



WHAT GOD HAS CLEANSED

The apostle Peter, in referring to how some in his day were twisting the writings of Paul from their true meaning, wrote: “they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:16). There are also many today who “wrest” the Scriptures to suit their own fanciful ideas and conform them to their likes and dislikes. We must realize, however, that anyone who does such a thing does so to “their own destruction.”

One such passage of Scripture that is often twisted to support false teachings is found in the tenth chapter of the book of Acts where we find: “There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius” (Acts 10:1) who was told to “send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter” (Acts 10:5). The next day as these men “drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven” (Acts 10:9-16). Three times Peter sees this sheet let down from heaven with all types of unclean animals in it. Three times he is told to kill and eat them and three times Peter refuses. God then tells him: “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.”

Many today take this passage out of context in an attempt to justify eating whatever they desire, in direct disregard of God’s instructions on what can and cannot be eaten. They distort this biblical account and declare that God has now said man can eat anything he chooses. While these fool-hearty individuals, in their attempt to indulge appetite and justify rejection of God’s regulations, place a fanciful interpretation on this vision, they stand in direct opposition to the heavenly record that no portion “of the scripture is of any private interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20).

Peter knew God never commands anything arbitrarily, or changes His mind and instructs His people to do just the opposite of His previous instructions. He knew well that God had said He would not “alter the thing that is gone out of my lips” (Psalm 89:34). For over three years Peter had walked with Jesus and he was fully aware He had not repealed the law pertaining to unclean animals. He realized God would not command him to eat anything He had already forbidden and was, therefore, confused concerning the meaning of the vision.

“Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold,

the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them" (Acts 10:17-20).

As Peter thought on the meaning of the sheet being lowered three times, the Holy Spirit said, "Behold, *three men* seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing."

In the mind of Peter, as with all Jews, Gentiles were considered "unclean" (Isaiah 52:1), "dogs" (Matthew 15:22-28), unworthy of eternal life. He, along with the entire nation, had failed to understand that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34) and that Jesus had come as "a light of the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:6) in order to bring "salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). The prejudiced eyes and bigoted minds of the Jews failed to discern God was not the "God of the Jews only," but the God "of the Gentiles also" (Romans 3:29). It took quite some time before the early Jewish Christians were able to accept that "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles" (1 Corinthians 12:13). Paul had even declared the Jews were guilty of "forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved" (1 Thessalonians 2:16).

For three and one half years after the crucifixion of Jesus, the disciples had continued to carry the gospel to the Jewish nation, but their continual rejection finally caused Paul and Barnabas to declare: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:46, 47).

With this culturally-biased bigotry, Peter went down from the house top to meet the three Gentile messengers. The next day "Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him"(Acts 10:23) in order to witness what would transpire, for he knew the contact he would have with these Gentiles would cause repercussions among the church, which was comprised solely of Jews at this time.

Upon arriving at the home of Cornelius, he found many friends and relatives also gathered there. "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 showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean*. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for" (Acts 10:28, 29). Notice, Peter said that God had shown him through this vision he "should not call any *man* common or unclean." This vision had nothing at all to do with food, regardless of what many today erroneously teach. It was given to impress upon the heart of Peter, and teach all people in all ages, that prejudice and bigotry are repugnant and unacceptable to God.

This lesson was so difficult for Peter to retain that years later when Paul and Peter were working together in Antioch, a serious problem arose. They were working with the Gentile Christians when a delegation of Jewish Christians, sent by James from Jerusalem, arrived in Antioch to observe the progress of the work there. Upon their arrival Peter became fearful of displeasing the Jews and withdrew himself from the Gentile brothers and sisters; thereby playing the part of a hypocrite.

After Cornelius explained to Peter how an angel had appeared to him and instructed him to send for Peter, the apostle exclaimed: "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). He then proceeded to present the gospel to those gathered and they accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision

which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 10:44, 45). Peter immediately responded: “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:47, 48). With the baptism of Cornelius and his household, we find the first Gentile Christians.

