known that the pig was an ancient

domestic and sacrificial animal (Eichrodt, 1961, p. 134). In researching food taboos, Simoons (1961) could find “no hint of negative reaction to pigs or pork throughout the early period of pig keeping in Egypt” (p. 15). On the contrary, evidence revealed that the Pharaoh, himself, possessed them, and they were bred in the temple grounds at Abydos, “most sacred place in all Egypt,” (Simoons, 1961, p. 15). Mice, serpents, and hares were regarded in magical belief as especially effective media of demonic power (Eichrodt, 1961, pp. 134, 135). Fried mouse was one Egyptian remedy for toothache (Ghalioungui, 1973, pp. 130, 146).

While cultic practices of the Egyptians and Canaanites were taboo to the Israelites, the above explanation cannot be accepted as the major impetus for forbidding unclean foods. The Canaanites sacrificed the same general range of animals as did Israel. The bull in particular was an important cultic mammal in both Egyptian and Canaanite ritual (Wenham 1979, p. 167). Because of the bull’s esteem in Egypt, Israel did not engage in sacrificial offerings while in captivity (White, 1958, p. 333). In the ancient Egyptian Medical Papyri both bull’s blood and pig’s blood were prescribed for certain ailments (Leake, 1952, p. 79). It seems logical that if pagan ritual was the reason behind the separation of clean and unclean animals, then either the cow should have been considered unclean, or the swine clean. Certain heathen customs were indeed forbidden on moral grounds, but nowhere is such an explanation given for the separations recorded in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.

***Ethical.*** Milgrom (1963) agrees that several factors may have been involved but emphasizes that “in no manner can they begin to account for the biblical dietary system in its entirety. . . . Of all the theories, only the ethical one best fits the facts; to teach reverence for life through restricted access to animal life for food” (p. 296). The laws were intended to have an immediate effect upon the consciousness of the Jew. Such statutes would make him abhor cruelty to animals as a monstrous crime; such abhorrence extending beyond animal life to the ultimate goal of reverence for human life. Ritual was necessary for a pragmatic display of lofty principles of life.

Such arguments leave one wondering why the distinctions are made in the manner in which they are. Could not the same reverence for life be taught using a different criteria to determine what is clean and what is not? It seems that the logical conclusion to be drawn from an ethical approach would be abstinence from all flesh foods, not just an arbitrary division between clean and unclean meats.

**Symbolic.** The symbolic interpretation allegorizes the behavior and habits of clean animals into living examples of how righteous Israel should live. In opposition, the lifestyles of the unclean symbolize sinful man. Social anthropologist, Mary Douglas, has made the strongest argument for this interpretation. Well known approaches to the allegorizing tradition include the first century Epistle of Barnabas and Bishop Challoner's notes on the Westminster Bible in the beginning of this century (Douglas, 1966, pp. 47-48). Such an approach can be dangerous in that it offers no hermeneutic guidelines, thereby resulting in an *ad infinitum* possibility of interpretations. The best illustration of the lengths that such allegorization can be taken to is Bonar's (1966) assertion that each animal is designed to teach man something about his relationship to God. The camel, an unclean animal that in some ways is similar to the clean ruminants, merely teaches that it is safe to trust God in areas of doubt. Conies teach that we are to hide from the least appearance of evil. The pig impresses man with the filth of iniquity. The Lord as shepherd, God's sustaining providence, the saint panting after his Savior, and the beauty of holiness are illustrated through the clean sheep, wild goat, hart, and roebuck, respectively (Bonar, 1966, p. 214).

