A Comprehensive Comparison of Christ's Teachings on the Doctrine of Fasting and the Ancient and Present Day Practices Thereof

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A COMPREHENSIVE COMPARISON OF CHRIST'S TEACHINGS
ON THE DOCTRINE OF FASTING AND THE ANCIENT
AND PRESENT DAY PRACTICES THEREOF

A Thesis
Presented to the
College of Religious Instruction
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Arts

by
Alan P. Johnson
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PART I. SPIRITUAL ASPECTS
CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study is a comprehensive comparison of Christ's teaching on the doctrine of fasting and the ancient and present day practices thereof. Due to the great diversity of doctrine and practice concerning fasting among Christian as well as non-Christian religious groups in the world today, the writer proposed the basic premise that there have been significant teachings added to and/or taken from Christ's doctrine. Therefore, the problems involved in this work were to determine what the pronouncements of God regarding fasting are, and to describe the practices of the peoples of the world in relation thereto.

STATEMENT OF PROCEDURE

Research -- A thorough study was made of most of the available printed materials on the subject; scripture and commentary, Christian and non-Christian. Study was done in some of the most complete theological and historical libraries in the United States. As far as the writer is able to determine, he has read everything published in English of any con-
sequence, and some works in German. During this research, the writer has seen nothing as comprehensive on the subject of fasting as this thesis is in its present form.

**Interviews** -- Personal interviews were held with many leading people in various religious organizations.

**Questionnaires** -- A questionnaire was sent to 254 Christian denominations in the United States to determine what present day doctrines and practices are. The results are summarized in Chapter XIV.

**A DEFINITION OF TERMS**

Many terms in Christian theology are quite nebulous and are interpreted differently by most major groups. Salvation, faith, God, baptism, Holy Spirit—to name just a few. In fact most of the basic Christian principles belong to this group. Fasting is one of them. Because fasting is interpreted in many ways by various groups, a brief discussion of the purposes and definitions sometimes advanced is essential to an appreciation of the problems inherent in this study.

The three general areas of purpose in fasting are physiological, social, and spiritual. That there is great physical benefit to be derived from fasting is no longer disputed by most physicians. Elaborations on this field of thought are found in Chapter XI. Fasting for social purposes
may be classified into two areas— (1) those who follow the fasting dogma of a group so as to be acceptable to that group with no thought of the spiritual or physical benefits to be derived therefrom; and (2) those who seek to influence their fellowmen by means of periods of fasting. Gandhi was a champion in this second realm. His practices and teaching are summarized in Chapter VIII.

In the opinion of the writer, history has substantiated the fact that fasting for spiritual purposes is basic and powerful to the fulfillment of such purposes. These purposes—and examples thereof—are discussed in various Chapters which follow. It should be noted that the greatest spiritual experiences in recorded religious history were preceded or accompanied by fasting. If one were to list the ten most significant spiritual experiences in scripture, he would find that most of them relate to fasting. From this observation it may be concluded that the greatest spiritual experiences will come today to those who understand and exercise the true Christian fast.

Because of the many fasting practices and definitions of principle, the Christian fast has almost wholly been lost to the world—in both theory and use. It is the writer's hope that this study may recapture some of the truth about the subject for the edification of the Christian world.
Definitions of fasting differ according to the purposes to which they relate. "Fast" is often used in the sense of mere abstinence from food. Hence we are fasting most of the time. Our word "breakfast" is derived from this concept because it is our first meal after our long period of abstinence from food and drink. However, the Christian fast is a much grander concept. When it is compared with ancient and present day practices in all world religions, including Christian, it becomes even more beautiful and sacred because of the infrequency with which it occurs.

Not intending to reduce this definition of terms to a matter of word meanings, the writer presents the following scripture and commentary thereon as representing the overall significance of fasting.

Fasting consists of a fine balance of positive and negative action. The latter consists of abstaining from many things, of which food is just one. The positive action entails conscious effort in several areas, such as; repentance, forgiveness, preparation for and strengthening of prayer, humility, etc. The practice of any one of these without the harmonious accompaniment of the others would not be Christian fasting, and participants would only deceive themselves if they made contrary claims.

Occasionally, as God has spoken to his people, He has
made a definite statement, only to attach to it an enlightening definition. These explanatory phrases are usually preceded by the words, "or in other words." Such is the case in the Doctrine and Covenants 59:14 (a book which is recognized by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as Scripture), a verse which presents a wealth of knowledge about the subject of fasting. "Verily, this is fasting and prayer, or in other words, rejoicing and prayer."

Fasting actually means, then to rejoice. An examination of the word 'rejoice' opens a new horizon of thought. "Re" is a prefix meaning back, again, or a return to. "Joice" is, of course, a derivative of the word "joy." A dictionary definition of joy is almost apologetically abstract, but, in the writer's opinion, the word is most beautifully described as follows. 'J' must stand for Jesus Christ; 'O' refers to others; and 'Y' means yourself. Would this not produce extreme joy if one could be in complete harmony in these three areas? Considering this definition further, rejoice would mean a return to a oneness with Christ, one's fellow men, and oneself. Rejoicing, then, is closely allied to repentance. The scriptures are in harmony with this thought which will become more apparent as this comparison progresses.

Anciently, the prophet Nephi expressed the thought that because of the many sins among people, it is not always
easy for them to rejoice, i.e. to reconcile themselves with God, friends, and their own conscience, but he (Nephi) called upon his heart to rejoice and forbid these temptations.

I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me. And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins; nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted. . . . Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin. Rejoice, o my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul. (2 Nephi 4:18,19,29).

One of the great missionaries of the Book of Mormon record was Alma, the younger, who, after his conversion, was filled with humble gratefulness for the opportunity to be of service to his fellow men and to his God. In connection with those whom he helped to find the gospel truth, he made the following comments:

Behold, thousands of them do rejoice, and have been brought into the fold of God . . . these records and their words brought them unto repentance, that is, they brought them to a knowledge of the Lord, their God, and to rejoice in Jesus Christ, their Redeemer (Alma 26:4, 37:9).

. . . Remember the words of your God; pray unto Him continually by day, and give thanks to His holy name by night. Let your hearts rejoice. (Alma 9:52).

The inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere had only the highest regard for the benevolent King Benjamin, "who had taught them to keep the commandments of God, that they might rejoice and be filled with love towards God and all men" (Mosiah 2:4). Certainly a perfect reconciliation (or rejoic-
ing) with God and man would produce this great love; under-
standing, of course, that the love spoken of here is that
which emanates from the presence of God, and not the thing
that is so often referred to as love by the world. This good
king, in speaking of this love again, emphasized that by
rejoicing and possessing it, we would always be forgiven of
our sins.

Believe in God . . . and if ye do this, ye shall
always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God, and
always retain a remission of your sins. (Mosiah 4:9,12).

The writer would like also to define joy, as being
that which results in a life which exists in perfect harmony
with God.

It is written, "men are that they might have joy." (2 Nephi 2:25). This contentment which results from a oneness
with gospel principles seemed to be Christ's central message
preached through word and action. He brought joy with Him to
leave with the world.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and
the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they
were sore afraid.
And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold,
I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be for
all people. (Luke 2:9,10).

Included in Christ's prayer in the garden at the end
of His ministry is a declaration to the Father that He would
leave the gospel with man in order that they might have the
same oneness which He has with His Father:

And now come I to thee: and these things I speak in the world, that they might have joy fulfilled in themselves. (John 17:13).

Accordingly, one's joy is full and Christ's joy will be with people if they "keep my Father's commandments, and abide in his love", and if "ye love one another as I have loved you."

In all of His teachings, He taught that obedience to, and an understanding of, the gospel would produce joy within man. Recall the two following parables:

Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:
Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. (Matt. 13:44-46)

Later in Christ's ministry He taught that joy is the condition of heaven:

After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.
And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.
His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. (Matt. 25:19-21).

It will be noted in these three parables that this joy comes only as a result of giving up many things of this earth and of earnest effort in obedience to God's laws. This
is the very essence and nature of fasting.

The joy spoken of here appears to be a direct product of fasting, or rejoicing, which is testified to by two distinct groups of Jesus' followers. First, He had chosen the Seventy and sent them out on their missionary journey.

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. (Luke 10:17).

Their reconciled state gave them great power, even in the Priesthood. Then the instance where Christ came to the rescue of other disciples when they failed to command the obedience of an evil spirit.

And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief; for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. (Matt. 17:18-21).

Christ spoke here of the devil as a mountain, which represents the greatest physical thing with which man is acquainted, and indicated that the evil one is man's greatest spiritual enemy, or obstacle, and can only be overcome through a state of joy, which comes about through fasting and prayer. Paul said:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wicked-
ness in high places. (Eph. 6:12).

But still, even though man fasts and prays, this does not automatically produce joy within him or reconcile him with God. From Christ's teachings it appears that this joyous contentment is a gift from God to man. It comes to him through the medium or power of the Holy Ghost. Luke refers to this in Acts 13:52, when he writes, "And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." Apparently one would have to be in perfect harmony in all three of the forementioned areas to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul also claims that the "fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, . . . ."

