

Is Meat-Eating sanctioned by Divine Authority.

"And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree in the which is a fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat."

To those who are seriously desirous of solving the "Food" question, these words will appeal with



singular force. There is nothing ambiguous about them; nor are we left in any doubt. We are distinctly told in this chapter of our sacred Scriptures that although we are to have dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth

upon the earth, the fruits of the earth only are given to us for meat.

This is the plain command of the Creator. We are to eat of every herb and of the fruits of the trees, but we are not commanded to eat of the flesh of animals or of fish; the vegetable kingdom is expressly reserved and set apart for man's food, and this is a fact that cannot be set aside or controverted.

The eating of flesh by man, however, may be traced back to the remotest periods of history. In the eighth chapter of Genesis we hear of Noah offering burnt offerings to the Lord "of every clean beast and of every clean fowl," and it may be inferred from this that the practice of taking the lives of certain beasts and certain fowls had existed some time previous to his period. It may also be presumed that since man had resorted to the practice of taking the lives of animals, it was with the object of providing himself with food.

But it is by no means certain that, because man ate of the flesh of animals, and offered it as burnt offerings to the Lord, the Creator necessarily approved of the practice.

Noah was one of the few survivors of a race that had been destroyed because of its sins, and it is conceivable that to take the lives of God's creatures and eat their flesh as meat was among the sins which were an abomination to the Lord, and which caused Him to destroy the human race.

We need hardly go back to Noah's days to realize that many false sacrifices, dedications and offerings are made to the Lord, which must be an abomination to Him; many an act and deed done in the name of Religion which is an outrage to His Holiness; much shedding of human blood and offering up even of human lives in the cruellest manner in the name of Christ.

For nigh two thousand years frightful tortures have been inflicted by man on his fellows; poor humanity has been persecuted, hunted, imprisoned and slain with relentless cruelty and cold-blooded ferocity; and since the Redeemer walked the earth, man has succeeded in deluging the centuries with oceans of innocent blood poured out in His Holy Name. In comparatively modern times the terrible Inquisition swallowed up its countless thousands, and even in our

own country, the prison, the faggot and the block have claimed their unoffending and helpless victims.

Noah, then, being human, was liable to human weakness, to the evil influence of inherited sin; to wrong conceptions of what was due to the Lord; to perverted ideas of the nature of true service, or of sacrifices that would be acceptable to Him.

Noah in common with his race, had been in the habit, probably, of killing certain "clean" animals for food, and as this form of food seemed good in his sight, he considered it his duty to make sacrificial offerings of it to the Lord. It does not, however, follow that Noah was right in his logic! It was contrary to the Creator's command to use the flesh of animals for food, and it is presumed that Noah must have been aware of this; yet, because it had been his custom to do so, he saw no harm in offering it sacrificially to the very Being who had expressly set apart the fruits of the earth for man's meat.

To satisfy the lusts of the flesh and pander to that sensual egotism which was as common in Noah's time as it is to-day, the express commands of God were set aside and considered of no particular moment in the economy of life.

It seems clear then that Noah sinned the sins of his forefathers, in this respect at least. And it appears equally clear that subsequent generations right through Biblical history simply followed Noah's example.

Many of the religious teachers mentioned in the Bible who "stood up for the Lord" were essentially human, and endowed with human tastes and weaknesses. They found the practice of eating animal flesh common among all peoples when they were born into the world, and they simply accepted it just as it stood. They were but men, and were liable to finite man's errors when he comes to interpret God's laws and commands.

They had forgotten that God cannot err, is not liable to mistakes; does not constantly change His mind as man does!

They had forgotten that, when God created this world in which we live, He made no mistakes and left nothing forgotten. And that among other things He made man and appointed certain of His creations for man's food.

God placed the entire vegetable kingdom at man's disposal, so that he might eat and be satisfied. But this did not satisfy him; he lusted after other meats, and in obtaining them he disobeyed one of the Creator's commands, and all the sophistry that man can bring in support of other interpretations of this plain command cannot alter the facts.