Peter had reasoned correctly concerning the response of the Jewish Christians, for it was not long before “the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision *contended* with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them” (Acts 11:1-3). Peter, along with the six witnesses he had taken with him to Caesarea (verse 12), related to them the vision he had on the house top and the experience at the home of Cornelius and concluded by declaring who, or “what was I, that I could withstand God?” (Acts 11:17) and “when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

As we have seen, this passage does not address the issue of clean and unclean foods at all, and Peter never once thought the vision did. He was very familiar with God’s commands concerning what animals could and could not be used as food. Many today, however, are completely unaware of the divine instruction, or have been erroneously instructed by false teachers who are “making the word of God of none effect” (Mark 7:13) by their fallacious fabrications that man no longer needs to obey God’s dietary laws. However, we should ever keep in mind the words of Jesus: “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9). All Christians are to teach “the way of God in truth” (Mark 12:14) without mingling the mad, muddled musings of men.

The Spirit of God has given us the spiritual instruction of the Bible, and we are under sacred obligation to instruct others “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Corinthians 2:13). When we want to know God’s instruction on any subject, we are to compare scripture with scripture, taking all that God’s word says on the subject and putting it all together. Then we will know the truth and become “a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

God’s commands concerning clean and unclean animals are clear, conclusive, and easily discovered for all to study. He says, “These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth. Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat. Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the coney [rock badger], because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the hare [rabbit], because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the swine [pig], though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you. Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you” (Leviticus 11:2-8).

God has made it very simple to distinguish which of the land animals can be eaten. Basically, all one must do is look at their feet and watch them eat. They must have a split hoof and chew the cud. This would rule out such animals as horses, elephants, camels, etc., for they do not meet the biblical criteria. Some, such as the camel, might meet a partial fulfillment by chewing the cud, but because it does not have a cloven hoof, it is still unclean. Most people do not have a problem with most of the animals in this category. There is not a mad rush for horse steaks or camel burgers, for

example. However, there are two items listed that induce many to rebel at this instruction; those are the rabbit and the pig. Of the two, the pig has caused more people to reject this clear instruction than any other animal. Some have even said, "I will not give up my pork for God or anyone else." It is evident these people prefer to be a slave to appetite rather than a servant of God.

It is interesting that of all the animals declared to be an abomination, the swine is the one God refers to the most often. Through the prophet Isaiah, God referred to a class of people who rejected His counsel in this area. "I have spread out my hands all the day unto *a rebellious people, which walketh* in a 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; Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day" (Isaiah 65:2-5).

The following biblical account of the second coming of Jesus reveals that those who are disregarding God's directions on diet will be destroyed when He arrives. "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).

There never has been, nor shall there ever be, a time when it is permissible for people to disobey a command of God simply because it is contrary to their likes or dislikes, their wants and wishes. The warning "if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you" (1 Samuel 12:15) is one that would be well to take to heart. God has given us His word that we may learn what God's will is for us, but we must make application of what is learned. There must be an inward application by daily meditation and an outward application by true obedience to His word with the full realization that it is "not the hearers of the law that are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Romans 2:13). Jesus said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but *he that doeth the will of my Father* which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21-23).

In addition to the land animals, God gave distinct directions on what creatures in the waters can be used as food and which ones cannot. "These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat. And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you: They shall be even an abomination unto you; ye shall not eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcasses in abomination. Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you" (Leviticus 11:9-12). Again the instruction is clear and simple, anything that comes from the water must have both fins and scales or it cannot be eaten. This rules out such things as crocodiles, eels, whales, dolphins, etc., which most people do not have a problem with. However, we do find many other creatures commonly used for food, such as shell fish (oysters, clams, lobster, etc.), as well as shrimp, catfish, and similar scavengers that cause some people to stumble over God's guidelines.

God also gives specific instructions on which of the fowls, or birds, may not be eaten. “And these are they which ye shall have in abomination among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the osprey, And the vulture, and the kite after his kind; Every raven after his kind; And the owl, and the night hawk, and the cuckoo, and the hawk after his kind, And the little owl, and the cormorant, and the great owl, And the swan, and the pelican, and the gier eagle, And the stork, the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat” (Leviticus 11:13-19). For most people in western civilization, these creatures would not even be considered for human consumption, however, in some parts of the world some of these items (including bat stew) are a regular part of the diet.