According to the philosophy presented in the Scriptures, God has not expected that man should come to earth to work out his salvation in a difficult manner, being left alone in his task. At various times He has given man a church to help. Paul defended the existence of the church to the people at Corinth:

God has given us spiritual leaders, "not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand. (2 Cor. 1:24).

Even though man has not seen God, still it seems possible, according to the Book of Mormon, Alma 32:42, to obtain His joy—which comes through rejoicing and prayer—"which is sweet above all that is sweet, and . . . white a-
bove all that is white." Peter gave this promise to the
saints with whom he lived and worked:

Jesus Christ, whom having not seen, ye love; in whom,
though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with
joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of
your faith, even the salvation of your souls."
CHAPTER II

FASTING IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES AND JEWISH THEOLOGY

Origin

The origin of the principle or practice of fasting is difficult to discern. It seems to have existed in the beliefs of many peoples from very early times, and certainly is not restricted to the Christian believers and their direct forefathers. All of the world religions include this practice in varying forms.

Even though the doctrine is not fully described in early history, the practice thereof is implied in several instances (Genesis 23:24, Ether 1:43, 2:15). It is the writer's opinion that this principle was given to Adam along with other truths of the Gospel which apply to this earth, as indicated by Moses:

And thus the Gospel began to be preached, from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost.

And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance, and the Gospel preached, and a decree sent forth, that it should be in the world, until the end thereof; and thus it was. Amen. (Moses 5:58,59).

It was also Gandhi's opinion that fasting was prac-
Fasting is an institution as old as Adam. It has been resorted to for self-purification or for some ends noble as well as ignoble.¹

From this beginning, all nations of the earth have retained parts of the revealed word, and even though philosophies of men have been mixed with the religious concepts of many movements, a golden thread of truth seems to run through all of them because in the opinion of one writer, they had a common beginning.

There can be no reasonable doubt that the Feralia of the Romans and the Craddha (feast to the Manes) of the Hindus, the worship of the Pitris and of the Manes, have a common character, and had a common origin.²

A second reason for the practice of fasting being present in the religion of all men is that it seems to be a natural function of man's being to fast.

Fasting has, in all ages and among all nations, been practiced in times of mourning, sorrow, and affliction. It is in some sort inspired by nature, which, under these circumstances, refuges nourishment, and suspends the cravings of hunger.³

When one recalls the times of his life of greatest spiritual

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³ *The Comprehensive, Critical, and Explanatory Bible Encyclopedia*, author, publisher, and date unknown.
stress, the things of this world became less important to him and the desire to be close to God seemed most desirable. This turning of the attention from things of this world to communion with God is fasting in its most perfect sense. It is the obvious function of every human being because the Spirit of Christ is in every man, which Spirit allows man to remember things which he has known before.

... eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began. (Titus 1:2).

And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit. (D. & C. 84:46).

The Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price, chapter three, also speaks of prudence and intelligence before the world was created. It is a natural desire for man to return to the God from whose presence he came. He draws men with magnet-like force.

The Day of Atonement

Of interest is the fact that the word "fasting" is not used in the Pearl of Great Price, or in the Bible during the corresponding period. The first reference we have of the practice as a commandment is in connection with the Law of Moses:

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there
shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God.

For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people.

Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.

(Lev. 23:26-32).

The Great Day of Atonement took place annually on the tenth day of the seventh month, Tisri, corresponding to the presently-reckoned month of October. It was later referred to simply as "the Fast." Originally the fast day was instituted in order to execute a reconciliation with the Lord and to acquire a oneness with Him:

The prevailing notion, . . . is that fasting is an act of humiliation before God. This conception, expressed by the phrase "afflict one's soul", so predominates that it has almost completely superseded the old word for 'fast' (sum), which conveys only the physical fast of abstinence from food. The association of the phrase in the meaning 'fast' is with the law of the Day of Atonement, which connects it indissolubly with the act of penitence. And, like every rite of propitiation, its virtue lies, not in the outward circumstance, but in the sincerity of the repentance which is the substance of it.

1 George Foot Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era (Two Volumes; Cambridge: Harvard Univer-
The term "afflict thy souls" suggests that fasting is fundamentally a spiritual exercise. It signifies the sacrifice of personal will:

The phrase which has been understood to include fasting is "ye shall afflict your souls," where the word for 'afflict' means to labour to anything with the idea of bending down over the work, hence the meaning to bow down, to be depressed or afflicted. Fasting at the present day may be regarded as one of the outward means which may be employed to humble and chasten the soul, and train it anew to the love and pursuit of holy and spiritual joys. ¹

The Law prescribed definite ordinances to be performed by the priests on the Day of Atonement. Moore gives a very adequate description of these rites, and since an understanding of the ritual is essential to a true comprehension of the significance of the first ordered fast day, details of it are cited here:

The Day of Atonement is signalized as one of the great festivals of the year by supplementary burnt offerings with corresponding oblations as a sweet savor to the Lord (Lev. 16:16,19), (Ezek. 45:18-20), and a he goat for the accompanying sin offering, exactly as prescribed for New Years. The distinctive rites of the day, however, are peculiar. These are of two types. The first, in their nature and original intent, are a disinfection of the sanctuary from the pollution that may have been contracted during the preceding year from the presence of men who were defiled by any of the varieties of uncleanness detailed in the laws. To this end the high priest, after incensing the adytum of the temple, which none but he might ever enter and he only this one day of the year, brought into it, first, the blood of a bullock offered

¹ Eadie's Biblical Cyclopaedia, other information
as a sin offering for himself and all the priesthood, which he sprinkled within the curtain, and then repeated the rite with the blood of the goat, a sin offering for the people. With the blood of the bullock he aspersed the curtain from without, and did the same with the blood of the goat; he next applied the blood of both, mingled, to the four corners of the altar of incense which stood in the front room of the temple, and to the surface of the great altar in the court.

Of a different kind is the second part of the ritual. After the ceremonies described above, 'When he has finished expiating the sanctuary and the meeting tent and the altar' (Lev. 16:20), (Ezek. 45:18 says Thou shalt un-sin the sanctuary) the high priest took a second goat, which in the first stage of the ritual had been drawn by lot 'for Azazel,' and pressing both his hands on the animal's head, confessed over it 'all the iniquities of the Israelites and all their transgressions, even all their sins,' and lading them on the head of the goat sent it, 'bearing upon it all their iniquities,' under conduct of a man previously appointed, to an isolated region, where it was let go into the wilderness.

A peculiar feature of the ritual, plainly symbolic, is to be noted. The high priest on this one day, and for this part of its rites only, is vested, not in his gorgeous pontificals of crimson and gold, but in pure white linen from head to foot. These are in an eminent sense 'the holy vestments'; before putting them on he must bathe himself in water, and this is repeated when, after the dismissal of the goat, he lays them aside. For the subsequent sacrifices of the day he resumes his pontificals.

The confession of the sins of the people said over the head of the goat that is to be sent away is of the same tenor: "O Lord (the Name), Thy people, the house of Israel, have done wickedly, transgressed, sinned before Thee. O Lord (as before) forgive now the wickednesses and transgressions and sins that Thy people the house of Israel have committed and transgressed and sinned before Thee, as it is written in the law of Moses thy servant, 'For on this day shall atonement be made to purify you; from all your sins before the Lord shall ye be purified'" (Lev. 16:30). When he uttered the ineffable Name, the priests and the people who were standing in the
court knelt and worshipped and fell on their faces, and made the same response as the priests in the former case.

These confessions show, whatever may have been the origin of the rites, that the atonement was not a disinfection of the sanctuary with blood or a physical riddance of guilt conveyed away by the scapegoat, but an act of divine forgiveness; in other words, the cardinal doctrine of Judaism that the forgiveness of God is bestowed upon the sinner who seeks it of him in penitence with confession has here given its own meaning to the rites, which thus, consciously or unconsciously, become symbolical of it.¹

The people had very little to do with the performance of the ordinance. Their time was spent in prayer and confession of transgressions:

The ritual of atonement in the temple was performed by the priest for the whole people, who had no other part in it than to utter their doxology in response at a certain point in the service. In the synagogue the day was one long act of penitence on the part of the congregation, and preeminently of its members individually. The confession of sins, which in the temple was an incident of the rite, was here the substance of it, and all the circumstance was of a kind to deepen the sense of sin, to fortify the resolve of amendment, and to add urgency to the prayer for forgiveness—in a word; to cultivate the spirit of genuine and sincere repentance. From ceremonies of expiation and riddance, which at the most might be made symbolical of purification of heart and annulment of guilt, the service became a spiritual exercise.²

In addition to the prescribed abstention from work, the Jewish Mishna outlines certain other things which must be omitted during Yom Kippur, the present name for the Day of Atonement. In the Mishna, Yoma 8:1, we find:

¹ Moore, II, p. 55.
² Moore, II, p. 58.
On the Day of Atonement eating, drinking, washing\(^2\) and anointing\(^3\), putting on sandals, and sexual intercourse are forbidden. But a king and a bride may wash their faces, and a woman after confinement may wear sandals.

