


Old Testament dietary laws in contemporary African Christian practice

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Old Testament dietary laws consist of the rules that God gave to the Israelites pertaining to what may be eaten and what should not be eaten. In the Old Testament, the animals that may be consumed are referred to as 'clean', whereas those which should not be consumed are referred to as 'unclean'. The prohibitions on food were mainly aimed at preserving the identity of the people of Israel. This article analysed the dietary laws recorded in Leviticus chapters 11 and 17. It investigated the observance of the Old Testament dietary laws among contemporary African Christians, with specific reference to Nigerian Christians. The findings of this study revealed that in the contemporary Nigerian Christian practice, some Christians' compliance or noncompliance to the food laws is faith-based, while for others it is not. Hence, some Christians obey the Old Testament food regulations on the premise of their loyalty to God, while some do not observe the dietary laws because they do not regard noncompliance as an act of disobedience to God. They believe that one's faith in God is not determined by what one eats or does not eat. Moreover, the study discovered that in recent times, compliance or noncompliance to the dietary laws is also based on health, economy, culture and other factors. A greater percentage of the data used in this work were derived through personal communication. The researcher utilised the descriptive research methodology in analysing the data derived from both primary and secondary sources.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: The article is an Afrocentric assessment of the observance of Old Testament food laws among contemporary Christians. This study contributes to Old Testament modern discourses on dieting and sustainable lifestyle. Its related disciplines are nutrition and dietetics, dietetic medicine, biblical interpretation, African biblical hermeneutics and practical theology.

Keywords: dietary laws; Old Testament; Christian practice; Leviticus; Nigerian Christians.

Introduction

The Old Testament is a sacred text that contains the laws of God. Laws are copious in the first major division of the Old Testament (Torah). The books that are referred to as 'Torah' are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These books contain God's instructions and his self-revelation to the people of Israel. Hence, the Jews regard these books as the most sacred in the entire Old Testament. Saldarini (1998:344) restated that the 'Torah is the most sacred and authoritative division of the Hebrew Bible. It is the heart of the Bible and the core of divine revelation'. The Torah contains diverse categories of laws such as dietary, ceremonial, civil, ritual and moral laws.

Among these various types of laws, this article centres on the dietary laws. The Old Testament dietary laws, concerned mainly with prohibitions on eating certain animals, were widely perceived by Christian writers to be one of the most salient features of Jewish religion (Blidstein 2016). In this article, Leviticus 11 and 17 are the primary texts studied because of their numerous laws on diet. This article investigates the observance of Old Testament dietary laws among contemporary Nigerian Christians and establishes the factors that promote the compliance or noncompliance with the food laws. In this article, the concept 'dietary laws' is interchangeably used with 'food laws' and other similar concepts. More so, the concept 'Nigerian Christians' refers to Christians who are Nigerians and also reside in Nigeria.

The researcher obtained informed consent to analyse the views of 145 informants (pseudonyms were used) from various Christian denominations in Nigeria (see Appendix 1). A common view of the informants is that the compliance or noncompliance with the Old Testament food laws is both

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faith-based and secular (Ajayi, Azuka, Chibuogwu, Dare, Ebi, Ejike, Okpala, Osagie and Tunji: informants). Similarly, Cachila (2017) observed that for health reasons, some Christians are discouraged from eating pork and some other meats, but they do not do so for doctrinal reasons. Hence, one who does not keep to the laws is not regarded as a sinner and one who keeps to the laws is not considered righteous.

Many Nigerian Christians uphold that all animals were created by God; God said that everything he created was good, as recorded in Genesis 1:31 (Adebola, Akachukwu, Ebizie, Emechi, Nduka, Tunde and Udeh: informants). Hence, all animals available to humans are good for consumption. Both those who consume meat of unclean animals and those who do not consume it have their reasons, such as faith, health, culture, economy, availability and others. According to Amadi, Ezeja Ibe, Idowu, Itodo, Obichukwu, Obochi, Salawu and Ugwuanyi (informants):

Most members of Seventh-day Adventist, Mount Zion Sabbath Church, Holy Sabbath Church of Christ and Seventh Day Baptists strictly observe the Old Testament dietary laws. They believe that non-compliance brings about the defilement of the body.