Douglas (1966) attempts to give guidelines to avoid such tangents. All of these injunctions must be explained by the command to be holy (p. 48). The concept of holiness is developed to the point that it means correct definition and discrimination; it is order, not confusion (Douglas, 1966, p. 53). Restated, "the notion underlying holiness and cleanness was wholeness and normality" (Wenham, 1979, p. 169). The analogy between holiness in man and cleanness in animals extends to the point that creatures conform to the standards of the biological group to which they belong just as man must conform to the norms of moral and physical perfection (Douglas, 1966, p. 14). Cud chewing, cloven hoofed mammals are the proper kind of food for a pastoralist (Douglas, 1966, p. 14). Any creature digressing from the normal order of things would then be considered unclean. Split hooves and rumination were criteria for normalcy among land animals. Fins and scales were characteristics of proper aquatic life. Predatory fowls were classified as unclean because feasting on carnage and carnivorous lifestyles were contrary to holding life sacred. Unfortunately such reasoning leaves Douglas (1966) to conclude that there is no deeper reason for the prohibition against swine than its failure to live up to the criteria of being a ruminant (p. 55).

There are a number of arguments against establishing symbolism as the primary intent of the dietary restrictions given by God to Moses.

Distinctive classes of clean and unclean did not originate at Sinai but rather prior to the Flood (Genesis 7:2, KJV). Leviticus only enumerates what had already been established.

The Bible does not equate cleanness with “edible” and uncleanness with “inedible” as Douglas (1966) and Wenham (1979) believe (p.170). Proper equivalents are “pure” in contrast with “defiled” (Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible, 1979 ed., s.v. “cleanness” and “uncleanness.”)

Allegorization disavows the correlation between healthful living and spiritual growth.

The Jews themselves, some even to this day, took these commands very literally. Israel was a holy nation and as such ought to act that way in every aspect of life.

**Hygienic.** The proponents of symbolism are adamant in decrying the trend of the twentieth century to make Moses an enlightened public health administrator. While allowing for the fact that there might be some hygienic values undergirding these statutes, they feel that the Israelites themselves did not regard them as such (Wenham, 1979, p. 167; Douglas, 1966, p. 29).

In the Torah it is not necessary for God to preface His decrees with physiological reasoning every time He addresses a distinct segment of human existence. Yet on several occasions the correlation between freedom from disease and obedience to God’s commandments is made. Two such texts are (a) “If ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them . . . the Lord will take away from thee all sickness and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee” (Deuteronomy 7: 12, 15); and (b) “If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book . . . He will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 28: 58, 60). The most notable of such passages is:

If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee (Exodus 15: 26).

Here is definite evidence that obedience to Yahweh results not only in spiritual blessings but also physical health. Disobedience inevitably leads to disease.

The true impact of the above conditional promise can only be realized when its magnitude is properly understood. Translations of medical papyri and autopsies performed on mummies disclosed that prevalent diseases in ancient Egypt included chronic rheumatism, dental caries, smallpox, schistosomiasis, arthritis, tuberculosis, staph infections, pneumonia, pleurisy, digestive illnesses, gout, kidney stones, atherosclerosis, constipation, polio, bubonic plague, dysentery, cholera, malaria, gonorrhea, visceral pains, urinary disorders, epilepsy, fevers, and a wide assortment of diseases caused by poor sanitation in general (Thorwald, 1963, pp. 34-46, *passim*).

Medical historians agree that the height of ancient Egyptian medical perspicuity was during the XVIIIth dynasty (Leake, 1952, pp. 35, 36)—the very time of the Exodus. The priest-physician had access to several very valuable medical texts (Leake, 1952). In these texts there is a mixture of magic, sorcery, and ignorance intertwined with scientifically rational therapy. Since the official doctors belonged to the class of priests, and their training centered around the temples, it is most certain that Moses had been well educated in the healing arts of the time. Yet within the Mosaic Health Code, not even a fragment of Egyptian medicine can be found. Rather than being curative, the Mosaic Health Code is entirely preventive. The dietary laws formed a part of that system of preventive medicine. They also had significant religiousity in that God was trying to impress upon Israel the fact that breaking a law of physical well-being was just as much a defilement as it was to break one of the ten commandments (White, 1938, p. 17).