2. In hot or cold water for mere enjoyment is prohibited, but it is permitted to wash away dirt.

3. A wound, etc., may be anointed.\(^1\)

During this fast, they not only abstain from food, but from bathing, perfumes, and ointments; they go barefoot, and are continent. This is the idea which the eastern people have generally of fasting; it is a total abstinence from pleasures of every kind.\(^2\)

Some of the older sects prohibited conjugal intercourse on the Sabbath (Jubilees 50:8) but the Rabbinical Law did not.

It is important that we note that fasting originally consisted of abstinence from food and drink. Scriptural reference substantiate this: Exo. 4:28; Jonah 3:7; 2 Cor. 11:27; Deut. 9:9; Esther 4:6.

**Fasting as a Substitute for Sacrifice**

After the destruction of the temple some gave up eating meat and drinking wine because the daily sacrifice and libation had ceased. They did this in lieu of the sacrifices which could no longer be performed:

There is another aspect of gift that calls for consideration. A gift is the transference of something from one


\(^2\) The Comprehensive, Critical, and Explanatory Bible Encyclopedia.
person to another; it involves deprivation on the one side, gain on the other. What gain God obtains from men's sacrificial gifts to him was a question which received at different times different answers, including the prophetic that God receives none. But the deprivation on the part of man was obvious, and capable of securing for the practice of giving gifts to God a vital meaning even when what was involved in acceptance by God was no longer vividly apprehended (cp. fasting as a substitute for sacrifice after the fall of the Temple, Abrahams, "Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels", p. 123., 'Fasting as a penitential rite was, in the Rabbinic view allied to sacrifice'). But this idea only came to the front after the destruction of the Temple. The Talmud records that R Shesheth (3rd century A.D.) on fast days was wont to pray: "Master of the Universe, it is revealed before thee that while the Temple stood, a man sinned and brought sacrifice, of which only the fat and blood was offered and this atoned for him; and now I have sat fasting and my fat and blood have been diminished. May it be thy will that it may be accounted unto me as though I had offered it on the altar, and do thou accept it from me with favor."

Cp. also ibid., p. 124 'Almsgiving is a Sacrifice of money, fasting of one's body.'

The manner in which sacrifice atoned for man's sins was not fully understood by most of the Jews nor did they question the workings of this atonement, nor of the fasting which served as a substitute. They took it for granted:

A theory of the way in which sacrifices and other rites expiated sin is in a revealed religion a superfluous speculation. God has attached to certain cases certain cases certain conditions on which he promises to remit sins. The essential condition is the use of the means he has appointed, whatever they are. To neglect them because a man does not see how they can be of any effect, is itself deliberate and wilful sin, vastly graver than the original offense. Judaism had, therefore,

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no motive for discussing the *modus operandi* of sacrificial atonement, and never even raised the question.¹

The Jewish people, however, had explicit faith in their sacrifices and fastings, and believed that the Day of Atonement was necessary in order to be forgiven of transgressions of specific magnitude:

... the Day of Atonement expiate when conjoined with repentance; repentance alone expiates for venial sins of omission and (some) sins of commission. For grave offenses, repentance suspends the sentence till the Day of Atonement comes and expiates. Repentance is thus the conditio *sine qua non* of the remission of sins.²

**Theory of Origin**

There are two theories of the origin of the Day of Atonement, i.e., the event which is commemorated thereby. Both are interesting and are cited here for their historical value.

**First Theory**—

The Book of Jubilees, indeed, provides a mournful occasion for the origin of the Day of Atonement: 'The sons of Jacob slaughtered a kid, and dipped the coat of Joseph in the blood and sent it to Jacob on the tenth day of the seventh month. And he mourned all that night, for they had brought it to him in the evening ... and all the members of his house were grieving and mourning with him all that day. ... For this reason it is ordained for the children of Israel that they should afflict themselves (i.e. fast) on the tenth day of the seventh month and ... that they should make atonement for themselves thereon with a young goat on the tenth of the seventh month, once a year, for their sins: for they had grieved the affection of their father regarding Joseph his son. And this day has been ordained that they should grieve thereon for their

¹ Moore, I, p. 500.
² Ibid., II, p. 498.
sins, and for all their transgressions and for all their errors, so that they might cleanse themselves once a year. ¹

Second Theory—
According to the theory of the Pentateuch the Day of Atonement and its ritual is of Mosaic origin. The occasion of the law was the death of Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu for having presented strange fire before Yahweh —Lev. 10:1-7, 16:1. As we have already seen, the author of Jubilees assigned an earlier and different origin to the Day. But it is, of course, the theory of the Pentateuch. So soon and so far as the theory that the Priestly Code is of Post-exilic origin was accepted, the theory of the Pentateuch itself that the Day of Atonement was an institution of Mosaic antiquity became untenable; for outside the Priestly Code the Day of Atonement is never mentioned in the Pentateuch, nor, indeed, in the rest of the Old Testament. . . . Our existing early literature contains no allusion to a Day of Fasting which the Hebrews were required to observe every year, whatever the circumstances. Indeed the narrative of Jer. 36 seems to exclude such a day even as late as the end of the seventh century. In the fourth year of Jehoiakim (604 B.C.) Jeremiah commands Baruch to read his roll in the Temple on a fast day; in the next year (603) in the ninth month, i.e. December, the people proclaimed a fast and Baruch read the roll. Between Jeremiah’s command and Baruch’s execution of it the tenth day of the seventh month must have passed once if not twice. Why, if it was then an annual fast day, did Baruch wait at least two months, and perhaps fourteen months, before he read the roll?²

Conclusion Concerning the Day of Atonement
The origin cannot be definitely determined; the periods of time when it was observed are not well established; but the teachings and meaning thereof seem to indicate a great

¹ Gray, p. 307.
² Gray, p. 308.
spiritual significance for fasting, i.e. the process by which we become "at-one" with God.

Purposes of Old Testament Fasting

It is the intent of the writer to outline here the various purposes for which people in old testament times fasted, and to cite evidences therefore.

1. Fasting aided in penance and repentance:

That fasting has an expiatory value is distinctly expressed in the Psalms of Solomon (3,8f.). The righteous man continually investigates his household to remove the guilt incurred by transgression. He makes atonement for inadvertent sins by fasting, and afflicts his soul.¹

If one say, 'I will sin and repent, I will sin and repent,' he will not be given (from on high) an opportunity to repent. 'I will sin and the Day of Atonement will effect atonement,' then the Day of Atonement does not effect atonement. For transgression from man towards God the Day of Atonement effects atonement; but for transgressions between a man and his fellow man the Day of Atonement does not effect atonement until he shall have first appeased his fellow man.²

When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. (Psalms 69:10).

A national fast was proclaimed when repentance was needed. (Jer. 36:6-10).

The fast of the Ninevites, its cause and effects are well known. The Ninevites were an idolatrous people--a people

¹ Moore, II, p. 258.
² Blackman, Yoma 8:9.
so plunged in iniquities, which even pagan ignorance could not palliate, that God declared their wickedness had come up before him, and he declared a fast of repentance through his prophet Jonah. (Jonah 3).

2. To humble ourselves, or chasten the soul:

I humbled by soul with Fasting. When I wept and chastised my soul with Fasting, that was to my reproach.

. . . My knees are weak through Fasting and my flesh fail-eth of fatness.

3. In times of fear and need of God's assistance against enemies, fasting was resorted to as in 2 Chron. 20:3:

The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the first ways of David, his father (viz., the ways in which David walked, when the Lord said of him, that he was a man according to his own heart.) But afterwards Jehoshaphat enkindled the wrath of heaven against himself and his kingdom by espousing the cause of Achab, the impious king of Israel. To punish this crime the Lord brought the Ammonites and Moabites, in conjunction with the Syrians, to overwhelm him and his people. But Jehoshaphat being seized with fear, betook himself wholly to pray to the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast in all Juda. 2

Also see 1 Samuel 14:24.

4. To produce visions and dreams. See Daniel 9:3-20 this and 10:2-5. Commentary on/fast is given in greater detail in connection with the "Long Fasts of the Scripture" chapter.

5. According to the Mishna, fasting was to be indulg-
ed in during drought periods. (The numbered explanations in


2Ibid.
The following quotation are Blackman's footnotes and are cited herein to enhance meaning.)

If the seventeenth of Marcheshvan were come and no rain had fallen, individuals begin to observe three fasts. They may eat and drink after nightfall and they are permitted to engage in work, and to bathe, and to anoint themselves, and to wear sandals, and to have marital sexual intercourse.