It would, however, certainly appear that in many of the books of the Bible there are passages that might lead one to suppose God approved of the practice. But if we continue to look into the Scriptures for further evidence on the subject, we shall soon find references of a totally different character, and a little study of the question will make it clearly manifest that there is a steady progressive development of thought in this respect running through the Old Testament.

In endeavouring to arrive at the truth behind seeming inconsistency, we must remember that the variableness lies not in the Will of God in the matter, but in man's interpretation of it. It is impossible that God's law of right and wrong in this respect, as in any other, could have ever changed.

Believing then as we do in the immutability of God's word, is it not incredible to suppose that this Omniscient Being, when planning out His marvellous scheme of creation, should have created man a frugivorous creature and have commanded him accordingly to eat of the fruits of the earth, and a few years later have changed His mind?

Surely this is not the plan upon which God works; surely He knows what He is about; and His word is more firmly established than the stars. To admit that the Supreme Being changed His mind is to invest Him with the attributes of man; erring, weak, changeable man; and as we naturally shrink from such a position, we must seek for another solution of the difficulty.

It seems that an explanation of the seeming inconsistency is offered in the fact that Jewish historians have always regarded their Jehovah as a Personal God; and once we clothe the Creator with personal attributes, we make Him subject to human weaknesses. Such a conception of God may well lead the mind into all sorts of errors, and it certainly appears that, as the whole of the old Jewish writers regarded Jehovah as a Personal Being, and moreover as a God possessed of the same passions and attributes as man, they found it easy enough to believe that, as He was given to anger, jealousy, repentance and such like weaknesses, He might conceivably change His mind occasionally.

In other words, God was measured by human standards, and man utterly failed to appreciate Him; failed to arrive at a just estimate of His immeasurable greatness, of the awful magnitude of His might, majesty, and power; and of the profundity of His unchangeableness.

At the very earliest period of Israelitish History we find the people following the instincts of all semi-savage races by shedding the blood of animals and offering their bodies as sacrifices to appease the Being they worshipped, and it is conceivable that the rulers of Israel, in codifying the customs into some intelligible shape to meet the requirements of the times, only followed these instincts in giving to the people that wonderful code of laws which is to be found in the books of Numbers and Leviticus; instincts, however, which completely harmonized with their own tastes and inclinations in the matter.

Further on, as the people became more enlightened, we find less attention paid to the rigid ordinances laid down by ancient law-givers. In Psalm li, 17-19, written by David about 1034 B.C., we find the following passage:—

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart. O God, Thou wilt not despise."

Still later, about 760 B.C., we find the following reference to the subject in Isaiah i, 11-14:—

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.

"When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?"

Such scriptures clearly show that, not only had the people no divine authority to offer these burnt offerings and sacrifices, but they were actually an abomination to the Lord. The Lord God of Israel is here asking by what authority these abominations were offered to Him; and it is clear that this must have had a potent effect on the Israelitish priesthood in checking these bloody sacrifices, as it will be seen from this time

onwards that the cruel practice gradually recedes into the background, and finally disappears with the advent of the Redeemer. So much, at least, may be said as to the practice of using animal flesh by way of sacrifice.

The first chapter of Genesis perhaps stands alone among the many beautiful chapters of the Bible. It is not a biography of man, as is practically the rest of the Old Testament. It is an unknown record of God's creation, accepted as true by the Jewish peoples and by the Christian nations.

The remainder of the Old Testament stands out in sharp contrast to this. It is a strange blending of God and man; on the one hand we have God as a Personal Being striving, struggling for the mastery of man's soul; pleading, beseeching man to be true to Him and not to depart from one who had been so good and merciful to him; and then threatening, cursing and punishing him; and on the other, a record of man's base ingratitude to his Creator, and of his vices, iniquities and crimes; and, alas! there is but little said of his virtues.