The general connection between health and holiness needs to be extended to the specific distinctions between clean and unclean meats. Most theologians bypass the fact that such laws were casuistic, matters of conscience having particular importance at only a certain time and place in history, namely the wandering in the wilderness. It must be reiterated that in the beginning God never intended for mankind to eat flesh of any kind. Yahweh was not making arbitrary ritual demands upon His holy people but was rather giving instruction for their betterment, intending to eventually bring them back to the original vegetarian diet (White, 1938, p. 378). To aid the Israelites in making the transition from flesh-eating to vegetarianism, the animals most likely to cause disease were forbidden. The animals deemed unclean were the carnivores, the scavengers, the “garbage collectors.” God knew that the partaking of such flesh would so enfeeble the brain that sacred things could not be discerned (White, 1948, p. 9).

And even with the animals deemed to be clean, strict instruction was given regarding their preparation. "It shall be a perpetual (lasting indefinitely) statute . . . that ye eat neither fat nor blood" (Leviticus, 3: 17, KJV). And to be doubly sure that the Israelites understood that He was talking about the "clean" animals, a few verses later God spelled it out very clearly, "Ye shall eat no manner of fat, of ox, or of sheep, or of goat. . . . Moreover ye shall eat no manner of blood, whether it be of fowl or of beast" (Leviticus 7: 23-26, KJV). Permissible to eat clean animals? Yes, but clear prohibitions against consuming their fat and blood. Considering that more than 80 diseases can be transmitted from animals to humans, (Christensen, 1976, p. 153) the most logical conclusion seems to be that even the clean meats were not intended to become a permanent part of the diet. But to the Israelites, the ritual became an end unto itself and they failed to understand the connection between physical habits and spiritual health. Thus, even on the borders of Canaan they still lusted after the diet they had eaten while in Egypt.

Wenham (1979) is quite accurate when he states that the dietary laws were for specific people in a specific situation; that they were part of the blueprint for making Israel holy (p. 161). Unfortunately, instead of perceiving God's desire to ultimately bring His people back to the original diet, he suggests that in the Christian dispensation there is no longer any reason for making a distinction between the "clean and unclean," so all flesh is permissible for food.

In general, Seventh-day Adventists have also missed the casuistic intent of Leviticus 11. If we are going to selectively choose which parts of the Levitical laws are binding on Christians today, then we should at least be consistent and also teach *the complete abstinence of all animal fat and blood*. The Levitical message is clear in this aspect, "As my holy people you can eat that double cheeseburger at McDonald's-but it has to be 100% fat-free and bloodless."

Paul clearly understood the intent of Leviticus. He begged the Jewish Christians in Rome, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, . . . that ye present your *bodies* a living sacrifice, *holy*, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world" (Romans 12: 1, 2, KJV).

In the final analysis, the spirit of holiness cannot be attained with diseased bodies and minds (White, 1948, vol. 1, p. 554). Holiness is not attainable while the body is being polluted with the unclean. The message communicated throughout Leviticus is "You are my special people. You are to be separate from the heathen practices of the nations around you. The state of holiness is so lofty that you have not even been able to conceptualize it. Therefore, as part of the covenant

relationship, I am going to instruct you in the way of holiness. Such instruction pervades more than just the moral law embodied in the ten commandments. It involves more than a ritual of sacrifices and offerings. Holiness; sanctification; is concerned with every aspect of living; your flocks, your houses, your work, your leisure, and even your diet.” Israel could never be “holy” as long as they were living the lifestyle of Egypt. Geographical separation wasn't enough. The camp could only be clean, the people could only be sanctified when they stopped lusting after the Egyptian lifestyle. This was a lesson that Israel never learned and far reaching were the consequences.

Had they been willing to deny appetite in obedience to His restrictions, feebleness and disease would have been unknown to them. Their descendants would have possessed physical and mental strength. They would have had clear perceptions of truth and duty, keen discrimination, and sound judgment. But they were unwilling to submit to God's requirements, and they failed to reach the standard He had set for them. . . . God let them have flesh but it proved a curse to them (White, 1938, p. 378).

The essence of Leviticus then is that physical life is enmeshed with spiritual sanctification. One cannot be separated from the other. To relegate the Levitical laws to mere ritual is to miss their intent. To make the ceremonies all-important is to obliterate their purpose. To rebel against them is to engender destruction.