They emphasise ritual purity more than moral purity. According to Blidstein (2017):

The dietary choices of the Jews were seen as an external and arbitrary mode of purity, as opposed to purity of mind, body, and flesh through sexual choice, and to some extent fasting, which was cast as internal. (p. 229)

The researcher employed the phenomenological method (descriptive analytical); it describes the shared and specific experiences by a group or individuals pertaining a phenomenon. According to Creswell (2007):

Phenomenological method is a qualitative research method which seeks to study and describe the lived experience of a group of people within a particular locality. The basic goal of the approach is to arrive at an explicit description of the nature of the particular phenomenon under investigation. (p. 57)

With this methodology, the researcher investigates the perspectives of Nigerian Christians towards Old Testament dietary laws.

Meaning of the concept 'Old Testament dietary laws'

Old Testament dietary laws are basically a Jewish concept that refers to the rules governing items of food which observant Jews are permitted to eat. It refers to regulations recorded in the Old Testament concerning foods that are fit and unfit for consumption. According to Ketterling (2020), in Jewish law, the Hebrew term 'kosher' literally refers to any food which is pure and ritually proper for consumption. It is used to refer to food items that meet the dietary requirements of Jewish law. Rogerson (1989) observed that the observance of the dietary laws is a religious practice of the adherents of Judaism. Similarly, Kimuhu (2008) averred

that in ancient Israel, certain foods were to be avoided because they were believed to be unclean, and the uncleanness inherent in them was contagious and harmful. Echeta (2014:14) submitted that 'holiness as a theological rationale for the dietary laws far outweighs all the other theological reasons why the Israelites must observe these rules'. As God's chosen people, the people of Israel were expected to be holy unto God. They were to express their holiness and loyalty by heeding the dietary laws, which were part of the terms of the covenant between them and God. Hartley (1992:271) restated that 'in following these dietary laws, the Israelites obeyed God's instructions several times each day, developing deep in their consciousness an attitude of obedience to God'.

Cohen and Stefon (2021) wrote that regulations and customs surrounding food are among the primary means by which communities maintain their distinctiveness and sense of identity. Hence, since ancient times, one of the distinctive marks of typical Jews is their strict dietary observances which distinguish them from non-Jews. Blidstein (2016:243) submitted that 'indeed, their role as identity markers and maintainers of borders between religious communities is already inherent in some biblical passages and is prominent in later Jewish texts as well'. Observance of the dietary laws was a strong force of solidarity and a distinguishing mark of their national identity. Similarly, Okwueze (2001:212) averred that 'food laws separate the Jews from other people. Many Jews will prefer to die rather than go contrary to these laws'. Roland and Faley (2003:68) asserted that 'despite the dearth of information, it is not unlikely that other reasons, such as hygiene and natural abhorrence, also affected Hebrew customs and legislation'.

The background to the Old Testament dietary laws

The book of Exodus provides the background to the Old Testament dietary laws. Ukwueze (2015) opined that:

Exodus records the story of God's chosen people- the nation of Israel. It reports how God called Moses to lead the people out of slavery in Egypt to the promised land of Canaan. (p. 3)

Both the deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptians and the covenant between God and the Israelites at Mount Sinai have been of central significance to the beginning and growth of Judaism and also in the historical development of the Jewish people. When the people of Israel were travelling across the desert, they were given a set of rules that they must follow; those rules included the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments (Decalogue) is recorded in Exodus 20; it contains the terms of the covenant which God made with the Israelites at Mount Sinai. These laws are meant to act as a check on the conduct of the Israelites and also to strengthen their relationship with God.

Like the Ten Commandments, the dietary laws were given to the Israelites to ensure a continuous harmonious relationship with God. Milgrom (2004) wrote that:

Underlying the rituals, a careful reader of the book of Leviticus will find an intricate web of values that purports to model how we should relate to God and to one another. (p. 1)

The food laws were meant to control the dietary behaviours of the people chosen by God. The Ten Commandments were silent on issues that pertain to diet; hence, God gave further instructions that would ensure that the Israelites did not become contaminated by what they consumed. Old Testament dietary laws are mainly documented in Leviticus 11 and 17. The book of Leviticus describes God's relationship with the ancient Israelites. The rituals in Leviticus may appear irrelevant to contemporary Christians, but they provide important Old Testament background for understanding many passages of the New Testament (Sklar 2014). Leviticus 11 distinguishes for the Israelites between that which is clean and that which is unclean, and it begins with the most basic of human needs – food. Gaebelein (1998:100) supported that 'Israel as God's chosen people, out of all the peoples on the earth, were to distinguish themselves by abstaining from eating detestable things'.