Bearing in mind the character of the race depicted in the historical books of the Old Testament, we may well be pardoned if we accept with many doubts the views held in those times in regard to the killing of God's creatures and using their flesh as human food; and it is perfectly clear that no justification whatever can be found in these books for the practice of meat-eating, but that the evidence is rather the other way, tending to show, on the whole, divine disapprobation of the habit.

But in turning to the Gospels of the New Testament, we have a new set of conditions to deal with, inasmuch as the interest at once centres round the acts and teachings of the supremely inspired Son of God, and pretexts in favour of the consumption of animal food are at once sought for and found in the examples supposed to be set by Christ Himself. The marriage feast in Cana of Galilee; feeding the multitude with loaves and fishes; and the partaking of the broiled fish and the honeycomb after His Resurrection, are all quoted as divine examples in favour of meat-eating; but let us examine the matter somewhat closely before we make up our minds one way or the other.

When the Saviour came among us, He came with no earthly pomp and circumstance. He took upon Himself man's estate, man's methods, habits and customs, including his ways of eating and drinking. It does not, however, follow that, because the Lord became man for our sake, He necessarily *approved* of all man's habits and modes of life. As a matter of fact, in the four books of the New Testament that record the life and works of the Saviour, and lay bare to some extent the simplicity and frugality of His domestic life, there is really no *direct* evidence in proof of His ever having partaken of animal food; no evidence of a nature, let us say, that would be accepted as conclusive in any human court of justice of to-day.

The most that can be required of us is to admit, for the sake of argument, that there is evidence, by implication only, that Christ may possibly have sometimes partaken of animal food. But as evidence of this nature is of a *negative* rather than a *positive* character, nothing can be proved by it.

We find in St. Matthew xi, 19, that His enemies accused Him of being "a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber." In St. Mark ii, 15, that He "sat at meat with publicans and sinners" (the word here translated "meat" in the original refers to *food*, not *flesh*; the "meat

offering' of the Hebrews was one of corn and oil); while all the books of the Gospels refer to His feeding the multitude with loaves and fishes.

But the most that this discloses is the fact that He, to whom all things were possible, did not despise human habits, or human means of relieving hunger; nor did He hold aloof from them.

We must also remember that fish was probably an absolute necessity for the crowded population of Palestine at that time. And the taking of net-caught fish does not involve bloodshed and cruelty that is needless; therefore the consumption of this type of food is a very different act to the eating of the flesh of warm-blooded animals, whether considered from the ethical or the hygienic standpoint.

It is indeed conceivable that, conscious as we know He was of His divine origin, He must have experienced many things in His brief human existence that were repugnant to Him; suffered many a thing that caused Him bitter pain and deep humiliation, yet he gave no sign.

Not the least among those afflictions were those which the God-Man found in the daily routine of human life.

It is distinctly recorded by the early Fathers of the Church that several of the Apostles were total abstainers from flesh-food, and it is more than probable that they were following the exalted example of their Master.

Looking at the subject from this standpoint, it would seem that the argument in favour of flesh-eating has little to gain by any reference to the records of the life of Christ, and His attitude in the matter.

Two of the commonest reasons given in favour of meat-eating are:

1. That if God did not intend man to eat of the flesh of animals, He would not have given them to us.
2. That man's teeth are evidently intended for the eating of animal food; and if they were not given to us for that purpose, why are we provided with them?

In regard to the first point, there is, no doubt, widespread misconception on the question. It is believed by most people, who will not think for themselves, that all animals whose flesh is considered what is popularly termed "good to eat" were really *given* to us by God for food. If for humane considerations it be suggested by some one that they should abstain from the use of animal food, the answer comes promptly, "Why should I? It was given to us for food, and why shouldn't I eat beef or mutton, or anything else I like?"

Then we frequently hear it contended that what we call the domestic animals "belong to man"; they are his property; he breeds, rears, feeds them; and if he kills such of them as are "good for human food," he has a perfect right to do so; they belong to him as rightfully as do his lands and house, and other goods and chattels, and he can therefore do what he likes with them.

