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PATTERN OF CHRISTIAN PRAXIS ON VEGETARIANISM: REVELATION 22: 2 IN LIGHT OF HEALTH REFORM TEACHING AMONG THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS

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Abstract

The term 'vegetarianism' which refers to the practice of eating vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains and legumes with no animal product, has attracted scholarly attention not just in Christianity but in the whole wide world. Existing studies on the phenomenon of vegetarianism (plant-based diet) focused more on the individual health benefits and consequences with little or no attention to its universally permissible eschatological fulfilment and eternal consequences in the biblical texts. Therefore, the study examined the Health Reform Teaching on vegetarianism in Revelation 22:2, with a view to establishing the accurate interpretation for Seventh Day Adventists. Using Peter Stuhlmacher's theory of biblical interpretation, the study reveals how plant-based diet has served as food, medicine and cosmetics and will continue to play an essential role in human health care. Other important facts the study reveals are that animals retain and concentrate contaminants they consumed, and that seafood and some fishes contain powerful and dangerous toxins, which put one at risk when consumed, especially when contaminated with mercury. Hence, Cancer, Tumor, Diabetes, Cardiovascular diseases and others, can be caused by the consumption of meat and fish. Based on the aforementioned, the study concludes that a plant-based diet is 100% better than fleshy food since it has healing properties, with little or no cholesterol, and can be used to cure cardiovascular diseases. Above all, the study also holds as detailed in the text that a plant-based diet will serve as food for the redeemed.

Keywords: Christian Praxis, Vegetarianism, Health Reform Teaching, Revelation 22:2, Seventh-day Adventists.

Introduction

No doubt in our world today with all the health-related challenges, dietary choice plays a vital role in the survival[i]. Hence, the practice of eating vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains and legumes

with no animal product (Vegetarianism), based on health and religious belief, has been a long-debated issue in the world[ii].

But it could be recalled that God gave human beings fruits and herbs (vegetarian diet) as food from creation, (Genesis 1:29), which Genesis 2:9, confirms, that God out of the ground, gave every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and the tree of life as food to humanity, this is what Revelation 22:2, reaffirms, that vegetarian diet (plant-based food), will be for human health.

Although it is a matter of scholarly debate, as to whether the tree of life mentioned in Revelation 22:2, which bears twelve kinds of fruits and the leaves for the healing of the nation, suggests the idea of vegetarianism, for Seventh Day Adventist Church, it is a Biblical injunction, therefore, in her Health Reform, advised members to practise vegetarianism[iii].

Vegetarianism: A Definition

According to Concise Oxford English Dictionary (Eleventh Edition), Vegetarianism is defined as the act of not eating meat or fish for moral, religious or health reasons[iv]. This could also be defined as the practice of eating vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains and legumes with no animal product.

Important to note is the fact that the practice of vegetarianism is in various forms. The first form is the category of people who are pure vegetarians, who avoid some or all animal foods, like, meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and milk; the second is, the semi-vegetarians, which avoid meat but eat poultry and other animal food; the Lacto-ovo-vegetarians, which avoid meat and fish, but include milk and eggs as the only animal foods in their diets; and the last group, those are vegetarians who practise veganism, eating no animal foods at all, which many among them, avoid wearing animal products, such as leather and wool, who likely than other vegetarians shun alcoholic beverages, processed foods, and foods grown with chemical fertilizers or pesticides[v].

Vegetarianism and Johannine Perspective

All through the Johannine books, the knowledge of vegetarianism (the eating of vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains and legumes) was not mentioned except only in Revelation. But before discussing vegetarianism and Johannine perspective, it is good to identify the Johannine books and the author. The Johannine books are the books of the Gospel of John, 1, 2 & 3 John and Revelation. And since the idea of vegetarianism was only mentioned in Revelation, the issue of authorship will be on the book of Revelation. The author of the book of Revelation is simple to be identified. The author repeatedly identifies himself as "John" in the book, (Chs. 1:1, 4, 9; 21:2; 22:8)[vi]. In the first sentence of the book of Revelation, the author called himself "his (God's) slave, John"[vii].