Structure of Leviticus 11:3–44 and Leviticus 17:10–16

Leviticus 11 contains instructions on the category of meat which may or may not be eaten, while Leviticus 17 prohibits the eating of blood, the flesh of animals that die naturally or that are torn by dogs. The structure of the chosen pericopes is as follows.

Leviticus 11:3–8 (land animals)

Clean animals are those with completely divided hoofs and which chew the cud, while animals which do not have these features are unclean. The concept 'chew the cud' means 'chewing food thoroughly'. Hartley (1992:264) wrote that 'chewing the cud is the practice of some animals to swallow lightly chewed food, regurgitate it, and chew it thoroughly at leisure before swallowing it again'. This enables the stomach to sufficiently act on the food, thereby providing enough nutrients for the animal's growth. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown (1993) asserted that by the structure of their stomachs, ruminating animals digest food more fully than others. According to Leviticus 11, animals such as camel, coney, rabbit and pig are unclean. Like cattle, pigs also have cloven hooves. Unlike cattle, however, pigs do not have multiple chambers in their stomach to chew the cud. A cow can chew the cud because it has several compartments in its stomach. A pig, in contrast, does not have a stomach that allows it to chew the cud, although it has cloven hooves (Jong 2013).

Hale and Thorson (2007:297) observed that '[t]here are some practical reasons for considering certain animals "unclean": the rabbit and the pig carried disease; the camel was needed for transportation'. According to Hartley (1992), for centuries, there was no negative attitude towards the pig in Egypt, but much later (5th century B.C.), the pig was considered a source of uncleanness. Some groups associated them with demons because the wild boar inhabited desolate places and ate

carion. Meng and Doyle (2002) posited that some people argue that pork is not hygienic for consumption because of the environment where pigs are raised or processed; pork is usually contaminated with disease and pest infestation because of their nature. This study reveals that among all the unclean animals, pig is the most consumed.

Leviticus 11:9–12 (water creatures)

Of all the animals that live in the water, only fish can be eaten. Leviticus 11:9–12 contains information on the type of fish that may be consumed and the types that should not be consumed. Fishes that have fins and scales may be eaten, while those which do not have fins and scales should not be eaten. Certain fishes were to be considered unclean, not because they tasted bad or were not part of God's good creation, but because they were ceremonially 'detestable' as food. Water creatures without fins and scales are much more likely to carry disease than free-swimming fish (Hale & Thorson 2007). Furthermore, Jong (2013) explained that:

The fish that do not have scales go anywhere and hole themselves behind rocks and in the mud. In contrast, the fish that have scales cannot bury themselves away like this. Why is this so? It's because their scales move whenever they swim. If the scaled fish bury themselves away in the mud, the mud will lodge between the scales and they will not be able to breathe through their gills. Any fish that has scales cannot survive buried in the mud. (p. 253)

Leviticus 11:13–28 (air creatures)

According to Leviticus 11:13–28, animals such as eagle, vulture, osprey, buzzard, kite, raven, ostrich, nighthawk, sea gull, hawk, cormorant, owl, desert, stork, heron and winged termites are unfit for consumption. One of the features of these unclean birds is that they eat live prey. According to Chingota (2006):

[T]he reasoning underlying this law may be that animals owned by Israelites were also supposed to obey the covenant law. These birds can be said to have violated the fundamental principle of not eating flesh with blood in it, the same principle that apply to eating the meat of an animal torn by wild beasts. (p. 147)

Leviticus 11:29–40 (reptiles, creeping animals and carcasses)

Eating of reptiles and other animals such as weasel, mouse, lizard, gecko, crocodile and chameleon is prohibited. There is also a prohibition on the carcasses of clean animals that had died a natural death. Hale and Thorson (2007:298) explained that 'the carcasses of clean animals that died naturally would defile those who touched and eat them'. Carcasses were a source of disease, even of epidemics. Many Nigerian Christians consume the meat of dead animals. The reasons behind this are discussed in later pages.