Let us take the first of these reasons, viz., that certain animals were *given* to us for food. Now if there is a gift there must be a giver. The gift is the effect, the giver the cause. Who was the giver; and when, how and where, and upon whom was the gift bestowed?

We have seen that there is nothing in the Old Testament to prove that the Almighty God created

any of the animals for man's food, but that on the contrary he was expressly enjoined to eat of the fruits of the earth; and to have, at the same time, *dominion* over the rest of the animal creation. Let us, however, pause a moment and consider what was meant by *dominion*. Did the Creator mean that dominion over "every living thing that moveth upon the earth" gave man the right to slaughter His creatures for food? Hardly that, or reference would have been made to it in the next verse:—

"And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat."

After so plain a command, the only interpretation that dominion might bear is its literal meaning—*lordship, power!*

God created other beings besides man, and as many of them were physically stronger than man himself, it was necessary that he should be protected against them, and have dominion over them; but it was evidently not the dominion of brute strength that was planned by the Creator, but the superior power of moral and spiritual force.

God put into man's hands no puny human weapons of offence and defence, but armed him with that mighty controlling force which is not well-known among us to-day, alas! We have lost the power, but in those far-away days when "man walked with God" it was different.

Perfect man and perfect woman were God's first human creations; living souls endowed with perhaps divine attributes, and invested with such spiritual power as would ensure to them complete dominion over "every living thing that moveth upon the earth"; and it was in this sense that man was given dominion over God's creatures.

Briefly, there is absolutely no evidence to show that the practice of killing certain animals for food purposes is anything more than a man-made practice that was born of human cravings and fed by man's insatiable appetite.

In the old, old days, when the fathers of the human race walked the earth as primitive men, they found that the flesh of some of the animals was good, and they slew them as we do to-day without let or hindrance. They were not troubled in those days by such questions as "Meum and Tuum," ethics and religion, right and wrong; nor were they swayed by such sentimental reasons as humane considerations, mercy, compassion, and the rest of it.

The nomadic life of the Israelites under Moses rendered the cultivation of vegetables, as we know it to-day, an impossibility. Sheep, goats, and oxen were plentiful; they carried their flocks and herds with them; here was convenient form of food; and as there was no other available, these animals necessarily formed the staple food of the people. The only thing Moses and the rulers of Israel could do was to curb, as far as it was wise and politic to do so, the lusts and appetites of the people; and their efforts in this direction found expression in the elaborate system of laws and regulations found in the Pentateuch.

But the domestic animals were no more *given* to these ancient peoples in those far-away times than they are given to us in these days. The practice of eating animal food was initiated by man probably at a time when the

economic conditions under which he lived were excessively hard. Food was scarce and the grossest ignorance prevailed as to the highly nutritive value of many vegetable products which no doubt existed then as now. If man under such conditions, therefore, took such means of subsistence as were ready to hand, there are certainly many excuses for him; indeed he had no choice in the matter; it was animal food or starvation; and the common law of self-preservation dictated which alternative to take.

In considering the contention that "domestic animals being the property of the owners man has a perfect right to kill them and use their flesh as food," we should bear in mind one or two points. When we speak of *rights*, we should not forget that there are rights of many kinds. There are legal and moral rights, rights in equity and in law, just rights and unjust rights, the right of might, right of dominion and power, and so on *ad infinitum*. By which of these rights is the question we are considering to be decided.

If we attempt to settle it on the ground that these animals are ours by the legal right of inheritance, the analytical mind of an able lawyer would at once look into our title and trace it back and back till he came to those far-off days when our ancestors took their animals by right of might, and although he would admit that custom has established a right, he would at the same time tell us that our title was faulty inasmuch as our ancestors obtained their possessions by force.

