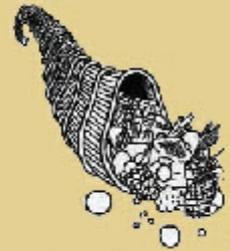




The Order of the Golden Age



THE RELIGIOUS ASPECT OF FOOD REFORM WORK

By Sidney H. Beard

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There are many reasons why the advocacy of Food Reform should be regarded as a *religious* work, and there can be little doubt that an immense impetus will be given to the Vegetarian Movement if this aspect of the question is more thoughtfully considered by Food Reformers, and this idea is more generally apprehended.

If to proclaim to men and women practical truths which belong to their peace; if to urge them to cease violating God's Laws and to obey His Will constitutes *religious work and a definite form of Christian service*, then the advocacy of a natural, hygienic, and humane diet should commend itself to every truly religious person and follower of Christ.

The gospel of Food Reform is all this, and more. Not only is it calculated to go to the root of a great deal of human misery and social depravity, but it strikes at the great stumbling-block which stands in the way of the advance of God's Kingdom of Righteousness upon this earth. No one who has thoroughly investigated the subject, can avoid the conclusion that a flesh and blood diet strengthens man's carnality, augments his passion, and brings upon him physical diseases - which, in their turn, induce mental and spiritual ailments having most disastrous consequences. In addition to this, carnivorous food prevents man attaining that spirituality of mind and those heights of philosophic thought which reveal to him opportunities for rendering beneficent service to his fellows. It also weakens his spiritual power, and has a tendency to hold him in bondage to the self plane of consciousness. Nothing can be more distressing than the realization of the immense amount of altruistic aspiration and effort which has been lost to the world, through the beclouding of human intellect and spiritual vision in the past centuries, by flesh and blood diet.

There are very few Food Reformers who have not received glimpses of these truths as the outcome of their own experience. This being the case, it ought not to be difficult to convince you that there is no more direct method of serving God and man than by devoting one's energies to the work of challenging this terrible violation of physical and moral law from every standpoint from which it can be logically attacked.

The past experience, however, of the Vegetarian Movement has demonstrated that it is exceedingly difficult for the prevalent customs, which are the outcome of centuries of ancestral habit, to be changed by merely making those who eat flesh aware of the fact that their dietic habits are wasteful and injurious, and that it is possible for human beings to follow a more excellent way. This method has been tried, and whilst it is true that some success has been obtained, yet when one considers the *magnitude* of the evil, the deplorable consequences which result from it, and the *overwhelming arguments* which can be urged against it, the number of those who have been won over from the ranks of the carnivora is, to say the least of it, somewhat disappointing. *Something more is evidently needed*, and it is to this *something* that I would invite the attention of every earnest worker in this great cause.

There is a psychic force known in this world under the name of *moral suasion*. It is something quite different to *intellectual persuasion*, and it is set in operation by a direct appeal to man's conscience or spirit - the force of that appeal depending upon the amount of spiritual force, energy, or vitality of the person who makes it. This spiritual force, in turn, depends upon the extent to which a human soul has become endowed with divine or spiritual life, has apprehended eternal verities, and is actuated by loyalty to truth and obedience to the voice of God - which is ever calling men to self-denying service for the sake of Righteousness and the benefit of their fellow creatures.

It is this power of exercising moral suasion, when manifested by those who have possessed spiritual vitality, which has transformed the ideas and actions of mankind at various periods of the world's history, and the great reforms of the future, will, in all probability, be brought about by this force and no other - for, in plain English, it represents *the power of God working through human instrumentality*. This being the case, and in view of the stupendous magnitude of the task which is set before us as Food Reformers; in view of the glorious harvest which awaits those who can awaken Christendom to a realization of the true nature of carnivorous practices and the ethics upon which they are based; in view of the incalculable amount of suffering, misery, and sin which can be prevented through the coming generations, if the world can be induced to amend its thoughts and its deeds in this respect, does it not behove us, *one and all*, to seek

a clearer apprehension of these great facts, and also a personal endowment of this spiritual force which will alone enable us to fight this battle against the barbaric notions and customs of Society, *in such a manner as to win it.*

The time has come when we should cease merely to apologise for our existence and to endeavour to persuade people that we are actually able to survive upon bloodless food. The time has come when we should boldly challenge the morality of flesh-eating when practised by any man or woman in a civilized country, and ask all those about us, in as tactful but yet forcible a manner as circumstances permit of, to justify their unnecessary participation in the murder and consumption of their fellow-creatures, *if they can*, or else to abandon it.