Early Christian Tradition almost unanimously recognized John as the author of Revelation[viii]. Justin Martyr at Rome (C.AD 100 –c 165; Dialogue with Trypho 81), Irenaeus at Lyons (C.AD. 130-c. 202; Against Heresies iv 20. 11), Tertullian at Carthage (C.AD. 160-c. 240; On Prescription Against Heresies 36), also Hippolytus at Rome and Clement of Alexandria accept John the Apostle as the author of Revelation.; Holbrook[ix]and Akpa[x] are in agreement that John the Apostle wrote the book of Revelation.

Hence, the texts that promote vegetarianism (the eating of vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains and legumes) are Revelation 2:7; 22:2 and 22:14. And it should be noted for the case of clarity that Rev. 2:7 and 22: 14, dwell much on the right of the overcomers, to the tree of life, and to eat of it, while Rev. 22:2, explicitly discusses how the eating of the fruits and the leaves will be for the healing of the nations. Hence, the working text for this study is Revelation 22:2.

Different interpretations have been given to the tree of life in Rev. 22:2 by different scholars. Adeyemo[xi] see the tree of life as imagery. Halbert [xii] sees it as a metaphor, Steadman[xiii] differently, sees it as a symbol, while Nichol[xiv] and White[xv] believe in addition to being symbolic at the present, it shall be literal in the future. None of these scholars has viewed the text from a dietary perspective as promoting vegetarianism. And from the passage, this study finds a connection between the tree of life and vegetarianism, which it seeks to unveil.

The question now is, since, from the beginning, it has always been the thought of God for good, to give a man an expected end (Jer. 29:11), in all ramification with health inclusive. And in His divine love, He has made provisions for the wellbeing of the humans He had created, which, the promise of health, through plant-based diet (vegetarianism) in the world made new where there will be no sin according to Revelation 22:2, suggests the importance of health and the choice of diet[xvi], could this be a call back to the original diet, if so, what has the Bible to say about it?

The promise to restore the ξύλον ζωῆς (tree of life) which φύλλα **(**leaves) will be for the θεραπείαν τῶν ἐθνῶν (healing of the nations) in Revelation 22: 2, takes us back to Genesis 2:9, where God planted the tree of life amid the garden of Eden, which was lost as a result of Adam and Eve's disobedient to God, (Gen. 3:22-24).

Although Buttrick[xvii] argues that there is a contradiction between Gen.1:26 and Gen.1:29, Dickson without contradiction believes that plant-based diet as part of creation is the specific diet for humanity as prescribed by God in Genesis 1:29[xviii]. White,[xix] Davidson[xx] and Manu[xxi] insist that vegetables, fruits, nuts and grains are God's original diet for man from creation. If the above argument is true that plant base diet (Vegetarianism) is the original diet for our first parent in Eden when sin has not intruded, it will not be a surprise to see a plant-based diet (fruits, leaves etc), as the food for the redeemed (Rev.22:2), in the world made new. These do not in any way nullify that God gave man-flesh (meat) without blood for food as seen in Genesis 9:3, 4, nor make light that Jesus ate and gave fish as food to His hearers, (Mark 6:41,) etc. And therefore, it should be noted that meat (flesh) was added after the flood as a result of sin.

Exegesis of Revelation 22:2

ἐν μέσῳ τῆς πλατείας αὐτῆς καὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ ἐντεῦθεν καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ξύλον ζωῆς ποιοῦν καρποὺς δώδεκα, κατὰ μῆνα ἕκαστον ἀποδιδοῦν τὸν καρπὸν αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὰ φύλλα τοῦ ξύλου εἰς θεραπείαν τῶν ἐθνῶν.