1. Men of distinction and outstanding piety.
2. Literally began to afflict themselves with three fasts. Only three fasts successively on Monday, Thursday, Monday (not more than two in one week) were permitted. This order was observed during all the undermentioned fasts.
3. i.e., on the nights preceding the fasts.
4. On the actual fast days.
5. Or wash themselves.
6. Or shoes, sandals.

If these days passed by and their prayers had not been answered, the Court decree three more fasts on the congregation. They may eat and drink while it is yet day and they are forbidden to work, or to bathe, or to anoint themselves, or to put on shoes, or to have marital cohabitation; and they must close the bath houses. If these fast days also passed by and their prayers were not answered, the Court decreed seven additional ones for the community—thus making thirteen fast days. Behold these additional surpass the first, in that on these days they open at dusk, and on Thursday they are allowed because of the respect due to the Sabbath.
3. viz., but not beyond sunset on the eve of the fast.
5. Or to wash themselves, i.e. the whole body with warm water.
8. Fasts on Mondays, Thursday, Monday, etc. successively.
18. To keep the shops open the whole day as Friday may not give the people sufficient time to get in and prepare the food for the Sabbath.

6. During periods of sorrow or mourning, fasting

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1 Blackman, Taanith 1:4,6.
seemed to be a natural accompaniment:

In all the provinces, towns, and places to which the kings cruel edict was come, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting. (Esther 4:3).

Festivals were occasions for rejoicing, and even real merrymaking took place at such times. Fasts were occasions for sorrow or affliction.

Strict fasting for that day, the Day of Atonement, as well as cessation from all work was obligatory. While it was a day for soul-searching, nevertheless, it was also marked by great joy because of the pardon which was received. There were a few other fast days of less importance than the Day of Atonement, and, also, some voluntary fasts, having in view the compassion of God in time of drouth, or when threatened by plagues of locusts, or when national misfortune seemed imminent.1

Under Ezekiel's influence greater stress was laid on the power of prayer and on the efficacy of fasting....

Hitherto fasting had probably not played a very important part in the religious life of the Jews. It was simply a part of their funeral rites. But during the Exile the exiles seem to have instituted a practice of commemorating all the calamities of their history by days of mourning and atonement, which were kept with every possible manifestation of grief and penitence. Thus fasting gradually came to be considered a necessity preliminary to any important undertaking, and for a strict Jew every undertaking of importance had its religious aspect.2

When Joel received his prophetic mission, the crimes of God's people had so provoked the Almighty, that he sent his servants to propose to them the alternative, either of preparing themselves for a day (of vengeance) such as had not been from the beginning, nor should be after it, even to the years of generation and generation, or of averting

the catastrophe by Fasting. "Now, therefore, saith the Lord, be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning. And rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God. For he is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy, and ready to repent of the evil. Who knoweth but he will return and forgive, and leave a blessing behind him."

This last reference fortifies the writer's contention that the spiritual exercise of fasting is by far the most vital. The abstinence from physical things merely lends assistance and support to it.

Sackcloth and Ashes

However, many physical signs were added to fasting in the hope that God and others would see the humility and repentance. This, of course, was apostasy from the true Jewish fast. On at least two different occasions, God condemned those who chose this method of fasting (Isa. 58: 1-5 and Matt. 6:16-18). Not only did the Pharisees and others fast for the world to see, but they fasted when the most people would take notice:

[Speaking of the efforts which the Pharisees made to glorify themselves] 'I fast twice a week, and I give tithes of all that I acquire.' The first of these (fasting) was in pursuance of the custom of some 'more righteous than the rest,' who . . . fasted on the second and fifth days of the week (Mondays and Thursdays). But, perhaps, we should not forget that these were also the regular market days, when the country people came to the

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1 Tracts, #14, Catholic Institute.
towns, and there were special services in the Synagogues, and the local Sanhedrin met so that these saints in Israel would, at the same time, attract and receive special notice for their fasts.\(^1\)

A description of "sackcloth and ashes" helps to appreciate its use:

Sackcloth was a course texture, of a dark color, made of goats' hair (Isa. 50:3, Rev. 6:12) and resembling the cicilium of the Romans. It was used (1) for making sacks (Gen. 42:25, Lev. 11:32, Jos. 9:4) and (2) for making the rough garments used by mourners, which were in extreme cases worn next to the skin, (1 Kings 21:27, 2 Kings 6:30, Job 16:15) and this even by females (Joel 1:8), but at other times worn over the coat (Jon. 3:6) in lieu of the outer garment.

The ashes of a red heifer burnt entire, according to the regulations prescribed in Numbers 19, had the ceremonial efficacy of purifying the unclean, (Hebrews 9:13) but of polluting the clean. Ashes about a person, especially on the head, were a sign of sorrow.\(^2\)

Those who fasted frequently dressed in sackcloth and tore at their clothes, putting ashes on their heads and went barefoot. But despite these seemingly odd outward practices, they were acceptable to God according to the Bible, if they were accompanied by true spiritual repentance and humble, sincere searching for God. Note here that it was because Ahab "went softly" that his fast was acceptable.

And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that

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he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.

And the word of the Lord came to Elijah, the Tishbite, saying,

Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house (I Kings 21:27-29).

In spite of the thought that people had that the use of sackcloth and ashes was acceptable to God, the prophets bore testimony against the lamentable abuses to which the practice was turned in the lapse of time and with the increase of social corruption (Jer. 14:12; Zech. 7:5). In the latter scripture, God points out that there is a distinct difference in fasting and fasting unto Him.

Jewish Fasting Not Ascetical

The true Jewish fast, which according to scriptures previously cited, was ordained of God, includes no austerities as we find in other religions.

The Pentateuch makes use of the expression "to afflict the soul" (Num. 30:14) for fasting, in which the special significance of fasting is expressed; some indulgence, otherwise allowable, must be denied to the natural will, to testify of the earnestness of its penitence and grief. It is characteristic of the moral spirit of Mosaism, that it strictly forbids all unnatural austerities, such as maining or mutilating the limbs, branding and the like (Lev. 19:28, Deut. 14:1, 23:2) for it is said in Deut. 14:1, "Thou art a holy people." (Eunuchs were on this account excluded from the congregation).  

Ibid., p. 573.
The psychological and disciplinary value of fasting was not ignored. But the excessive indulgence and the sole reliance upon it for the attainment of purification and holiness was condemned. Self-infliction in itself is no atonement and bestows no sanctity on man. . . . Mar Autra (4c.) declared: "The merit of a fast day lies in charity dispensed."

A man should not tax himself beyond reasonable endurance, and repentance is possible without fasting. Isaac Aboab (14c.) asserts: Judaism's way of repentance is easier than that of other faiths who prescribe bodily infliction. Our Torah did not ordain any bodily self-afflictions. Repentance is through the prayer of the lips and the meditations of the heart.¹

In the eyes of Judaism, to neglect or enfeeble the body, the instrument of the soul, is altogether sinful. As the Sabbath law demands physical rest and recreation after the week's work, so the Jewish religion in general trains men to enjoy the gifts of God; and the rabbis declare that their rejection (except for disciplinary reasons) is ingratitude for which man must give an account at the last Judgment Day. The Pharisaic teacher who opposed the Essenic custom of fasting and declared it sinful, unless it be for special purposes, would have deprecated even more strongly the ascetic Christian or Hindoo saint who castigated his body as the seat of sin.²

Extensive vows and fasting which leads to extreme asceticism seem to be contrary to the spirit of Christianity. They indicate more concern for the salvation of one's own soul than for the true spirit of brotherly love, of assisting others in their progress, etc. This is the philosophy expressed by Moore, as follows:

In these manifestations of Jewish piety there is no ascetic strain, in the historical and usual sense of the term. The characteristic of asceticism is not the pains and privations to which a man subjects himself, but the end which he proposes thus to achieve. One wide-spread and primitive motive is the attainment of supernormal psychico-physical powers, whether exercised immediately or through control over spirits. A higher end is the liberation of the rational soul from the trammels of sense and from bondage to the appetites and passions that have their seat in the flesh. To a crasser dualism matter was inherently and irremediably evil, and the human body with all its functions was part and parcel of a material world whose evil was not only physical but moral. The soul was essentially divine, and when once it realized its own nature there was war without truce between it and the body. The freedom of a man's soul could be won only by the subjugation of the flesh; and only when it had thus conquered its liberty could it attain salvation, or, in mystical form, achieve its destiny in union with God, or more metaphysically, in identity with Absolute Reality. Jewish theology, as it has been exhibited in a former chapter, is in contradiction with this philosophy at every point. The premises of an asceticism such as was in vogue in certain pagan circles and early took root in the Christian church, were altogether lacking.