### **An Historical Application**

In 1348, the Black Death (bubonic plague), the worst epidemic the world has ever seen, broke out in Europe and continued for the next 40 years. It is estimated that between two thirds and three fourths of the entire population of Europe was decimated (Gordon, 1959, p. 462). So many died that the pope consecrated the Rhone River as a final burial place for the afflicted (Goerke & Stebbins, 1968, pp. 10, 11). Haggard (1934) says that the plague “threatened to exterminate the human race” (pp. 174-178).

It is interesting to note that almost 1000 years earlier a similar outbreak of bubonic plague, called the Plague of Justinian, ushered in the Dark Ages. It too ravaged the whole known world, wreaking its devastation for 70 years. A whole host of plagues and epidemics flourished between these two outbreaks of bubonic plague including leprosy, smallpox, diphtheria, measles, influenza, tuberculosis, anthrax, cholera, and syphilis.

What caused these pandemics that nearly wiped out the human race? A clue can be found in the burial of Thomas A. Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was murdered in 1170. When the monks undressed him for burial, they found lice everywhere in his undergarments "like boiling water" (Swinson, 1966, p. 19).

Under papal Christianity, the Levitical emphasis on cleanliness had become lost. The pagan Greek belief that the soul is good but the body is evil and, therefore, should be shunned was adopted into papal dogma. As a result, personal hygiene and health were neglected. Living in filth became a sign of "sanctity." In summarizing medical historians on this point, Hubbard (1986) states that throughout the Middle Ages cleanliness was a sign of weakness, and worldliness, and luxury (p. 144). He goes on to say that "while the squalor and dirty habits may have been the physical cause, the intellectual stagnation of the Dark Ages which produced ignorance of the simplest rules of hygiene and sanitation would be closer to the truth. . . . Religious dogma, which had no basis in Scripture, produced results which still baffle historians and medical researchers," (Hubbard, 1986, pp. 153, 154).

#### **Application for Today**

First recognized as a distinct clinical entity in 1981, AIDS has since claimed the lives of 11.7 million people. Approximately 16,000 new infections occur daily (Basch, 1999, p. 473). Had the sexual guidelines in Leviticus 18 alone been carried out, it would have been impossible ever to have an AIDS epidemic.

In this part of the world we still see the effects of not properly disposing of our waste and garbage and of not having proper sanitary measures for eliminating excrement. As a result gastroenteritis, intestinal parasites, typhoid, cholera, trachoma, schistosomiasis, and skin diseases are endemic in many developing countries. Yet the amount of human waste pales in comparison to that produced by animals that are being raised for food. In the United States the livestock industry produces 250,000 pounds of excrement a second. This is 20 times as much excrement as the entire human population of the country produces, (Robbins, 1987, p. 372). In America, a typical egg factory with 60,000 hens produces 165,000 pounds of waste per week while a pork operation of just 2000 pigs produces four tons of manure and five tons of urine, not in a week, but every day, (Robbins, 1987, p. 372).

And it is the high consumption of animal foods in developed countries that is leading to huge morbidity and mortality numbers due to heart disease, cancer, and stroke. Today, in almost every Pacific rim country, these are now the top three

killers, whereas just 25-30 years ago they were almost unheard of in this part of the world. Even in the Philippines, heart disease is now the number one cause of death (1998 *Philippine Statistical Yearbook*, pp. 9-14).

Perhaps it is time that the book of Leviticus, especially those verses containing parts of Mosaic Health Code, be re-examined. Could it be that we are in danger of making the same mistakes as did the Israelites or Christians in the Dark Ages? The book of Leviticus is not about animal sacrifices. It is not about ritual cleansing. It is not about "thou shalt," and "thou shalt not." Instead, it is about being clean. Clean in one's personal habits, clean in taking care of our environment, clean in our relationships toward one another. And the underlying theme throughout is that sinful, filthy, depraved, unclean mankind cannot stand in the sight of Almighty Jehovah unless he is sanctified. Cleanliness on the outside is indicative of the sanctification that has occurred on the inside. Without either, neither man nor woman, can ever be completely "whole."

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*Dr. William [Bill] C. Andress is Assistant Professor in the Health Education Department, School of Graduate Studies, at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies.*