The Scope of the Text

Revelation 22:2, from a broader perspective, falls within the narrative of the imagery of the Heavenly Jerusalem of Revelation 21:9-22:5[xxii]. According to Beasley-Murray, the book of Revelation as a whole is a tale of two cities; the harlot and the bride[xxiii]. So, chapter 21: 9- 22:5

deals with the imagery of the bride (heavenly Jerusalem) This imagery of the new Jerusalem with the glory of paradise is the bride of the Lamb, who has prepared herself (19:7; 21:2) and has been adorned (21:2; 21:19) for her husband. Citing Fekkes, Decock believes that the bride is the Church who is called to prepare herself (chs 2-3) as presented as prepared, adorned and ready for the marriage union[xxiv].

Historical Context

In the understanding of the imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem of Revelation 21:9-22:5, one of the key things to understand, is the historical background or context of the text. To do it effectively is to use an approach such as Contemporary-Historical that will all consider the historical situation of the first reader as the text could be reconstructed[xxv].

According to Collins, the socio-historical context of the Apocalypse of John suggests that Revelation could have been written around the end of the first century during the reign of Domitian along the coast of Asia Minor[xxvi]. These were times Christians probably found themselves in a political, sociological and theological crisis[xxvii] and persecution. Christians suffered a feeling of deprivation socially which led to an experience of fear and resentment at the power of Rome and were socially disorientated[xxviii]. Hence Barr opines that the understanding of the interpretation of Revelation will only be in the light of the situation of the first historical readers to provide consolation and to suppress the distinction between the flawed present and the ideal future[xxix].

Literary Context

Vorster in some ways believes that the literary theory of the book of Revelation is difficult to understand, and thus makes the study of "genre" of great importance[xxx]. According to him, in doing that the traditional, universal and conventional aspects of the genre are considered. With this study in the New Testament, attention is currently shifting from author to text and from text to reader[xxxi].

Although scholars like Beasley-Murray[xxxii] and Decock[xxxiii] among others have unanimously agreed that the book of Revelation is apocalyptic, Rand went further to describe it as an apocalyptic narrative since it has a narrative form presented in a framework of a letter[xxxiv]. The book of Revelation is apocalyptic in the sense that the events shown to John the Revelator are eschatological (futuristic), of things that will happen in the end. This, therefore, means that, for one to understand the book of Revelation, one need to apply all the principles of literary apocalyptic writings for a better understanding of its texts.

Interpretation of major keywords and phrases in the texts

From the ongoing, it is imperative to understand the terms καρποὺς, φύλλα, and θεραπείαν τῶν ἐθνῶν, in the context of study title. From the analysis, the word καρποὺς could be rendered in three ways as either fruit (plant produce), or as a fruit of the womb (child, baby) or fruit of the genital (descendants)[xxxv]. But based on the context in Revelation 22:2, it is obvious that the meaning of καρποὺς used is that of plant products that serve as foods[xxxvi]. It is the word used in Matthew 7: 17, 18[xxxvii] and in Genesis to describe the fruit from a tree, which Henry believes reminds humans of the gracious provision of herbs and fruits (food) in Genesis 1:29[xxxviii]. In the same vein, the word φύλλα, literal means leaves from a tree. It can equally mean foliage[xxxix]. As it is clear that not all tree leaves are edible, it means that the context in

which φύλλα, is used in Revelation 22:2 renders the meaning as foliage which is the typical green leave eaten directly as food for example *uha, nturukpa etc* (Igbo leaves) or used as a tea[xl], which Bromiley believes has a healing property as seen in Ezekiel 47:12[xli]. Likewise, the phrase θεραπείαν τῶν ἐθνῶν is used in this context in relation with the fruit and the leaves of the tree of life. This takes back to Genesis where God gave humans every fruit-bearing tree (herb) as food,

כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת־כָּל־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ פְּרִי־עֵץ זֹרֵעַ זָרַע לָכֶם

Here, it should be noted that healing in this context does not suggest the presence of sickness, for the Bible has said there will be no pain (Rev. 21;1-4), but healing should be understood in the context of abundant life in Christ as long as saints continue to eat from the tree of life[xlii].