This is confirmed by another observation, which is in itself of wider scope. The goal of the true ascetic, whether in India or in the West, is purely individualistic; the most logical type is the solitary hermit, whose sole all-absorbing concern is his own soul. Now it can hardly fail to impress everyone familiar with the sources that such desperate concern of the individual about his own precious soul is conspicuously absent in Judaism; and that for reasons that lie deep in its religious thinking. (italics mine)

Many rabbis disapproved such self-imposed abstinences. A vow of abstinence is an iron collar (such as is worn by prisoners) about a man's neck; and one who imposes on himself a vow is like one who should find such a collar lying loose and stick his own head into it. Or, a man who takes a vow is like one who builds an illegitimate altar (bamah), and if he fulfils it, like one who sacrifices on such an altar. R. Issac (reported by R. Dimi) said: "Are not the things prohibited you in the Law enough for you, that you want to prohibit yourself other things." An ingenious interpretation of Numbers 6:11, discovers that the Nazarite
had to make atonement by sacrifice for having sinned against his own soul by making the enjoyment of every­thing. In this spirit is the often quoted saying of Rab: "A man will have to give account on the judgment day of every good thing which he might have enjoyed and did not."

Such sentiments, however frequent they may have been, must not be taken as the voice of an anti-ascetic "spirit of Judaism." They are expressions of personal tempera­ment, circumstance and surrounding, and not to be broadly generalized. From an early time, also, antipathy to Christian monasticism was an influence not to be left out of account. The treatment of the subject by Maimonides has in view both Christian asceticism and similar tendencies in pietistic and mystical circles among Jews.¹

**Duration of the Fasts**

Most fasts were for a twelve hour period, and lasted from dawn to the first appearance of the stars after sunset. There was no objection to hearty meals before and after these limits. The Day of Atonement and the Ninth of Ah, however, were for twenty-four hours and lasted from evening to evening.

**Who Should Fast**

The Mishna sets forth clearly the time when children should begin to fast.

Children need not be made to fast on the Day of Atonement, but they should train them¹ the year before² or two years before,³ in order that they become accustomed to the observance of commandments.

1. To abstain from eating at their usual times but to eat an hour or so later.
2. In the case of an ailing child this practice is begun a year before he (or she) must fast.
3. In the case of a healthy child he (or she) is

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¹ Moore, II, p. 264-6
thus trained two years before fasting is compulsory. "Before, . . . viz., a boy must fast at the age of thirteen years and one day, a girl at the age of twelve years and one day."

Children from the age of seven fast in proportion to their strength. Mitigations are allowed in the case of pregnant women, people who are ill, and others, particularly where there is thought of danger of life.

Public Fasts

Public fasts were decreed for special intercession in times of national emergency or in times of prolonged drought or plague or sorrow. Some of these became annual institutions, others were held only as proclaimed.

Aside from the one required fast, Yom Kippur, there seem to be four others which were established by custom and were apparently acceptable to the Lord.

Thus saith the Lord of hosts; the fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace (Zech. 8:19).

History shows that the Jews adopted these four fast periods while in captivity. They were to commemorate the following things: Fourth month--the breaking of the tables of the law of Moses (Ex. 32) and storming of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar;

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1 Blackman, *Yoma* 8:4.
2 Silver, p. 196.
fifth month—the return of the spies (Num. 13 and 14), the temple burnt by Nebuchadnezzar, and again by Titus; and the plowing up of the site of the temple, with the capture of Bether; seventh month—the complete sack of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and the death of Gedaliah (2 Kings: 25); tenth month—the receiving by Ezekiel and the other captives in Babylon of the news of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Some of the special national fasts are recorded in I Sam. 7:6, all Israel; II Chron. 20:3, all Judah; Jer. 36:6-10, all Judah; Neh. 9:1, all Israel.

The number of regular fasts increased until the Mishna now records thirty-five.

Any day which is recorded in the Scroll of Fasts as one on which it is forbidden to mourn, it is forbidden to mourn also on the day before it but it is allowed on the day following it.

(Note:) The Scroll of Fasts contains a list of thirty-five days, enumerated in the order of the months, telling in brief of certain joyous events in the history of the Jews and on which fasting—and public mourning in some cases—were forbidden.

It was the custom, as recorded in Joel 2:1-15, to proclaim public danger by the blowing of trumpets, which were made of rams horns. This custom carried over to those fast days which were originally observed because of some catastrophe.

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1 Blackman, Taanith, 2:8.
(During Rosh Hashanah, it was the custom to give a long blast on a ram's horn. The following is in connection there with). On a fast day, referring to public fast days because of pestilence, drought, war or other trouble, they were of rams' horns, carved, their mouth-pieces overlaid with silver.  

Private Fasts

Many instances of private fasts can be cited in the Old Testament. Those of Elijah, Moses, and Daniel will be referred to in a special chapter on "Long Fasts of the Scriptures"

David stood charged in the sight of the Lord with the two most mortal crimes that man can commit—murder and adultery. The sacrifice which he offered in atonement for these crimes was that of fasting. Even though this did not give full atonement for the life he had taken (Acts 2:29), he was willing to do what he could (See II Sam. 12:1-23 for a full account of his repentance).

On another occasion, David reveals his humility and desire to live the Golden Rule when he says:

False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.
They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.
But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sack cloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.
I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or

1 Ibid., Rosh Hashanah 3:4.
brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother. (Psalms 35:11-14).

Here he forgot his resentfulness against these people in their time of need, and even though they had wronged him, he humbled his "soul in fasting" and sought a blessing for them.

From the preceding material in this chapter, it would seem that the mere abstinence from food is not very meaningful to people except for health reasons, unless it is accompanied by "singleness of heart." This, according to the foregoing, is true fasting, and without a complete understanding of the full spiritual meaning, one's fasting cannot be perfect. People certainly would not claim that they were fasting every time they went without food. If such were the case they would fast each night. Consider the case of the good-hearted, but weak King Darius, who, immediately after having Daniel thrown into the lion's den, went to his room and fasted all night. He probably went without food every night, but during this particular night, he fasted:

Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting; neither were instruments of musick brought before him, and his sleep went from him. (Daniel 6:18)

It will be noted that King Darius completely secluded himself from earthly distractions, and spent the night reconciling himself with his God, with Daniel, and with his own weak self. One often hears it taught that Daniel was saved only because
of his own great faith, but it is evident that the fasting
and repentance of the king aided his cause. Another lesson
seems to be implied in this example. As he fasted, "his
sleep went from him." When one grows near to God and receives
of His Spirit, he gains a greater energy or strength than
that which is gained by human means—sleep, nourishment, etc.
Such energy will be sufficient, at times, to fulfill a per-
son's needs over an extended period, as will be pointed out
later.

Some instances of fasting and repentance of well-
known Old Testament characters are recorded in histories
other than those which are commonly recognized as Scripture.
The following is an example thereof:

Examples of self-imposed abstinence as a penance for
mortal sin are given in the Testaments of the Twelve
Patriarchs. For seven years Reuben drank no wine or other
liquor, no flesh passed his lips, and he ate no appetiz-
ing food, but continued mourning over his sin, for it
was great. In the fear of the Lord, Simeon afflicted
his soul with fasting for two years for his hatred of
Joseph. (Test. Simeon 3,4). Judah, in repentance for
his sin with Tamar, to his old age took neither wine nor
flesh, and saw no pleasure. (Test. Judah 15,4). By the
side of these instances we may put an utterance of R.
Meir about the penance of Adam; for a hundred and thirty
years (Gen. 5:3) he lived apart from Eve, and all that
time wore a girdle of fig-leaves next to his skin.  

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1 Moore, II, p. 257.
CHAPTER III

ISAIAH ON FASTING

There are many references to fasting in the scriptures. But it isn't the New Testament, Book of Mormon, or Doctrine and Covenants to which one must go to find the best single statement of principle on the subject. It is Isaiah who wrote the most comprehensive record on fasting. He reveals the Lord's conversation with the children of Israel who had been diligent in observing the outward signs of fasting (i.e. sackcloth and ashes, abstinence from food and drink, bowed bodies, etc.). These works had not been recognized by the Lord:

Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labors.

Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? It is to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that he break every yoke?

Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when
thou seest the naked, that cover him; and that thou hide
not thyself from thine own flesh?
Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and
thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy right­
eousness shall go before thee: the glory of the Lord
shall be thy reward.
Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou
shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take
away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth
of the finger, and speaking vanity;
And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and sat­
isfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in ob­
scurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day;
And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy
thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones; and thou
shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of
water, whose waters fail not.
And they that shall be of thee shall build the old
waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many
generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of
the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.
If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from
doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath
a delight, the hold of the Lord, honourable; and shalt
honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine
own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words;
Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I
will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the
earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father:
for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. (Isaiah 58:
3-14)

Following are elaborations on the information which
God through Isaiah has given regarding true fasting.

Verses 1-5—The Hypocritical Fast

1. Isaiah was commanded here to "cry aloud" and
"spare not." He was to rebuke the children of Israel because
the intent behind their fasting was sinful. They had so
perverted the true fast which God had given them that He accounted it to them as transgression.

2. God recognized the fact that they had prayer daily and had desired of Him all of His just rewards in return for what they had supposed were righteous works. Basically, God was pleased that Jacob's children would seek Him at all.