Let us draw a parallel between this case and that of many of the great families of our own country, or, for that matter, of any country in Europe. The landed possessions of many of these great ones of the earth are vast and yield great revenues. They are firmly established in them, and the law of the country recognises their proprietorship. Nobody to-day bothers himself about the equity of their titles; the land is theirs; it has descended for generations from heir to heir, and that is enough.

But trace back the history of some of these lords of the earth; go back generation by generation; back to those days when strife was rife, and breast-plate and morion, sword and spear, were important factors in the formation of family estates and the upbuilding of family names.

Go back to those "good old days" when "barons held their sway" and serfdom was the portion of the people; to those fine old times when the strong hand took what it wanted and held what it took; when kings confiscated the estates of those who opposed them, and distributed them with lavish hand among courtiers and flatterers; gave away with unstinted generosity that which was not theirs to give, and enriched those who had no right to receive, save the right which might gives.

You shall find that had not time sanctioned the title it would have been found of so faulty a nature that no court of justice of to-day would uphold it. And you would realize in this case, as in the other, that many an owner of inherited estates has no more equitable, just, moral right to his property than has the man who claims the right of taking the lives of living creatures.

The right of *possession*, the right of *might*—both being legalised by man-made laws and by custom—are his; but man's laws are not God's laws, and although

man finds it easy enough to justify himself before earthly judges, his conscience must tell him that he cannot and will not be able to offer justification before that High Tribunal which takes no cognizance of such human laws as are not framed in justice and equity, and administered in mercy and compassion.

In considering the second point, that "the human teeth are evidently intended for flesh food," we should not too readily accept all that people say in this world. Many an apologist for meat-eating will be found to defend the practice on the grounds of man's teeth being those of the carnivora; whereas, as a matter of fact they are nothing of the kind. One writer says:—

"The physical structure of man is declared by our most eminent biologists to reveal the indisputable fact that he is at the present day, as he was thousands of years ago, naturally a frugivorous (fruit-eating) animal The accepted scientific classification places man with the anthropoid apes, at the head of the highest order of mammals. These animals bear the closest resemblance to human beings, their teeth and internal organs being practically identical with those of man, and in a natural state they subsist almost entirely upon nuts, seeds, and fruit."

There is, besides this testimony, overwhelming scientific evidence forthcoming of man being of the frugivorous order of mammals (see "The Testimony of Science in favour of Natural and Humane Diet," published by The Order of the Golden Age), and if those who follow the practice of partaking of flesh food, because they believe they belong to the carnivorous order, will not look into the question for themselves, then they must bear the charge of deliberately shutting their eyes to facts.

Man is *not* of the order of carnivorous animals, and no amount of sophistical jugglery can prove him to be so. He is declared by the most eminent authorities to be of the frugivorous order, and if, after science has spoken, man persists in his carnivorous practices, he will do so because he lusts after the flesh of God's inoffensive creatures, and not because he believes he was intended by his Creator to be a meat-eater.

William E. Cooper.

This article, with many additions, can be supplied in the form of an artistic booklet.

THE SIMPLE LIFE.

The truly Simple Life is when we obey Nature, and do not defy her laws.

Nature bids us rise with the lark, and go to rest when night steals across her form.

Nature bids us drink only when thirsty, and of water pure; while to eat when hunger calls for food is her only legitimate meal-time.

Nature clothes us in scant attire; so we should dress as simply and akin to the human form as possible, eschewing the hideous tyrannies of attire which disfigure men and women, and which deprive them of freedom.

If we obey Nature we must cast aside the shams and mockeries of conventionality, be it in dress, food, religion, or customs. Those who are slaves to these shrink from doing so, for these false gods are their deities.

We know that many of our customs are horrible. Many of our laws, likewise, are disgraceful, and our morals, immoralities. Yet Society and Co. cling to all, and bolster up the false and the unreal, and worship both because it suits their purpose to do so.

When we learn to face the truth and live up to it, the Simpler Life will come.

Lady Florence Dixie.