Theological Value of Vegetarianism in the Revelation

The fulfilment of restoring the Eden lost by Adam and Eve, according to Vanhoye is what Revelation 22: 1-2 portrays[xliii]. To him, the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:9-10), described in Ez. 47:1-12 (particularly 1, 7, 12) and that of Zch 14:8 is pictured in Revelation 22; 1-2. The descriptions of the new Eden with flowing river, tree of life that bears fruits that its leaves will heal nations in Revelation, which carries the description of the Garden of Eden and the Garden of the New Jerusalem in Ezekiel's vision, will be a reality in the earth made new, and a reminder that only God is eternal, in Him is life, eternal life given as a gift to the redeemed in Christ[xliv].

No one will inherit the kingdom by chance, for every citizen of the Kingdom must have been tried[xlv]. This calls for obedience to every word of God since Revelation 21:8 has made it clear that the fearful, unbelievers, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters and all liars will not be there. No sinners according to the Bible will be in heaven (Galatians 5:21). Apostle Paul enlisting the fruit of the flesh and of the practice that will not be seen in heaven, mentioned drunkenness and revelling (Galatians 5:21), two things which have eventually taken the day in this our time, makes it clear that those who practice these things will not make it to the kingdom of God. Apostle John in another hand wrote in 3 John 2, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayeth prosper and be in health even as thy soul propereth". This suggests that the health of the believers is also important to the Bible writers and by implication to God.

Today, the life of gluttony at the expense of health has become a re-occurring experience of many in the world[xlvi]. Many have died as a result of what they have taken as food[xlvii]. Also, sicknesses like diabetes, cancer, tumour, obesity, cardiovascular diseases, etc are traceable to food[xlviii]. Research has shown that such sicknesses as mentioned above are highly gotten from fleshy diets (fish and meats)[xlix]. Reasons have been that most of the fleshy foods eaten now are diseased,[l] the clean animals inclusive. The question is should one on the basis that some animals eaten now are diseased, avoid meat? For Coles, Hepburn and Bennett, a man was made to eat a mixed diet both plant base diet and animal diet (meat)[li]. But Dickson argues that there are clear medically certified risks involved in flesh intake[lii]. Dickson believes that the dietary restriction (Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14) with a distinction between 'clean' *kosher* and 'unclean' *teraifa*[liii], was intentional[liv] which includes health purity, national consciousness, holiness, ritual and ceremony among others[lv].

As diverse hermeneutical interpretations on some New Testament texts (Mark 7:15, Acts 10:9-16, Rom. 14, 1 Tim.4:1-5 etc), seem to suggest the abrogation of the dietary law[lvi], which

scholars like Harris and Jordan supported by arguing that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross abrogated the Mosaic law thereby putting away the restriction between the clean and the unclean[lvii], Moskala[lviii] and Hamilton[lix] in their own opinions believe the dietary law of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 are applicable today. Quoting Genesis 1:31, Hurewitz argues that after God gave humans plant base diet as food in verse 29, His pronouncement that 'all' He created was good, makes 'all' things clean[lx]. But Moskala noted that the Hebrew word translated as 'all' or 'everything' (Gen.9:3) does not mean to eat snakes, spiders, centipedes, rats, lizards, cockroaches, vulture, frog etc[lxi]. If Moskala is right, what about those cultures where worms, frogs etc., are permitted? This question begs for an answer[lxii].