3. As far as the writer is aware, with the exception of blessings bestowed by the grace of God (which man receives without any merit of his own, nor can he deserve them), all of the promises of the Bible are conditional. Great faith is predicated upon man's learning the true nature of prayer and fasting. But more important than the outward symbolic functions is the motive behind man's actions. All too often "religious" ordinances seem apparently to be performances without the spiritual push to render them efficacious. The people who fast or tithe or pray with the wrong motives behind them should be rebuked as well as those who do not practice these things at all. In verse one, the Israelites were disturbed because they had adhered to their warped fasting practices, but apparently had not received the things they prayed for. Therefore, being disgruntled, they asked God why he took no knowledge thereof. The answer was that they sought pleasurable functions and performed their regular labors on the fast day. As indicated in the chapter
on the Old Testament scriptures, these were the very things which were forbidden when God established the Day of Atonement. On fast days they were to set aside all the work they could, and also the pleasures that were legitimate at other times, in order that they might devote more time to prayer and meditation.

4. One of the functions of fasting was to reconcile men with and increase their love for their fellow men. However, the most usual "blessing" which those who lived in Isaiah's time desired of God during their fasts was that God would aid them in smiting and defeating their enemies. That was also the custom before Isaiah's time (2 Chron. 20:3). God's pronouncement was that their fasts should not be for that purpose. Verse four would indicate that the fasting of the American Indian before and during battle, as cited in the chapter on the Native Races of America, would not be looked upon with favor by God.

5. If one could reword this verse into the vernacular of today, it would probably sound like this--you're joking, you can't be serious! Do you sincerely believe that the mere fact that you make yourself hungry and miserable by not eating constitutes a fast? Understanding now the true spiritual meaning of the Day of Atonement, do you honestly believe that your feeble attempt is acceptable to God?
Of great import to the Israelites were the words "the fast that I have chosen," indicating that God did establish and command a fast. As will be pointed out in the chapter on the "Teaching of Christ," Jesus re-ordained this fast in the meridian of time and again in the latter-days.

The Lord also chastized those who would go around on fast day in a meloncholy way, all bowed down and lamenting what an awful thing it is to fast and what a great sacrifice they were making.

Verse 6--Four Spiritual Purposes

If man were to accomplish these four spiritual purposes during his fasts, great joy would be the result, as has been previously defined. These purposes have to do with man's relationship with Jesus Christ and others, and with the perfecting of his own characters.

1. Concerning Jesus Christ--To "break every yoke," i.e. to loose oneself from every earthly thing which prohibits in any way his unity with God. One of man's purposes in being on this earth is to learn to use and work with material things, but also to become independent of all of them so that at any given moment he can leave any earthly thing without regret. He should learn to love and seek after God and eternal truth and not be deterred or "yoked" by any desire
for the material things with which he lives.

2. Concerning others-- "To let the oppressed go free." One of the essentials of repentance is that a person request and obtain forgiveness from the person against whom he has transgressed. If one is unwilling to reconcile himself with a fellowman who may have wronged him, he is oppressing him and prohibiting him from full repentance. If he is inclined to hold a grudge or any ill will, fasting aids him in humbling himself, and granting forgiveness so that others may be free as they endeavor to repent. Forgiveness, someone has said, is the fragrance which a flower spreads on the heel that crushes it.

3. Concerning "yourself"--"To loose the bands of wickedness." Christ indicated (Matt. 17:18-21) that the faith necessary to overcome Satan comes only through prayer and fasting. Fasting aids one in "putting on the whole armour of God" (Eph. 6:11-13), and in developing his character so that truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation and the Spirit of God are so much a part of him that the devil cannot tempt him.

4. Undo heavy burdens--Often one places heavy burdens upon himself by unwise eating. Excessive or unbalanced foods preclude the best functioning of the body and mind. A periodic fast undoes these heavy restrictions from his being
by allowing a period of natural purification. (See Part II of this work for elaborations on this statement).

Verse 7--Four Temporal Purposes

In labeling these next purposes "temporal," the writer does so with reservation because it is claimed that everything is spiritual unto God, and that exercises such as caring for the poor have great spiritual benefits.

The four things which each should do (in addition to the four spiritual purposes) before his fast could be recognized by God as "perfect" were as follows:

1. To feed the hungry.
2. To care for the homeless.
3. To clothe the needy.
4. To be with one's family and the Lord's people generally.

The Fast Sunday program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints enables one to fulfill all of these functions. The value of that which is saved by abstaining from food and drink for twenty-four hours is contributed as a fast offering to a fund which goes to the poor for food, clothing, housing, etc. Numerous are the instances every month of people so assisted. As one participates in this program and has love in his heart for his brethren in so
doing, he is included in the number that Jesus referred to when He said:

For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in. Naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. . . . Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (Matt. 25:35,36,40).

Not what we give, but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three-
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and Me.

-James Russell Lowell

The Fast and Testimony Meetings enable one to meet with his own, to be enriched spiritually, to forgive and be forgiven. This was also done anciently in the church in the Western Hemisphere.

And the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls. (Moroni 6:5)

The care of the poor is an essential part of the true Christian fast and always has been. Those who have eliminated this or disassociated it with fasting have perverted Christ's doctrine. Numerous instances may be cited which support the historical giving of food, but a few will suffice:

Christians believe, therefore, that a season set aside for the de-emphasis of the physical is essential to man's spiritual development. It provides a time when all people support one another in a general effort to free themselves for concentration on matters of the soul.
In earlier times, incidently, the money saved by abstinence from expensive food was expected to be given as alms.

The merit of fasting is the almsgiving. (Tobit 12:8).

What a man thug spared he gave to the needy (E. G. Test. Joseph 3:5).

In 1563 London was visited by a plague. Days of fasting were appointed, Mondays and Wednesdays, to continue until some abatement of the disease, which could not be observed by great gatherings as commonly, for fear of contagion. The food saved was bestowed upon the poor in the back lanes and alleys of the city.\(^1\)

The Indians of Mexico offered food in their temples on fast day anciently.

Franklin D. Richards of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said that "The first Thursday of every month is a Fast day, for the Saints to gather together in prayer and fasting, and to bring their offerings for the poor, that the afflicted and unfortunate may not lack for food or clothing, and the comforts of life."\(^2\)

Brigham Young explains the origin and purpose of fast day in the latter days:

Another thing I wish to say. You know that the first Thursday in each month we hold as a fast day. How many here know the origin of this day? Before tithing was paid, the poor were supported by donations. They came to Joseph and wanted help, in Kirtland, and he said there should be a fast day, which was decided upon. It was to be held once a month, as it is now, and all that would have been eaten that day, of flour, or meat, or butter, or fruit, or anything else, was to be carried to the fast meeting and put into the hands of a person selected for the purpose of taking care of it and distributing it among the poor. If we were to do this now faithfully, do you think the poor would lack for flour, or butter, or cheese, or meat, or sugar, or anything they needed to eat? No, there would be more than could be used by all the poor among us. It is economy in us to take this course, and do better by our poor brethren and sisters than they have hitherto been done by. Let this be published in our newspapers. Let it be sent forth to the people, that on the first Thursday of each month, the fast day, all that would be eaten by husbands and wives and children and servants should be put in the hands of the Bishop for the sustenance of the poor. I am willing to do my share as well as the rest, and if there are no poor in my ward, I am willing to divide with those wards where there are poor. If the sisters will look out for rooms for those sisters who need to be taken care of, and see them provided for, you will find that we will possess more comfort and more peace in our hearts, and our spirits will be buoyant and light, full of joy and peace. The Bishops should, through their teachers, see that every family in their wards, who is able, should donate what they would naturally consume on the fast day to the poor.¹

Some thoughts on giving are contained in a study made of philanthropic contributing. Almsgiving seems always to have been one of the finest exercises of the soul. The thoughts--

¹Ibid., Vol. 12, p. 115-116.
1. Giving is not giving up anything, but conducting an exchange—temporal wealth for spiritual wealth.

2. Mr. Hayes says: "I give one tenth or over to my church. . . . You don't give anything to your church until you give over one tenth."

3. One man reported that he does not report his giving for income-tax purposes because: "I feel when you deduct money for your church giving, you are trying to get some back."

God has promised man great blessings if he, in love, will aid the worthy poor. If he does not, however, the scripture says, "Whoso stoppeth his ear at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." (Proverbs 21:13).

Verses 8-14: Blessings from Fasting

The thirteen blessings which were promised to those who would observe God's true fast were:

First blessing— "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning." As explained in the chapter on "Prayer and Fasting," each thought one thinks and each desire he has produces an energy or light which is emanated from his being. In fasting, this spiritual emanation becomes newly pure and powerful. It enables one to do greater and more righteous works. It is then that this light, through improved actions which it stimulates, causes one to shine before men, that they may see his good works, and glorify God by seeking after Him. It is this light which gives power and direction to
man's communication with God, which phenomenon is called prayer.