Leviticus 11:41–44 (crawling animals)

This section prohibits the eating of animals that swarm on the earth, animals that move on their belly and animals which have many feet.

Leviticus 17:10–16 (blood of animals and animals that die naturally)

The consumption of the blood of animals and eating the meat of animals which die naturally or are killed by wild animals is prohibited. If an animal dies naturally, the blood of the animal does not gush out but sticks to its flesh. The blood preserves the life of different parts of the body. Jong (2013) submitted that:

God commanded us not to eat the flesh of any animal with its blood, because the life of the flesh is the blood, and the blood is the same as life itself. Thus, blood is sacred and a living creature should not consume the blood of another living creature. (p. 368)

According to Hartley (1992):

The instructions about the uncleanness carried by a carcass build on the belief that death is a curse for disobeying God. Anything a carcass touches must be destroyed or cleansed. Because contact with a dead body made one unclean, ancestral worship was prevented from taking hold in Israel. (p. 271)

Nigerian Christians and Old Testament dietary laws

The dietary laws given to the Israelites were intended to set them apart from other nations and to protect their identity. According to Chingota (2006:148), 'Jews regarded the dietary laws as visible marks of their distinctiveness as the chosen people of God'. Hale and Thorson (2007:298) stated that 'the laws of ritual cleanness were meant to remind the Israelites of their need for moral cleanness'. In Mark 7:18–20, Jesus taught that only the moral distinction between clean and unclean was important; it is moral cleanness, not ritual cleanness. Christians need to be distinct morally and not only ritually. Just as the Israelites were concerned with their ritual behaviour, Christians are expected to be concerned with their moral purity. Hence, Klawans (2000) observed that ritual impurity is an impermanent sort of defilement, while moral impurity results from what are believed to be immoral acts. The Jews strove to express their unique status through obedience to the dietary laws; thus, Christians must express their uniqueness through obedience to God's will.

Among some Nigerian Christians, compliance or noncompliance with the Old Testament food laws is not associated with one's allegiance to God. Sometimes the reasons attributed to compliance or noncompliance with the food laws are not faith-based. Again, choice of the kind of meat to be consumed is usually more individualistic than denominational. Members of a certain Christian denomination do not usually base their compliance or noncompliance on what they were instructed by their church leaders. However, the study discovered that the various Sabbath-based denominations strictly adhere to the Old Testament teachings on diet. According to Anorue, Chika, Emezue, Nwabueze, Okike and Ugonna (informants):

A core Sabbatarian would remain hungry, rather than eating any food prepared with the meat of any of the unclean animals. They also avoid the consumption of the meat of animals which die naturally.

As a result, many Sabbatarians do not eat outside their homes. Many Sabbatarians are strict vegetarians. Chukwu, Eme, Ezeudu, Ibezim, Okocha and Uguru (informants) observed that man, originally, was to eat only vegetables, fruits, seeds and nuts, as recorded in Genesis 1:29. No flesh was to be eaten.

Leviticus 11 mentions the meat of animals that may be consumed and those which should not be consumed. Many Christians consume the meat of clean animals. This study, however, discovered that there are some Christians who, for some reasons, do not consume the meat of some of the clean animals. For instance, Adah, Chima, Iroh, Ngene, Onuh, Ovioba and Udemadu (informants) said that they do not eat cow meat, as instructed by their doctors, because of health reasons. Similarly, Dike, Iduh, Igara, Kalu, Ncheke, Ndukwe, Okonwo, Okwara (informants) posited that anytime they consume goat meat, they see blood stains in their faeces, so, as a result, they avoid it, especially when it is used for pepper soup. Thus, consumption of the meat of some clean animals poses health risks to some individuals.