From all of these, it becomes clear that there are two scholarly views between those who say, fish and meat (clean and unclean) should be eaten as food and those who say no to fleshy food (Vegetarians). Keeping the latter apart, the question is should the clean foods (fish and meat) in the dietary law of Moses be eaten by Christian and in particular, the Seventh Day Adventist Christians? Davidson argues that although the Seventh Day Adventist Church preaches health reform, the Church only recommends a vegetarian diet for her members, of whom nearly one half do not eat meat[lxiii]. He only added that those who eat meat chose carefully to observe the clean and unclean distinction[lxiv]. No doubt, Seventh-day Adventists, as a result of their dietary practices, have frequently been the object of scientific studies involving the relationship of diet to health in the United State. Interestingly, results have consistently been found that Adventists live longer and enjoy better health than the rest of the population in the United States[lxv]. Could it be that they live longer lives than others because they say no to fleshy foods or that they chose their meats carefully being aware of the health-related problems associated with meat-eating? White been sensitive to the grave problem of diseased animals wrote:

> The flesh was never the best food, but its use is now doubly objectionable since disease in animals is so rapidly increasing . . . Could you know the nature of the meat you eat, could you see the animals when living from which the flesh is taken when dead, you would turn with loathing from your flesh meats. The very animals whose flesh you eat, are frequently so diseased that, if left alone, they would die of themselves; but while the breath of life is in them, they are killed and brought to market. You take directly into your systems . . . poison of the worst kind, and yet you realize it not . . . In many places, fish become so contaminated by the filth on which they feed as to be a cause of disease. This is especially the case where the fish come in contact with the sewage of large cities . . . Thus when used as food they bring disease and death to those who do not suspect the danger[lxvi].

Based on the above statement by White, the question one may ask is, are there scientific or medical records in support of this? Fox describing meat-eating as unhealthy from a medical point of view submits that:

> The statistical record of high meat consumption and increased probability of colon, breast, and other cancers, heart disease, and atherosclerosis, the major leading causes of death in North America has been well established by independent researchers (Barnard1990; Fiddles 1991; Mitra 1991; National

> Research Council 1989; Robbins 1987). As a result of this realization, Health and Welfare Canada (a federal government department) issued a new version of Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating in 1992. As alternatives to meats, tofu and legumes are accentuated, were 5-10 servings per day of vegetables and fruits and 5-12 servings per day of grain products [lxvii].

She maintains that if not for the intervention of the livestock industry who lobbied against the endorsement of the Guide, a vegetarian diet would have been endorsed[lxviii]. This among other medical reports shows that flesh-eating poses danger to health. Therefore going back to the food promised the redeemed in heaven as written in Revelation 22:2 and using it as a base for the fulfilment of what had been in the beginning.

If the above statements are true, the question is, are Christians, especially Seventh Day Adventist Christians in the three districts of Ilishan-Remo in support of the above view? If no, it means they are entitled to their choices, but if yes, then, the Adventist Health Reform should be followed. But unfortunately, more than half of the Seventh Day Adventist Christians in the three districts of Ilishan-Remo are not vegetarians. It means, not necessarily that animals and fishes in this part of the world, Ilishan in particular, are 100% healthy for consumption nor Adventists here immune of health-related diseases that could be gotten from flesh food, rather it is what they have chosen as food. This by implication suggests that, although the Seventh Day Adventist Church in her Health Reform, recommends vegetarianism for her members, its practicability is based on individual choices.

Vegetarianism and Health Reform Teaching

According to Schwarz and Greenleaf, the practice of vegetarianism[lxix] in the Seventh Day, Adventist Church rests on a healthy basis[lxx] which can be traced back in history to Ellen G. White. White, the greatest American woman author with over 3000 published books on different disciplines, and over 5000 manuscripts, letters, articles and sermons[lxxi], whose extensive writings are still held in high regard by the Church[lxxii], was a prophetess[lxxiii], a spiritual leader, a preacher[lxxiv], a health reformer and most valued influential woman in Seventh Day Adventist Church, having the most translated works all over the world[lxxv], one among the founders of the Church, who was shown the harmful effect of tobacco, tea and coffee in 1848[lxxvi]. Before that time, liquor, tobacco, coffee, tea and pork meat was the order of the day among members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, except for Captain Joseph Bates whose health was not impaired as a result of his vegetarian life, which assumably, maybe a proof of what Majumder submits that "You are what you eat"[lxxvii].