Second blessing— "And thine health shall spring forth speedily." This refers to spiritual, mental, and physical health. Spiritual health because in fasting one reunites himself with God and his fellowmen. Mental health because his mind becomes clear and active. Physical health because his body is cleansed of the impurities which cause it to fail. (See the chapters on the physiological aspects of fasting for a more extensive discussion of this point).

Third blessing— "Thy righteousness shall go before thee." It is said that a man's reputation always precede him. If one would pray and fast, meditate, search the Scriptures, examine himself, and eliminate his inconsistencies, the reputation of a good man would be his. Then those whom he meets would say, "We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." (Zachariah 8:23)

Fourth blessing— "The glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward." The word "rereward" means "backer up" or "supporter." The Prophet Joseph Smith received by revelation these words, "The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth. Light and truth forsake that evil one." (D. & C. 93:36,37). Through fasting, then, one receives greater light and truth which are necessary to overcome
temptations, pitfalls and the powers of Satan, according to Scripture.

Fifth blessing— "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord will answer, thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am." God will more surely hear and answer prayers accompanied by fasting, which adds strength to prayer, because, in many ways, it humbles one. "Be thou humble: and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers." (D. & C. 112:10). (More concerning this blessing may be found in the chapter on Fasting and Prayer).

Sixth blessing— "Then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day." This blessing is predicated upon sincere repentance and reconciliation with God and man. In this verse God repeats again the three of the areas of spiritual fasting—"If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, [i.e. the things that keep man from oneness with God], the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; [pointing out the faults of others, and gossiping or making unkind comments about others], And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul [i.e. cease to be selfish as one grows in love for his fellow men]." If one would perform these fasting functions, he would begin to experience great personal growth and his weaknesses (darkness) would be turned into strength and "be as the noon day,"
i.e. power in growth, warm, brightness, etc.

Alma, a Book of Mormon prophet, in parable, spoke of this same growth, and indicated that the result is eternal life which is sweet and pure and desirable above all else.

And behold, as the tree beginneth to grow, ye will say: Let us nourish it with great care, that it may get root, that it may grow up, and bring forth fruit unto us. And now behold, if ye nourish it with much care it will get root, and grow up, and bring forth fruit.

But if ye will nourish the word, yea, nourish the tree as it beginneth to grow, by your faith with great diligence, and with patience, looking forward to the fruit thereof, it shall take root; and behold it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life.

And because of your diligence and your faith and your patience with the word in nourishing it, that it may take root in you, behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure; and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst. (Alma 32: 37,41,42).

Seventh blessing-- "And the Lord shall guide thee continually." One problem of all Christians seems to be to be able to discern the spirit which leads them and to know whether it is God or the devil. Both are powerful influences. But "light and truth forsake that evil one," which glory one receives in fasting. From the foregoing discussion of this chapter, it appears that the children of God would be much more capable of knowing when God was leading them if they would fast, pray and meditate correctly, thereby giving Him a chance to reveal his will to them. Christ has promised to
be man's constant companion by means of His light. He said to those who were worthy to receive the Holy Ghost, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." (John 14:27).

Eighth blessing-- "And satisfy thy soul in drought."
The spirit does not hunger and thirst after the same thing which the body desires. Therefore, by suspending for a time that which satisfies the body, such as food, drink, recreation, physical labor, marital cohabitation, sleep, and other activities which satisfy physical needs, man would be better able to satisfy the spiritual needs. There seems to be a natural law that the physical functions, when stimulated and catered to, must be satisfied before the spiritual. Therefore, only by suppressing the temporal for a time can real spiritual exercise take place. By obeying always the physical needs, man produces a real spiritual drought. God says if one will fast--spiritually (a positive function) and temporarily (a negative function)--he will satisfy this drought. The soul will then bear fruit, as Alma said above, and as Paul indicates, as follows:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [i.e. teachability] temperance: (Gal. 5:22,23).

Ninth blessing-- "Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." No the land around it, a watered garden is always growing, fresh matter how barren and non-productive/and healthy. This
promise is to all fasters in all of their righteous endeavors in life, if they will fast correctly. No matter what the efficiency of the people around them, their progress will be steady and good.

Tenth blessing— "Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations." As Abraham was promised, the faster shall be blessed with children. A closely-knit family has always been one of the great desires of man and God—who is quite a family-man Himself.

Eleventh Blessing— "Thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in." The breach referred to here is, in the opinion of the writer, the veil which exists between man and God. In fasting, this veil will grow thin and man will learn new truths concerning the life he should lead.

Consider the example of Moses as a repairer of the breach between the children of Israel and God.

They forgot God their Savior which had done great things in Egypt; wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea. Therefore, he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them. (Psalms 106:21-23).

As pointed out before, the prime purposes of fasting are purification and reconciliation.

Twelfth blessing— "I will cause thee to ride upon the
high places of the earth." This blessing that God's people shall lead the earth is predicated upon requisites in addition to fasting. One must--

(1) Keep the Sabbath Day holy and not seek pleasure thereon,

(2) Sustain the authorities of God (the holy of the Lord),

(3) Seek to act as God directs, and not as one would otherwise desire.

Thirteenth blessing-- "And feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father." The blessings of Jacob, Issac, and Abraham have best been summarized by Dr. Milton R. Hunter, in his Pearl of Great Price Commentary. The blessings of their covenant are:

(a) Abraham was to be a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a strange nation.
(b) He was to be the father of a great nation.
(c) His name would be great among all nations.
(d) Abraham and his posterity would be given a land which would be unto them an everlasting inheritance as long as they served God.
(e) Abraham's posterity would be a numerous as the stars of the heavens and the sands of the seas.
(f) Many of his descendants would bear the name of God, even the Holy Priesthood; in fact, Abraham's posterity would be a nation of Priesthood holders.
(g) In Abraham and that Priesthood all families of the earth would be blessed.
(h) Those throughout the world from Abraham's time forward who received the Gospel of Jesus Christ would be accounted as the seed of Abraham.
(i) Christ would come through Abraham's seed.
(j) God promised to bless them that blessed Abraham
and curse them that cursed Abraham.

(κ) Circumcision was to be the sign of the covenant.

(λ) The covenant was to be an everlasting one, or a gospel covenant.

(m) In return for all of the foregoing blessings, Father Abraham and his posterity were to serve the Lord their God and keep all of His commandments.

God has said, then that we may receive every blessing which Father Abraham was promised, with two exceptions which were particular to Abraham himself, if we will but learn the true nature of fasting and observe it as He has given it.

The thing which makes this entire scripture so valid and thrilling is verse 14, in which Christ puts his stamp of approval on the doctrine, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."
CHAPTER IV

LONG FASTS OF THE SCRIPTURES

Instances of long religious fasts in the scripture are very few. It is recorded that Moses, Elijah, and Christ fasted forty days each; Moses on two separate occasions. Daniel, by implication, is said to have fasted three weeks. The length of these fasts do not appear to be given to man as an example to follow. Each was special, and each had a distinct purpose. It should be noted that none of these fasts were undertaken by these men of their own choice for the purpose of obtaining a blessing from God. Each man was lead by God into the fast and was sustained by Him during the entire period.

It is the writers purpose in this chapter to point out the distinct difference between these special long fasts of the scripture and the regular short fasts (which were generally held for twenty-four hours) which God established for His people to keep. The scriptures do not support the contention that these long fasts endow just anyone with secret powers from God. Man perverts himself and the Scriptures when he allows himself to assume something which these re-
cords do not plainly teach. Those who insist that it is proper to "fast" for forty days in order to follow the example of Moses, Elijah and, most of all, Christ, should adhere to the pattern of abstinence as well as length of time to be consistent with the examples. These men of God abstained not only from food entirely, but also from water. This man recognizes as a physical impossibility in the absence of the supernatural sustenance. The word "supernatural" is used here in its true sense as something that is above or beyond the earthly knowledge of man. Many of the things which God does are supernatural, but are considered by some to be true and good. All too often man thinks of the supernatural or metaphysical happenings as wrong. This blanket branding of phenomena is illogical reasoning.

An examination of instances of long fasting follows.

MOSES

This prophet of Israel fasted twice, each for forty days and forty nights. The purposes seemed to be somewhat different. His first fast was before he received the first law on the two stones. Note that the Lord called him to this fast:

And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.
And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and got him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights. (Exod. 24:16-18)

It would seem that God sustained Moses with light during this time so that he could enjoy complete distraction from every natural consideration while in His presence.

There is no record of any particular physical benefit accruing to Moses during this fast, nor was he fasting for that purpose. But one does read that he was clothed with God's glory—the brightness, strength, warmth, and cleanliness thereof—as he descended the mountain.

Upon seeing the idolatry of his people:

I took the two tables, and cast them out of my two hands, and brake them before your eyes.

And I fell down before the Lord, as at the first forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger. (Deut. 9:17-18).

The initial purpose of this second fast was to do penance for the sins of the children of Israel, but God took him up again and prepared him for receiving the ten commandments.