According to Cachila (2017), the high consumption of pork among Christians has been an issue of contention, and it gives rise to the question 'why do Christians eat pork'? This study discovered that some Christians do not consume meat of certain unclean animals such as pigs, because of health reasons. Ade, Amaechi, Amobi, Ezeama, Ezeoke, Kenekukwu, Okoye, Ugwuja and Ukeju (informants) found that 'pig is a dirty animal, usually eats dirty things and has excess fat'. Jong (2013) restated that:

Is there a day when a pig is ever clean? Can it stay clean even for a single day? Of course, there are times when the pig pen is cleaned, shoveling out the filthy excrements and washing the pen with detergents. But what happens in just half a day when the pig is put back into the pen? It gets all filthy in its own excrement in no time. So, there is not a day when a pig pen is clean. (p. 250)

There is an organism, *Toxoplasma gondii*, found in pork. During cooking, it forms a cyst around itself for protection from heat. When pork is not properly cooked, the organism finds its way to the retina of the eye, causing an eye disease condition known as toxoplasmosis. This condition usually leads to irreversible blindness. Undercooked pork also causes other health issues such as fever, muscle pain and diarrhoea. Haughee (2022) asserted that these laws are not ceremonial, but rather they reveal the nature of the animals and human digestive system. The dietary laws emphasise that God created all things and knows the nature of all things. He knows what is clean and what is unclean for consumption. Among all the unclean animals, the most consumed among Nigerian Christians are pig, snail, winged termite, crayfish, catfish, prawn and shrimp. More so, many Nigerian Christians knowingly consume the meat of animals which die naturally. Some purchase dead animals and prepare them for consumption. Haughee (2022) wrote that some Christians suggest that improved feeding systems and modern cooking methods for unclean animals removed the need to observe

these dietary laws. In addition, some Christians believe that the dietary prohibition is specific to adherents of Judaism and that the New Testament does not promote the observance of dietary laws. Blidstein (2017) explained that:

[W]hile the first century sources reject only some secondary Jewish food purity laws, by the end of the century, the Levitical dietary laws themselves were under dispute, creating the basis for all subsequent opinion. Most second-century Christian writers agreed that food, in principle, cannot be impure, and that the application of purity status to food characterizes Jews or heretics. (p. 14)

This study discovered that for various reasons, many Christians in Nigeria consume pork. Most of them base their stand on the Old Testament creation narrative, which submits that God created everything, that everything he created was good and that he gave man dominion over all creatures (Anozie, Asogwa, Dim, Ene, Enwere, Eze, Njoku, Nwoke, Osondu and Ugwu: informants). Some New Testament texts also promote the consumption of unclean animals. For instance, Acts 10:13–15 records that God told Peter to kill and eat of the four-footed creatures, reptiles and birds of the air. When Peter objected, a voice said to him: 'What God has made clean, you must not call unclean'. In Romans 14:14, the Apostle Paul teaches that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it is unclean. Again, in Matthew 15:11, 17–18, Christ teaches that:

It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles. Whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer; but what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles.

Thus, based on the given New Testament texts, some Christians believe that it is not improper to eat the meat of any animal. God created animals to serve as food to humans, so any kind of meat can be eaten without feeling any sense of guilt. Thus, eating of the meat of any animal does not make one unrighteous (Ama, Chukwuka, Echebi, Echetawom, Obike, Ojide, Okeke, Onah, Ononye and Ukaonu: informants).

Other reasons that make many Nigerian Christians consume pork are: it is very delicious; it is available and affordable; it is healthier for consumption. Beef, chicken, fish and other meats are very expensive, but pork can be afforded by a low-income earner. It is very economical for family use. Pork worth N1000 can be sufficient to prepare a meal for a large family. The study also discovered that in many localities, pork is used as a ceremonial meat during the new yam festival, masquerade festival, marriage and funeral ceremonies. In some of these ceremonies, every household is expected to prepare large quantities of pork for entertaining visitors (Eke, Ezeanwu, Igala, Ndu, Nnadi, Obi, Ojo, Onuoha, Sheyi, Uche and Ume: informants). As a result of the high consumption of pork, many persons operate commercial piggeries. In recent times, pig farming has become a huge source of income for many persons and establishments. Pig farming does not require much training and it is not capital intensive (Ajuka, Aguwa, Achuamu, Ekweke, Igwe,

Nnabuike, Obasi, Okongwu, Onwukwe and Ukwueze: informants).

Going by the features of unclean animals in the Old Testament, the snail is an unclean animal, yet many Christians in Nigeria consume it. Nevertheless, Christian denominations such as Seventh-day Adventist, Winners Sabbath Church of Christ, Holy Saints Sabbath Church and Seventh Day Baptists regard these creatures as 'unclean'. Snail meat is delicious. It is very expensive, yet many persons consume it. It is believed to be healthier for consumption than some other meats because it does not contain fat. While some people rear snails for commercial purposes, many hunt for them in bushes and farms, especially during the rainy season. In the past, snails were not reared for business purposes; they were regarded as a poor man's food, but in recent times, not everyone can afford them (Adedamola, Ikeocha, Ofoezie, Onuzuruike, Onyegasi, Oyem, Ugochukwu and Yakubu: informants).