God even informs us which insects, or bugs, can and cannot be eaten. “All fowls that creep [flying insects], going upon all four, shall be an abomination unto you. Yet *these may ye eat* of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth; Even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind. But all other flying creeping things, which have four feet, shall be an abomination unto you” (Leviticus 11:20-23). Along with the insects God includes slithering reptiles and rodents. “These also shall be unclean unto you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth; the weasel, and the mouse, and the tortoise after his kind, And the ferret, and the chameleon, and the lizard, and the snail, and the mole” (Leviticus 11:29, 30). This regulation causes very little problem in most of the civilized world (with few exceptions), but it should be remembered that in some areas of the world, people eat every type of bug, worm, and reptile imaginable.

There are some who, in a vain and feeble attempt to disregard the clear commands of God’s word, will claim this distinction between clean and unclean animals was given only for the Jews. However, the fallacy of such a position is easily seen in the fact that centuries before the time of Abraham (the father of the Jews) or Moses (many generations beyond Abraham), God had already instructed Noah: “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). Thus, we see this distinction existed from the earliest time, before there was ever a Jew.

The word of God assures us “no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psalm 84:11). Therefore, if God does withhold something from us, we must understand it is because it is not good for us. There are many books available that reveal the dangers and diseases resulting from disobedience to God’s commands on diet, but since it is the purpose of this book to help the reader see what God says, rather than why He may have said it, these dangers and diseases will not be discussed here.

Some people question: “What right does God have to tell me what I can or cannot eat?” The answer to such a question is really quite simple. First of all He is our Creator and having made us, He knows what is best for us. The second reason is that He has redeemed us at the infinite cost of the precious blood of Jesus Christ. “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” (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). In the light of Scripture we can see the devilish deception in the popular phrase, “it is my body.” Our bodies do not belong to us, they are His temple. They belong to God and are simply on loan to us.

Once we understand this and realize He cares exceedingly how we treat our body temples, then we can comprehend more fully the ramifications of the following warning: “Know ye not that ye

are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? *If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy*; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17). It would be well for each of us to earnestly contemplate the question: “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” and heed God’s longing call to “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” (2 Corinthians 6:16-18).

Won’t you decide today that “whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, [you will] do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31)?

DEFILED HANDS OR HEARTS?

Many of those who have been involved in the production of the modern versions of the Bible are so opposed to God’s dietary regulations that they have deliberately and maliciously mutilated the Holy Scriptures in their attempt to cause it to conform to their perverted, prejudiced premise. A clear example of this mutilation can be found in Mark chapter seven. Here Jesus said, “Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear” (Mark 7:14-16). The New International Version deliberately changed “can defile him” to “can make him unclean” and omits the entire sixteenth verse, “If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.” Jesus continued: “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 [eliminating, expurgating] all meats?” (Mark 7:17-19).

Notice what the NIV has done with this passage. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’? For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body. (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods ‘clean.’)” In addition to once again changing “defile” to “unclean,” the words “In saying this, Jesus declared all foods ‘clean’” are added without warrant or warning. The reader is simply misled into believing they are a part of the inspired words of the apostle Mark. Why would they insert such a corruption as this? The reason for this deliberate depravity can be seen in the confession of George Milligan, a member of the original Revision Committee, who admitted the change was based upon their understanding of Peter’s vision in Acts 10:9-16. (More correctly, their misunderstanding for, as we have seen, this vision was dealing with prejudice not food.)

It is their opinion the entire Gospel of Mark is “largely dependent upon the recollections of the apostle Peter” (rather than the inspiration of the Holy Spirit), and so they seize their opinion of Peter’s experience as justification in making Mark express that same opinion.

“But by the change of a single letter in the Greek, a new reading is gained, and the verse now concludes -- ‘This he said making all meats clean,’ being the Evangelist’s comment upon what he has just recorded, a comment that gains still further in significance when we remember that St. Mark’s Gospel was in all probability largely dependent upon the recollections of the apostle Peter, who was taught in so striking a manner that in God’s sight nothing is common or unclean. Acts 10:9-16.” (Milligan, *The Expository Value of the Revised Version*, p. 62.) He openly admits they

intentionally changed the original Greek reading in order to create a “new reading,” which they think Mark really intended to say.