Vegetarianism became part of Adventist Health Reform worldwide after June 5th 1863, when Ellen Gould White was shown a greater vision on the Health risk of members, beyond the vision against liquor, this time on a diet (flesh)[lxxviii]. She said, "If meat-eating was ever healthful, it is not safe now. Cancers, tumours, and pulmonary diseases are largely caused by meat-eating"[lxxix].

Field report on health reform practise among the Seventh Day Adventists Ilishan-Remo

Question	F & % SA	F & % A	F & % NS	F & % D	F & % SD
Health Reform in Seventh Day Adventist Church came as a result of health challenges among church members	26(26%)	35(35%)	23(23%)	9(9.0%)	7(7.0%)
Vegetables, Fruits, Nuts and Grains are recommended for Church members in the Health Reform	48(48%)	47(47%)	3(3.0%)	1(1.0%)	1(1.0%)
Vegetarianism in Seventh Day Adventist Church is only recommended in the Health Reform Message and not a doctrine	57(57%)	29(29%)	8(8.0%)	4(4.0%)	2(2.0%)
The practice of Vegetarianism in Seventh Day Adventist Church is not forced on members but optional as a matter of choice	80(80%)	17(17%)	2(2.0%)	1(1.0%)	Nil

From the table, the results show that the number and percentage of respondents who agreed and strongly agreed are far above the number and percentage of those who are not sure (NS), disagreed (D) and strongly, put together, which is in agreement that the teaching and practice of vegetarianism is not a doctrine of the Seventh Day Adventist Church and not forced on any member of the Church, rather recommended. Hence, the practice hangs on individual choices.

Johannine Vegetarianism among the Seventh Day Adventists

The Seventh Day Adventist Church, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State, is made up of three Districts which comprise Ilishan North District, Ilishan West District and Babcock University District. These Districts by way of grouping belong to the Ogun Conference in Western Nigerian Union Conference of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Nigeria.

The understanding of Johannine vegetarianism among the Seventh Day Adventists can be seen from the results of the findings, from the data provided by the respondents as they respond to the questions on the said title, starting from the general beliefs on a plant-based diet (vegetarianism) to that of Johannine vegetarianism.

General beliefs on a plant-based diet (vegetarianism)

Question	F & % SA	F & % A	F & % NS	F & % D	F & % SD
A plant-based diet has healing properties	81(81%)	18(18%)	1(1.0%)	Nil	Nil
Persons with an ulcer, diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular diseases etc, can be cured by placing them on a plant-based diet	63(63%)	30(30%)	6(6.0%)	1(1.0%)	Nil
Fruits, vegetables and herbs promote good health	88(88%)	11(11%)	1(1.0%)	Nil	Nil

Beans and soya beans can supply enough protein in place of meat and fish	59(59%)	35(35%)	3(3.0%)	3(3.0%)	Nil
A plant-based diet is less in cholesterol than fish and meat	70(70%)	22(22%)	6(6.0%)	2(2.0%)	Nil
The method of using a chemical in fishing and animal feeds can lead to problems	74(74%)	24(24%)	Nil	Nil	2(2.0%)
Millions of lives can be saved when plant-based diets are taken other than diseased meat and fish	79(79%)	20(22%)	1(1.0%)	Nil	Nil

The agreement of the respondents from the above table, (those who agreed (strongly) against, NT, D and SD), show that a plant-based diet with its healing properties can be used in healing lifestyle diseases and cardiovascular diseases based on their understanding of the importance of vegetarian diet and healing powers, which like medicine, contains substances that produce pharmacological effects similar to any other medication, and have the power to prevent and correct diseases, with no side effect[lxxx]. With all these, there is no doubt that plant base diet promotes good health and the record of the respondents shows that.