Another unclean creature that is often consumed by many Nigerian Christians is *Macrotermes bellicosus* (winged termite). Igbo people call it 'aku'; to Hausa people, it is 'khiyyea', and 'esusun' in Yoruba. Aderonke, Aleke, Anene, Chikezie, Egwuatu, Idike, Ime and Ogidi (informants) observed that winged termites are very rich in protein and delicious. Ntukuyoh et al. (2012) reiterated that winged termites are rich in vitamins A and C. They have high protein and fat content. They contain many important minerals that promote health. They are nocturnal creatures. They are a seasonal food; they usually come during the rainy season, on the days with rain and intense sunshine. On such days, most lovers of winged termites stay awake in order to gather them. In recent times, many people hunt them for commercial purposes. They are consumed by both the poor and rich. *Macrotermes bellicosus* can be fried, roasted or steamed before consumption.

Going by their features, catfish and crayfish are classified as unclean fishes, yet many Christians consume them. According to Alum, Anyanwu, Edoweku, Ezeadam, Ezeaka, Ohia, Oluwole and Omeje (informants), these fishes are delicious and have high protein content. They are very important ingredients in many Nigerian delicacies. Daily consumption of meals prepared with sufficient crayfish helps in maintaining healthy skin and liver. In his study, Alhassan (2020) affirmed that crayfish has many vitamins, proteins and minerals. It is low in fat. It is high in B vitamins and minerals such as calcium, magnesium, iron, zinc, selenium and phosphorus. It is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which promote healthy liver, skin, hair, joints, eyes, brain functioning and overall health. Many Nigerians rear catfish for both personal and commercial purposes because it is a freshwater fish and does not require huge capital to start a farm.

Prawn and shrimp are also highly consumed by many Nigerian Christians. They are used in preparing many dishes, because they enhance the taste and aroma of meals. They are delicious, nutritious and promote health (Abimbola, Adeniji, Adewumi, Bisola, Dalumo, Eluwa, Okpe and Omaka: informants). According to Nwokolo (2021), prawn and

shrimp are rich in nutrients such as protein, copper, selenium, iron, zinc, phosphorus, calcium, potassium and omega-3 fatty acids. They are also good sources of vitamin A and E and B12. They have low fat and carbohydrate content. Daily consumption of prawn and shrimp reduces inflammation and promotes healthy cells, bones and brain. They also help in weight management and reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases. Even though the Old Testament dietary laws were originally meant to preserve the identity of the people of Israel, many Christians observe the food regulations because of their health values.

The Old Testament dietary laws prohibit the eating of the meat of animals that die naturally; that is, animals that were not slaughtered. Most people who rear animals for both personal and commercial purposes do not dispose of dead animals. They either consume or sell them off at lower rates. Some people buy dead animals because they are usually affordable. Hence, lack of money promotes the consumption of meat of dead animals among Nigerian Christians. However, some Christians keep to this law, not because of their loyalty to God, but because they are scared of eating the meat of animals which died of unknown causes. Outbreaks of some diseases could lead to massive death of animals; it is believed that the consumption of the meat of such animals can lead to health problems, especially if the meat is not properly cooked (Abumchi, Ademola, Anike, Asimonye, Ndudi, Nwosu, Obeta, Ogbonna, Olusegun, Omoruwa and Shogunle: informants).

Conclusion

The Old Testament dietary laws were given to the Israelites in order to distinguish them from other nations and to protect their unique identity. They were meant to control the dietary behaviours of the people called and chosen by God. As a sign of allegiance to God, the Israelites were required to continually keep themselves pure by avoiding consumption and touching of the carcasses of all unclean animals. Equally, the Old Testament dietary regulations prohibit the consumption of meat of animals that were not slaughtered. The book of Leviticus has explicit information on the features of clean and unclean animals.