The context of Mark seven reveals explicitly that Jesus was not talking about clean and unclean foods, but rather about the heart of man. The topic of discussion was whether one had to wash their hands before they ate “when they come from the market” (Mark 7:4), not whether it was permissible to eat a pork chop. Jesus was pointing out to the people that one’s worship of God becomes unacceptable when that individual sets aside God’s commandments for the teachings and traditions of men. Notice that this discussion began when the scribes and Pharisees “saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables” (Mark 7:2-4).

These religious leaders tried to enforce these man-made regulations upon all. They asked Jesus: “Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?” (Mark 7:5). In response Jesus strongly rebuked them and “said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition” (Mark 7:6-9). He accused the fanatical traditionalists of “making the word of God of none effect through your tradition” (Mark 7:13).

They were so concerned with becoming spiritually defiled by contact with the Gentiles at the “market” and the necessity of a man-mandated regulation to wash away the defilement that they could not see that spiritual defilement comes from within. “Hearken unto me every one of you,” said Jesus, “and understand: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man... 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 evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:14, 15, 18-23).

Remember, the word of God was given by the Holy Spirit, therefore, it is spiritual and cannot be understood except under the guidance of the Spirit of God. One purpose the Holy Spirit was given is to guide us in an understanding of the Bible. Jesus said, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13) and Jesus’ prayer “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17) makes it clear: God’s word is the truth that the Holy Spirit will enable us to understand. In our own finite wisdom we are unable to understand the things of God, for “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). The natural man does not receive the things of God’s word, instead he or she will twist and contort them to conform to their own thoughts and desires.

We shall now consider another passage of Scripture that the unlearned and unstable pervert and

wrest “unto their own destruction.”

COMMANDS TO ABSTAIN FROM MEATS

“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” (1 Timothy 4:1-5).

There are some who attempt to use this passage to justify eating whatever their appetite craves, but far worse they present their perversions to others as justification to reject God’s restrictions regarding diet. There are several things that should be noted in the instruction the Holy Spirit has given here.

1. This is referring to a specific group of people who “depart from the faith” or turn away from the teachings of God’s word.
2. This resulted from them allowing themselves to be led by seducing spirits rather than the Holy Spirit.
3. They begin to teach devilish doctrines.
4. They become liars and hypocrites, insensitive to the truth and without remorse.
5. They place a prohibition on marriage.
6. They demand that people “abstain from meats.” This statement has caused many to misunderstand this passage. They do not realize the word “meats” does not refer solely to flesh foods, but is an old English word that refers to food in general. This can also be seen in the Greek word “bromata” (foods) from whence we have a product known as “Bromo-Seltzer” to help relieve overindulgence in food.
7. Reference is made only to that food “which God hath created to be received” and not to that which He has forbidden.
8. Those who “believe and know the truth” will be thankful for what God has created for them, rather than unhappy and complaining over what He has withheld from them.
9. That “which God hath created to be received” has been revealed in His word and “sanctified [set apart] by the word of God.”

Early in the Christian era, as errors and corruptions began to creep into the church, the man-made system of monasticism was introduced. This deceptive and devilish doctrine taught there were merits that could be earned through such things as celibacy and suppression of appetite. It was believed that marriage was a concession to the lusts of the flesh and therefore sinful. In addition to this, these ascetics also believed that denying themselves certain foods, either permanently or on church mandated holy days, was also meritorious. This concept eventually evolved into the development of monasteries and convents, with the accompanying requirement of celibacy among priests and nuns, as well as the practice of such dietary practices as Lent abstinence and fish on Fridays, etc., all of which are relics of those early corruptions.

This passage has nothing to do with clean and unclean foods. Paul is arguing against the fanaticism and monasticism that teaches the material creation is evil, and the pious must live an isolated, celibate life, subsisting on a meager and bland diet. Both marriage and food were created

by God in the Garden of Eden and are to be received with thanksgiving. In the original diet given to man, there were no flesh foods and it did not even include all types of vegetation. (Genesis 1:29) It was not until after the flood (when vegetation was sparse) that animals became a part of man's diet. (Genesis 9:3) Until then man's diet consisted of fruits, nuts, grains, and vegetables. Even the animals were not created carnivorous (Genesis 1:30) and in the new earth (Revelation 21:1; Isaiah 66:22), they will be brought back to their edenic state. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:6-9).