On the other hand, it will be totally out of place to say that fish and meat do not supply protein, but the health risk associated with flesh makes it unparalleled to compete with plant-based foods that have little or no side effects. Unlike the protein founds in fish and meat, the protein founds in a plant-based diet, especially vegetables, fruits, grains and legumes are superior in the sense that it constitutes essential nutrients such as methionine and lysine, complete nutrients rarely found in fish and meat[lxxxi]. And worthy to note is that no plant-based diet contains cholesterol, even the ones rich in fats such as nuts have no cholesterol, and instead, they help reduce the blood cholesterol levels[lxxxii]. This is not so with fish and meat or with foods of animal origin. All contain cholesterol except for honey[lxxxiii].

Beliefs and agreement on Johannine Vegetarianism

Question	F & % SA	F & % A	F & % NS	F & % D	F & % SD
Rev. 22:2 discusses the health benefits of a plant-based diet	50(50%)	36(36%)	11(11%)	3(3.0%)	Nil
Rev. 22:2 can also be used to promote the use of a plant-based diet	48(48%)	43(43%)	7(7.0%)	1(1.0%)	1(1.0%)
The fruits and leaves of the tree of life which will be for the healing of the nations will serve as food in the world made new Revelation 22:2	54(54%)	35(35%)	8(8.0%)	3(3.0%)	Nil
I am aware that it was not God's original plan for man to kill animals for food	82(82%)	12(12%)	3(3.0%)	Nil	3(3.0%)
The consumption of flesh came after sin Gen. 9:3,4	83(83%)	15(15%)	1(1.0%)	1(1.0%)	Nil

From the above table, the results (those who agreed (strongly) against, NT, D and SD), show the respondents' understanding about the tree of life in Revelation 22:2 which the bible says

will bear twelve kinds of fruits and its leaves for the healing of the nations, will serve as food in the world made new. Using Peter Stuhlmacher's theory which allows for the study of Old and New Testament traditions, the bible gives a record of the tree of life in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament, (Gen. 2:9; Rev. 22:2). In the Eden home before sin, the tree of life, which was taken away when sin came in served as food. Also, it cannot be dismissed that the fruits and leaves of the tree in Revelation 22:2 will not serve as food in the earth made, the New Jerusalem. What God avoided Adam and Eve from in Eden when sin intruded, lest they be immortal sinners[lxxxiv], will God restore in the earth made new and will freely give to the redeemed[lxxxv] to access. This accounts for why it is not the original plan of God that animals will be killed for food as seen in the table. It is so because, since there was no sin, no death was ever recorded and fruits and herbs were abundant, there was no need for animal killing as food in place of God's provision for Adam and Eve. Hence, the killing of an animal for food (without blood) came after sin, when Noah came out of the ark (Gen. 9:3, 4).

Conclusion

The standard of life especially in matters of foods and nutrition has always been temperance in helpful things and abstinence from harmful things[lxxxvi]. This principle is what the scripture teaches with no exception. Dietary choices should be treated with great importance, for the fall of humanity from glorious distinction to ignominious extinction is wrapped up in the controversy on food, appetite, choice and obedience[lxxxvii], according to the bible record. Hence, vegetarianism and its practice among Seventh Day Adventists, Ilishan-Remo, on conviction, influenced by Church teachings, while those who eat fish and meat does that by choice.

Therefore, the study concludes that, in whatever choices Seventh Day Adventists, Ilishan-Remo make, temperance and health principles should be upheld. The overview of the research findings based on the research topic concludes the following: The tree of life in Revelation 22:2 in the New Jerusalem will be literal, and the fruits and leaves will serve as food for the redeemed. A plant-based diet has healing properties and should be consumed more than fish and meat, for healthy living. A plant-based diet has little or no cholesterol compared to meat that has saturated fat. It promotes good health and has higher nutritional value than meat and fish. The direct transfer of diseases and toxins from meat and fish to humans when not properly cooked can be avoided taken a plant-based diet. Lifestyle and cardiovascular diseases, like, hypertension, diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity etc can be cured using a plant-based diet.

Endnotes

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