The few years' experience which I have had of Food Reform work have had crowded into them a great deal more than falls to the lot of the average Vegetarian. The thousands of letters which I have received, together with the numerous interviews which I have had with men and women on this subject, convince me that moral suasion is the great dynamic by which the Era of butchery is to be brought to an end. I find that when a man ceases to eat flesh in obedience to the voice of conscience, not only does he fight his way through the initial difficulties of the change, but he begins at once to become a missionary to his neighbours and friends, and, in most cases, burning the bridge that lies behind him, boldly avows himself *a Vegetarian for life*. On the other hand, I am continually coming across Vegetarians, who simply adopted the change of diet at some time, from hygienic motives, and who, after a few years, through inconvenience, an attack of indigestion, or some other cause have backslidden to the flesh-pots. Again, I have often found that upon making known to these backsliders the religious aspect to the Vegetarian Movement, they have at once acknowledged the force of the plea, and, expressing astonishment that the matter had not been put to them in that light before, have declared that they will start anew in the Food Reformer's pilgrimage and will seek to tread the path actuated by loftier motives than before.

There are thousands of young men and women standing idle in our Christian Churches who will gladly embrace a definite call to practical, common-sense religion, and a form of Christian service which promises them an adequate return for their labour. If we go to these and talk to them of Vegetarianism, as a mere change of diet, they often smile upon us and pay little heed to our message. If, on the other hand, we approach them and tell them of a practical method of hastening the accomplishment of Christ's purposes towards this fallen world, and of sapping the drink crave at its foundation; if we hold out to them a reasonable hope of removing the great hindrances which have barred the advent of God's reign of righteousness and love upon this earth; if we tell them it is possible to bring a practical and tangible blessing both immediately and throughout the coming years into the lives of the men and women about us - whose cry at present is "Who will show us any good in the midst of our hopeless struggle against the old Adam and the diseases which seem so certain to come upon us?" - they will respond to our appeal to join us in this great and noble work!

For the sake of the work itself, for the sake of the new volunteers we may enlist, for the sake of this poor sin-cursed world which we are seeking to help, and *for our own sakes* - in order that we may labour with nobler enthusiasm, with more consecrated zeal and more determined effort, as well as with more distinct and evident success - I take this opportunity of urging upon you, one and all, to look upon the work of promoting Food Reform from the standpoint of religion, to consecrate yourselves to it as to a service which is infinitely more acceptable to the Almighty than singing Psalms or making long prayers, and to join hands with those of us who are seeking from God such qualifications of mind and heart as will enable us to turn many to righteousness, and thus ameliorate the condition of tens of thousands of our fellow-creatures, both now and throughout the coming centuries.

Let us think of the awful scenes being enacted in the operating theatres of our hospitals and the sufferers who are languishing under the affliction of loathsome diseases in the various wards. Let us consider the hopeless, despairing millions, dwelling amidst squalor, vice, and depravity in the slums of our great cities. Let us reflect upon the condition of the broken-hearted women whose husbands are drifting rapidly down the drunkard's "descensus averni." Let us imagine the despair of the sad but helpless multitude of our fallen sisters, who, outraged by man and wronged by society, are being offered up at the shrine of human carnality. Let us think of the millions of gentle but sentient creatures who are being daily massacred or tortured in consequence of the tiger spirit which is dominant in the Human Race. Then, realizing the vicious degeneration of body and demoralization of soul which results from violating God's physical laws in the important matter of diet, and being convinced by experience and study that the habit of eating flesh and blood is the chief cause of this great tragedy which is being ceaselessly enacted, let us make such a consecration of our time and talents as will be a worthy response to the needs of the case, to the light which God has shed upon our path, and to the call which He makes to us, as His children, to break the bonds of ignorance and sin asunder and to let the oppressed go free!