After the flood God permitted the use of flesh foods with guidelines, as He had given with the original diet. (Genesis 9:3, 1:29) God informed Noah: "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). Only the "clean" animals were to be eaten and therefore seven of each were taken into the ark, whereas two of each of the unclean were sufficient to repopulate the earth.

Paul's statement that "every creature of God is good" has also caused confusion for some due to the unfortunate rendering "every creature" in the King James Bible, which precipitates the premise that only animals are referred to here. One minister, in commenting on this passage, declared: "man is a creature of God. If every creature is good to eat, then I could eat you." This phrase is more correctly translated "everything created" as nearly all other translations have done and refers back to those things He "created to be received" whether marriage or foods. These have been sanctified, or set apart, by His word. Anything NOT sanctified by the word of God, but condemned by that word, is anything but good. When the believer understands this and chooses to live in harmony with the word of God, their prayers will be of "thanksgiving" for they "believe and know the truth."

DOUBTFUL DISPUTATIONS

I believe that more errors arise from a quick and careless reading of scripture, and from hasty conclusions based on detached statements, than from wilful perversion of the truth. The biggest problem is due to the lack of proper thought and study, rather than deliberate distortion. One such passage of Scripture that has been tremendously twisted from its original intent due to the lack of careful, contextual consideration is the fourteenth chapter of Romans. This chapter has been used by some to disparage a vegetarian diet, to negate the distinction between clean and unclean meats, and to abolish the Bible Sabbath.

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:1-4).

These "doubtful disputations," or disputes over individual opinions, are contrary to the Spirit of Christ and the children of God are not to engage in these arguments. As we consider the instruction in this chapter, we must be exceedingly cautious that we do not read into this divine instruction

concepts that seek to justify our likes or dislikes, and which were foreign to the mind and message of the apostle Paul.

There are two types of people referred to in the passage before us - the weak and the strong. Paul's counsel and exhortation is primarily to the strong with instruction to beware how they receive and react to the weak brother, for he, too, is a servant of God. He says the stronger in faith believe they "may eat all things." There are some who attempt to make Paul say that one may eat "anything." However, the "all things" Paul refers to are the things "which God hath created to be received" and "are sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 Timothy 4:3). This passage does not teach that man can now eat that which God has previously forbidden. It is not even dealing with clean and unclean foods, but disputes over food that has been offered to idols.

In the book of First Corinthians (written a year before Romans) Paul had dealt with the same problems of diet, weak brothers, and the necessity of Christian love and forbearance. Paul began: "Now as touching things offered unto idols" (1 Corinthians 8:1). He immediately reveals what the issue was and continues: "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 that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. 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. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse" (1 Corinthians 8:4-8).

The individual who is strong in faith realizes that "an idol is nothing" and there is only one God, but "there is not in every man that knowledge." This weak brother or sister (possibly recent converts from pagan idolatry) cannot eat, with a clear conscience, anything that might have been offered to an idol. The apostle tells the stronger believer to remember that one is not better if they eat, or worse if they do not eat. Therefore, he continues, "take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak" (1 Corinthians 8:9). This is the same instruction he gives in Romans. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Romans 14:13).

Notice the severity of casting a stumbling block before them that are weak. "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?" (1 Corinthians 8:10, 11). If the weak "see thee which hath knowledge" ("that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one"), he might be tempted to go against his conscience and also eat and thus perish, for "he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). Consequently, Paul, very directly and with great clarity, declares: "But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, *I will eat no flesh* while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Corinthians 8:12, 13).

The word of God does not teach that one can eat anything they want, but rather that we should be willing not to eat anything that others would find offensive. This is why Paul so pointedly proclaimed: "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth [well-being].

Whatsoever is sold in the shambles [market place], 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. *But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols*, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: Conscience, I say, *not thine own, but of the other*: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. *Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God*: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit [well-being], but the profit of many, that they may be saved” (1 Corinthians 10:23-33).

In addition to the problem of food sacrificed to idols, the church struggled over the observance of various religious holy days. “One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks” (Romans 14:5, 6). Some today attempt to use these verses to justify disobeying the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:8-11), but Paul never condones, nor calls upon anyone to disregard God’s instruction or disobey His commandments. It is crucial that we never forget the only days we can “esteem alike” are those that God has not sanctified to Himself. It is suicidal to esteem as the same that which God has set aside as different.