The study investigated the observance of the Old Testament dietary laws among Nigerian Christians. It examined the factors associated with compliance or noncompliance with the dietary laws. The findings of this study reveal that many Nigerian Christians do not observe the dietary regulations because of factors such as economy, culture, environment and health. Moreover, the study also found out that members of various Sabbath-based denominations strictly observe the food laws, because they uphold that just like the New Testament, the Old Testament has pride of place in contemporary Christian practice. Therefore, this paper unequivocally submits that in contemporary Nigerian Christian practice, compliance or noncompliance with the food laws is both faith-based and secular. Hence, some Nigerian Christians believe that

one's belief in God is assessed by one's dietary practices, while to others, it is not a yardstick for determining one's loyalty to God.

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O.G.C. is the sole author of this article.

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Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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Appendix 1

TABLE 1-A1: Personal communication (pseudonyms are used for the names of informants).

S/No.	Name of informant	Name of Christian denomination
1	Abimbola, C.	Deeper Life Word Ministry
2	Abumchi, I.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
3	Achuamu, D.	Maranatha International
4	Adah, K.	Living Faith Evangelical Ministries
5	Ade, E.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
6	Adebola, D.	Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
7	Adedamola, S.	Covenant Christian Bible Ministry
8	Ademola, U.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
9	Adeniji, O.	End Time Bible Ministry
10	Aderonke, D.	Word of Life Ministries
11	Adewumi, E.	Assemblies of God Church
12	Aguwa, E.	Christian Pentecostal Church
13	Ajayi, I.	Covenant Christian Bible Ministry
14	Ajuka, O.	Catholic Church
15	Akachukwu, N.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
16	Aleke, C.	Mountain of Grace Ministry
17	Alum, C.	Christ Apostolic Church
18	Ama, K.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
19	Amadi, J.	Seventh-day Adventist
20	Amaechi, S.	Catholic Church
21	Amobi, N.	Deeper Life Word Ministry
22	Anene, A.	City Takers' Assembly
23	Anike, E.	Catholic Church
24	Anorue, E.	Winners Sabbath Church of Christ
25	Anozie, H.	End Time Bible Ministry
26	Anyanwu, C.	Christian Pentecostal Bible Based Church
27	Asimonye, U.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
28	Asogwa, C.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
29	Azuka, E.	Dunamis International Gospel Centre
30	Bisola, O.	Christ Embassy
31	Chibuogwu, U.	Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
32	Chika, F.	Overcomers Sabbath Church of God
33	Chikezie, E.	Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
34	Chima, L.	Unity Church
35	Chukwu, T.	Holy Saints Sabbath Church
36	Chukwuka, N.	Catholic Church
37	Dalumo, A.	Holy Ghost International Arena
38	Dare, C.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
39	Dike, S.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
40	Dim, E.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
41	Ebi, D.	Living Faith Church
42	Ebizie, C.	Presbyterian Church of Nigeria
43	Echebi, E.	Deeper Life Word Ministry
44	Echetawom, S.	Domain of Praise Ministry International
45	Edoweku, C.	House on the Rock Ministry International
46	Egwuatu, A.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
47	Ejike, E.	Mount Zion Ministries
48	Eke, R.	Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries
49	Ekweke, R.	City of Purpose Ministries International
50	Eluwa, P.	Unity in Christ Bible Church
51	Eme, U.	Seventh-day Holy Church
52	Emechi, I.	Catholic Church
53	Emezue, G.	Seventh-day Adventist
54	Ene, G.	Catholic Church
55	Enwere, U.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
56	Eze, B.	House on the Rock Ministry International
57	Ezeadam, F.	Maranatha International
58	Ezeaka, E.	Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)

Table 1-A1 continues →

TABLE 1-A1 (Continues...): Personal communication (pseudonyms are used for the names of informants).