Paul wrote to the church in Galatia: “Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of [for] you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain” (Galatians 4:10, 11). Before their conversion the Galatians were not Jews, but heathen; and these days, months, times, and years of the Levitical law were becoming but a substitute for those pagan holidays, which they had regarded with superstitious reverence while heathen. Some, even today, argue that we must keep the feasts and ceremonies of Judaism although the word of God explicitly asserts: “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). The last Passover that was ever to be kept was in the upper room the night of Jesus' betrayal. The Lord's Supper was to take the place of the Passover and the latter was to pass away forever.

All of the old Jewish festivals and ceremonies, such as the food and drink offerings, the various holy days and new moon celebrations (i.e. Passover, Feast of tabernacles, Feast of Trumpets, etc.), which pointed to the coming of the Messiah, met their fulfillment in Jesus. These “days, and months, and times, and years” were the Levitical ceremonies that pointed to the coming of the Savior and they were nailed to the cross. Notice how clear Paul makes this in his declaration that Jesus blotted “out the handwriting of ordinances... and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross... *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ*” (Colossians 2:14, 16, 17). Once Jesus came in fulfillment of these ceremonies, it would be a denial of His Messiahship and the sufficiency of His sacrifice for one to continue in them. Any attempt to transfer some saving ability to these ordinances would be to reject Jesus as the sole Savior of the world. Only the Lord Jesus can save and He “is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by Him” (Hebrews 7:25).

It is not for us to judge another for observing these things or for abstaining from them. The issue of judging one another is of such importance that Jesus warned: “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matthew 7:1). In the light of what Jesus taught concerning judging others, Paul proclaims: “But

why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ... So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Romans 14:10, 12, 13).

It is not a light thing to speak evil of others or to make ourselves judges of their motives or actions, for "He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge" (James 4:11). There is but one judge who "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Corinthians 4:5), and whoever takes it upon himself to judge and condemn his fellow men is usurping the prerogative of God. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4). What business does any human being have judging God's servants? If we belong to God, then it is for God to judge us and not for us to judge one another.

FOOD THAT KILLS

As we have seen, there are some who mistakenly believe and erroneously teach that even unclean animals are made clean by the gospel. Those same people, however, would be disgusted to think of eating rats, bats, toads, cats, dogs, monkeys, etc.. They seem to forget that Christ purifies people, not animals, and this causes them to misunderstand and misapply the passages of Scripture we have been studying, as well as this final one we shall now consider.

"I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean" (Romans 14:14). The Greek word (*koinos*) here translated "unclean" is not rendered this way in any other place in the New Testament. However, a derivative of this word is also translated one time as "unclean" in Hebrews 9:13. This word means "common" or "profane." The Greek word (*akathartos*) is the word translated "unclean" throughout the New Testament and means "foul" or "impure." That these two words are able to be used in close connection, but are not identical, can be seen in how Peter used them together. Peter said, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common (*koinos*) or unclean (*akathartos*)."

Many are quick to claim that when Paul says "there is nothing unclean," he is saying God has deviated from His previous directions and we may now eat anything we want. Again, we must remember the apostle is dealing with "things offered unto idols" (1 Corinthians 8:1) and not with clean and unclean animals. When he says "nothing," he is using it in the same way he uses "all" when he said, "*All* things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient" (1 Corinthians 6:12). He is not asserting that it is permissible for him to disobey God's word or break any of His commandments, for he declared just prior to this statement that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10). Paul never believed or taught that it was lawful for him to lie, steal, kill, commit adultery, worship idols, etc.. The apostle knew that "all things" that were not forbidden by God were the *only* things lawful for him.

These things must be understood in the same way that the word "every" was used by God when He said, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a

certain rate *every day*” (Exodus 16:4). They could not gather bread *every day* because it did not rain bread *every day*. The record declares: “Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none” (Exodus 16:26, 27). It rained bread “every day” that God provided, but not on the day He restricted. Likewise, it is evident that when Paul says “all things” in Romans 14:2 and “nothing” in verse 14, he is not referring to that which God has already forbidden.

Even those things that are “lawful” and not forbidden by God, Paul informs us, are not necessarily appropriate to practice. “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient” [beneficial or appropriate] (1 Corinthians 6:12). “All things are lawful for me, but *all things are not expedient*: all things are lawful for me, but *all things edify not*. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth [well-being]” (1 Corinthians 10:23, 24). Even those things which are permissible for the Christian, should not be practiced if it will cause harm to a brother or sister in Christ.

Remember, these passages are not referring to clean and unclean animals, but things offered to idols. When God says something, there is no changing His mind and there should not be any changing of ours. To be committed to Christ is to be unwaveringly committed to the instruction He has given, regardless of what men say.

The magnitude and consequences of the subject we have been studying can be better understood when we realize one can be lost over the issue of food. “But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat [food], now walkest thou not charitably [in love]. *Destroy* not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.” According to Scripture we can kill people with the food we eat. Again, we are counseled not to “become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. 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?” (1 Corinthians 8:9-11).

Not only can other people be lost by what we eat, but we, too, can be lost by what we eat, for “when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ” (1 Corinthians 8:12) and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Paul recognized the immensity of this issue and fervently responded: “if meat [food] make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend” (1 Corinthians 8:13). Never does Paul say that we are free to eat whatever we want, but to the contrary, he maintains that if we offend others by our food, we should cease to eat that which offends. This is completely opposite of what so many attempt to teach today.

If one can forfeit eternal life by their selfish, supercilious attitude toward others and eating that which is “lawful,” is it not absurd to believe that one can be saved while living in deliberate disregard of divine directions? We have previously seen how through the prophet Isaiah God referred to a class of people who rejected His counsel in this area. “I have spread out my hands all the day unto *a rebellious people, which walketh* in a 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; Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day” (Isaiah 65:2-5).

It is also a biblical fact that at the second coming of Jesus those who are disregarding God's

directions on diet will be destroyed. “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). Remember, there never has been, nor shall there ever be, a time when it is permissible for people to disobey a command of God simply because it is contrary to their likes or dislikes - their wants and wishes.

Never forget: “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Romans 14:17-19). The kingdom of God is righteousness, not unrighteousness. Peace, not war and conflicts. Joy, not anger and disputes. Therefore, the Christian should not enter into “doubtful disputations” or “any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak” (Romans 14:21). “For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak” (Romans 14:20, 21). Remember, “the kingdom of God is righteousness” (Romans 14:17). Righteousness is obedience to the law, for “all unrighteousness is sin” (1 John 5:17), and “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4), and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Thus, it becomes indisputable that forbidden foods, or the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, is not even under consideration as one of those things of personal opinion.

“Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:22, 23). There are many things that are allowable that are not, however, necessary. If we are seeking to help a brother or sister who has a weak, uninstructed faith, it would be far better to have charity toward him, even though his scruples are devoid of reason, than to wound him and cause him to stumble. The lesson is not that it is better to do something, but that it is better not to do than to offend. However, to weakly comply with the judgement of others, rather than to act from strong personal conviction, is sin. When a person takes part in anything feeling it is wrong, it is sin. If you believe something is wrong, then don't do it, for “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23).

The supreme emphasis of Paul's writings on this subject has been the sorry situation of an individual with so little real knowledge of Christ that he thinks righteousness is to be obtained by the eating, or not eating, of certain kinds of food. The idea clearly conveyed throughout his teaching is that it is by faith, and not by eating and drinking, that we are saved. Nowhere does Paul, or any other Bible writer, in any way teach that God has now changed His mind about what is and is not to be eaten, or what was once forbidden has now been altered (in direct defiance of His word) and is now acceptable. Nor do they teach that the Sabbath, or any other commandment of God, can be disregarded at one's pleasure, but rather their inspired instruction is to constantly practice Christian courtesy and compassion. A calloused Christian is as much a contradiction of terms as a cold sun. The purpose of the sun is to shed the warmth and light of which it is composed. So the purpose of the Christian is to diffuse the peace, joy, and love which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

None of us are called to be conscience for any other human being. We must all come to

understand that conscience is between an individual and God alone. We are never at liberty to impose our freedom of conscience upon another, but are at times even required to refrain from exercising our own freedom out of consideration for others. In other words, if we are able to walk fast, we are to help a weaker brother or sister who is going the same way, only more slowly. But we are not to turn out of the way to please someone who is walking the wrong way.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1, 2).