S/No.	Name of informant	Name of Christian denomination
59	Ezeama, K.	Domain of Praise Ministry International
60	Ezeanwu, N.	Fountain of Life Ministry
61	Ezeja, K.	Mount Zion Sabbath Church
62	Ezeoke, J.	New Life in Christ Bible Church
63	Ezeudu, A.	Sabbath Church of Christ
64	Ibe, B.	Seventh-day Adventist
65	Ibezim, L.	Holy Sabbath Church of Christ
66	Idike, S.	Deeper Life Christian Ministry
67	Idowu, M.	Seventh Day Baptists
68	Iduh, E.	Word of Life Ministries
69	Igala, F.	Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
70	Igara, C.	Presbyterian Church of Nigeria
71	Igwe, C.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
72	Ikeocha, U.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
73	Ime, P.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
74	Iroh, M.	Pneuma Domain Ministry
75	Itodo, N.	Seventh-day Adventist
76	Kalu, K.	The Lord's Chosen Charismatic Renewal Ministry
77	Kenechukwu, U.	City Takers' Assembly
78	Ncheke, E.	Overcomers World Ministries
79	Ndu, A.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
80	Ndudi, K.	House on the Rock Ministry International
81	Nduka, E.	City of Purpose Ministries International
82	Ndukwe, O.	Deeper Life Word Ministries
83	Ngene, N.	Catholic Church
84	Njoku, H.	Assemblies of God Church
85	Nnabuike, O.	New Fountain of Life Ministry
86	Nnadi, R.	Synagogue Church of All Nations
87	Nwabueze, H.	Mount Zion Sabbath Church
88	Nwoke, E.	Catholic Church
89	Nwosu, J.	Assemblies of God Church
90	Obasi, S.	Evangel Pentecostal Bible Church
91	Obeta, K.	Catholic Church
92	Obi, A.	Deeper Faith Ministry
93	Obichukwu, O.	Mount Zion Sabbath Church
94	Obike, A.	New Life in Christ Bible Church
95	Obochi, P.	Holy Sabbath Church of Christ
96	Ofoezie, N.	Living Faith Church
97	Ogbonna, I.	Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
98	Ogidi, E.	Domain City
99	Ohia, T.	Domain of Praise Ministry International
100	Ojide, E.	City Takers' Assembly
101	Ojo, E.	City of Purpose Ministries International
102	Okeke, T.	City of Purpose Ministries International
103	Okike, I.	Holy Sabbath Church of Christ
104	Okocha, C.	Mount Zion Sabbath Church
105	Okongwu, A.	Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries
106	Okonwo, E.	Voice of the Cross Evangelical Ministry
107	Okoye, A.	Fountain of Life Bible Ministries
108	Okpala, F.	Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
109	Okpe, S.	Living Faith Evangelical Ministries
110	Okwara, J.	Christ Church
111	Olusegun, A.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
112	Oluwole, A.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
113	Omaka, E.	Dunamis International Gospel Centre
114	Omeje, K.	Potter's House
115	Omoruwa, E.	Presbyterian Church of Nigeria
116	Onah, V.	Fountain of Life Bible Ministries
117	Ononye, E.	Evangel Pentecostal Church
118	Onuh, O.	Living Faith Church

Table 1-A1 continues on the next page →

TABLE 1-A1 (Continues...): Personal communication (pseudonyms are used for the names of informants).

S/No.	Name of informant	Name of Christian denomination
119	Onuoha, R.	Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
120	Onuzuruike, E.	Methodist Church of Nigeria
121	Onwukwe, H.	Assemblies of God Church
122	Onyegasi, S.	Deeper Life Word Ministry
123	Osagie, G.	Presbyterian Church of Nigeria
124	Osodu, A.	Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
125	Ovioba, P.	Covenant Christian Bible Ministry
126	Oyem, D.	End Time Bible Ministry
127	Salawu, R.	Seventh Day Baptists
128	Sheyi, A.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
129	Shogunle, U.	Catholic Church
130	Tunde, G.	Christ Ascension Ministry
131	Tunji, H.	Catholic Church
132	Uche, R.	Faith Tabernacle Ministry
133	Udeh, E.	Potter's House
134	Udemadu, N.	Presbyterian Church of Nigeria
135	Ugochukwu, L.	The Apostolic Mount Olive Church
136	Ugonna, J.	Seventh Day Baptists
137	Uguru, D.	Holy Sabbath Church of Christ
138	Ugwu, B.	Redeemed Christian Church of God
139	Ugwuanyi, S.	Holy Sabbath Church of Christ
140	Ugwuja, A.	Evangel Pentecostal Church
141	Ukaonu, I.	New Fountain of Life Ministry
142	Ukeju, C.	New Fountain of Life Ministry
143	Ukwueze, N.	DayStar Church
144	Ume, L.	God of Possibilities Ministry
145	Yakubu, U.	Catholic Church