FROM HIS TAIL TO HIS SNOUT!

Psalm 34:11

Do you think, brother, that in God's great plan
When He was prescribing the best for man
That He made a mistake in leaving the swine out.
For he was not good from his tail to his snout!

I Corinthians 3:17

Oh, the carcass of an old dead horse or a cow
Don't get too rotten for a dirty old sow;
Though we holler a lot about boils and gout,
We eat Miss Piggy from her tail to her snout.

Ezekiel 33:11

We couldn't eat the buzzard, we'd think it a crime,
But how much more filthy is he than the swine;
That we make into pie, or we cook him with kraut,
And eat him or die, from his tail to his snout!

Isaiah 66: 2-4

We cook him with cabbage or boil him with greens,
With his mangy old hide we season our beans;
With his scabs and his boils within and without
Sweet Piggy we eat from his tail to his snout.
On filth they feast, while in stink-holes they lay
And still for their carcass our money we pay;
The preacher, professor, or the judge on his bench,
Eat the carrion-eater, his filth and his stench.

Ezekiel 22:26

In the filth you can see him clear up to his eyes
His slimy old carcass all covered with flies;
Most dead with cholera (due to butcher, no doubt).
We still think him good from tail to snout.

II Corinthians 6:17

We eat the old grunter, we eat the young shoat,
The fat we fancied may be pus or bloat;
It would smell as good, and as healthy, no doubt,
As the hoofs and the hide, the tail and the snout.

Isaiah 66:17

We may like him lean, or we may like him best fat
Just as well eat the dog, or else eat a cat;
Just as well eat the buzzard, the owl or the bat
The lizard or the snake, the mouse or the rat.

Romans. 12:1

Our most sensitive natures would almost run wild,
If we handled the corpse of a man or a child,
But we sit at our table and cram down our throat
With greatest relish---the corpse of a shoat.

Deuteronomy 14:8

God made him a scavenger, He says he's unclean
What other creature is as filthy and mean?
If we eat of his flesh, or touch his dead carcass,
With sin and disease it surely will mark us.

Leviticus. 11: 7, 8

Tis sad, brother, although God's work is just,
We eat the slop-eater, for eat him we must;
The dirtiest of beasts we will not do without.
But eat him we will, from his tail to his snout!

Matthew 15:8

Now we sing and we talk of God's love so divine,
Like vultures, then feast on the dirty old swine.
We might shun many ills, and diseases, no doubt,
By not eating him, from his tail to his snout.

I Corinthians 10:31

Yes, we worship the Lord, and pray and shout.
But that old hog flavor we can't do without;
For ham, bacon, and sausage; we go the whole route.
And eat the whole hog from his tail to his snout.

II Peter 2:22

In God's word we find he is classed with the dog
No matter how high-bred he still is a hog

Though you wash him, or teach him if you will,
He still will go back to his mire and his swill.

Genesis 1:29

We'd be better off if we obeyed God's command,
And ate vegetables, grain and fruit of the land
Then it wouldn't take half of the tonic and pills
To relieve all mankind of their swine-fed ills.

Genesis 9:5

You may think of fresh pork as a very rare treat,
But our bodies are made of just what we eat,
And the food he has eaten, the filth of the land
Goes into our body as food second-hand.

III John. 2

No wonder we are weak and heart beats are slow,
Sanitariums full, hospitals o'er flow,
For we eat such unclean, abominable things,
That are creeping, crawling, or flying with wings.

Psalms 119:105

God forbade us to eat these dirty old creatures,
No matter what is the theory of preachers;
If left to man's opinion---we'd not know the right,
But thank the Lord, in His Word there is light.

Luke 4: 2, 3

And now, my brother, you may no doubt recall—
Indulgence of appetite caused Adam's fall.
Our Savior was tempted on this point, no doubt,
Then why do we eat from his tail to his snout?

Revelation 22:11,12

Now I've told you my story, recited by piece;
If you can eat pork with your conscience at ease,
If sin, filth, or disease, you care little about—
Keep on eating the brute,
From his tail to his snout!

John T. Reagan