And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights: he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.
ELIJAH

Like the fasts of Moses, this forty-day abstinence of Elijah's was carried out by divine order. (See 1 Kings 19:1-8).

If ever there was a time in the life of Elijah when he needed the encouragement of supernatural sustenance, both spiritually and physically, it was at this time of deep discouragement as he fled from the wrath of Jezebel. He was cast down to the point of asking God to take away his life—a prayer which, for his own good, God did not answer. Instead, by sustaining him for a forty-day "journey" on one meal, it appears that God endeavored to impress upon him that as long as he was under the sustaining hand of the Almighty the discouraging circumstances around him did not matter. This concept seems to be further urged upon him by the tempestuous physical manifestations at the cave in Horeb, which "God was not in," followed by the "still small voice" of God.

The whole experience added up to a particular supernatural dealing of God with Elijah at a crisis of discouragement, and is probably not a pattern laid down to be followed by man at his own instigation for the receiving of power with God. A further item worthy of note is that Elijah's forty-day fast followed, rather than preceded, the demonstration of God's power through him on Mt. Carmel with
the prophets of Baal. It appears that immediately following
that forty days he seemed backward to grasp what God was
trying to impress on him at the cave in Horeb, as a careful
reading of the account will show. This possibly indicates
that great insight into the things of God does not necessar-
ily follow a protracted period of abstention from food, even
in a godly man.

This one meal from the angel appears to be symbolic,
of the manner in which God supports those whom He calls to
long fasts. See the discussion of fast of Christ which
follows for a complete description of this point.

Elijah fasted on many other occasions of his own
free choice, and sought strength from God through it. For
example, before his forty-day fast, he commanded Ahab to eat
and drink while he passed up the worldly sustenance to go
away and pray.

**DANIEL**

There is no definite record of a long fast of Daniel.
Some, however, by implication, seek to relate Daniel 9:3-20
with Daniel 10:2-5, and thereby establish the fact that Daniel
fasted for three weeks. Neither the time elements nor the
content is definite enough to draw this conclusion.

In chapter nine of Daniel, one may read of Daniel
seeking the Lord in fasting and prayer, and during that fast, he saw a vision from God. Chapter ten describes a period of mourning of three weeks, during which Daniel existed on a very limited diet. He informs us that he "ate no pleasant bread," nor "flesh nor wine."

The circumstances were different during these fasts and probably should not be grouped with those of Moses, Elijah, and the Savior.

The Christ

Only six verses concerning Jesus' fast are found in the New Testament. (Matt. 4:1,2; Mark 1:12,13; Luke 4:1,2). Very little information is given by the gospel writers, and as a result many commentators of the life of Christ have found it difficult to write anything thereon. No indication is given as to what happened during that fast. One writer has the following to say concerning this section of scripture:

I think I do not mistake, when I assume that this particular chapter of the gospel history, commonly called the temptation, is just the one that a good many theologians, and a much larger number of Christian disciples, do really, if not consciously, wish had not been written; that which most stumbles their speculation, and least fructifies their spiritual impressions; that which wears the most suspiciously mythic look, that which they skip most frequently in the reading, or, if they read only gather up their minds to go on with due attention, after they are through with it.

1 Horace Bushnell, Christ and His Salvation (New York:
In the writer's opinion there are very few commentaries which even come close to the true significance of Christ's fast. This is because they fail to understand three things--(1) the fact that God can sustain life for long periods without food and water, and what the nature of this support is; (2) the significance of the forty-day period; and (3) the nature and purpose of these special fasts by Moses, Elijah, and Christ are entirely different from the other religious fast which God established for man.

**HOW GOD SUSTAINS LIFE**

All life upon this earth is sustained by the light of God, according to the following:

. . . Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—

The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. (D. & C. 88:12,13).

From the scriptural point of view, this light of God reaches man through at least three great processes which he does not wholly comprehend. They are: (a) the transformation of the light of God into the light of the sun and its conduction to earth:
This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. (D. & C. 88:7).

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life (John 6:63).

(b) the process of photosynthesis, which takes this transformed light of God from the sun, and, in the leaves of green plants, combines it with water and elements to produce the growth of these plants; and (c) the many bodily processes in man which are activated by the eating of these plants. The energy—or actually God's light which has by this time been worked and reworked—which man thus derives activates his mind and body, and thus his life is supported.

And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings. (D. & C. 88:11).

These processes belong to this earth only. Translated, resurrected, and other heavenly beings are and will be vitalized directly by this light from God. Thus was Christ supported while his body was in the tomb.

... that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By [or in] which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison (1 Pet. 3:18,19).

For notwithstanding they die, they also shall rise again, a spiritual body.

They who are of a celestial spirit shall receive the same body which was a natural body; even ye shall receive your bodies, and your glory shall be that glory by which
By God's light, He reveals truth to man and supports him in many ways. There is no reason why He couldn't support Moses, Elijah, and Christ directly during their fasts instead of in the roundabout way of mortals. It will be noticed that only after the forty days when His Father withdrew His direct light, did natural hunger return to the Savior. "And when they [the forty days] were ended, he afterward hungered." (Luke 4:2).

During the long weeks of seclusion, our Lord had been sustained by the exaltation of spirit that would naturally attend such all-absorbing concentration of mind as His protracted meditation and communion with the heavens undoubtedly produced; in such profound devotion of spirit, bodily appetites were subdued and superseded; but the reaction of the flesh was inevitable.

The Significance of Forty Days

The reoccurrence of certain numbers in connection with the gospel is obvious. One cannot always attach too much meaning to them. However, in many of the instances in which the number forty is found, there is a distinct pattern and significance. (1) It seems always to be instituted and ordained by God. In none of the instances cited did the

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1 James E. Talmage, Jesus the Christ (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1943), p. 128.
people involved undertake to go through these periods of their own choice. They were called and commanded. (2) In the medical experience of man, it appears that in none of these occurrences could the purpose of the occasion have been accomplished without the direct assistance of God. (3) In every instance, the 40 periods of time involve a purification, preparation, and teaching. Let's examine just a few.

1. Genesis 7:17. In the time of Noah, God cleansed the earth of every impure thing, sparing only the righteous. The covering of the earth with water required 40 days and 40 nights, even though the waters did not recede until after 150 days.

2. Numbers 14:33. For 40 years God led the children of Israel in the wilderness after bringing them out of Egypt. For 40 years He fed them manna and cared for them. (Exod. 16:35). During this time He cleansed and prepared them to receive their inheritance by teaching the young and waiting for the old, who had become corrupt in Egypt, to die.

3. During two separate forty day periods, God prepared Moses to receive the first law, to build the Ark of the Covenant, and then to receive the Ten Commandments. (Deut. 9:9; Exod. 24:18).

4. God and Elijah communed for forty days in preparation for the latter's great work in restoring the Law,
and binding all things together in one. (1 Kings 19).

5. A forty-day period was allowed the Ninevites by God through his prophet Jonah (Jonah 3), for them to cleanse themselves completely, or be destroyed. They were able, with God's help, to accomplish what the people of Noah's time had failed to do in one hundred and twenty years.

6. For forty days Christ was prepared by His Father to embark upon His great teaching ministry which should aid men in their salvation. (Matt. 4:1,2).

7. For approximately forty hours as His body lay in the tomb, Christ organized the spread of the gospel to the spirit world and prepared the resurrection of mankind.

8. After His resurrection, Christ remained on the earth forty days and appeared forty times, teaching His people the more precious truths of the gospel and preparing them for exaltation (Acts 1:3).

In the writer's opinion, all of these occurrences with one exception were absolutely essential to the salvation and exaltation of the earth and mankind.

Christ's forty day communion with His Father was at the insistence of the latter. The gospel writers say "Then was Jesus led up of the spirit," and "the spirit driveth him," and "was led by the Spirit."

Even though Jesus was sinless throughout His life,
still He had to grow in knowledge, wisdom, and power.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. (Luke 2:52).

And I, John, saw that he received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace, and he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness. (D. & C. 93:12,13).

During this fast, . . . the angels ministered unto him (Mark 1:13). Talmage expresses beautifully the necessity of this period of consultation and revelation with His Father:

Christ's realization that He was the chosen and foreordained Messiah came to Him gradually. As shown by His words to His mother on the occasion of the memorable interview with the doctors in the temple court, He knew, when but a Boy of twelve years, that in a particular and personal sense He was the Son of God; yet it is evident that a comprehension of the full purport of His earthly mission developed within Him only as He progressed step by step in wisdom. His acknowledgment by the Father, and the continued companionship of the Holy Ghost, opened His soul to the glorious fact of His divinity. He had much to think about, much that demanded prayer and the communion with God that prayer alone could insure.¹

Receiving then a fulness of knowledge concerning His mission, He was prepared to embark upon the task of teaching truth.

Nature and Purpose of Forty Day Fasts Different

Of necessity, this third point has been explained in

¹ Talmage, p. 128.
conjunction with the prelude to this chapter, and with the
topics of how God sustains life and the significance of the
forty periods of time.

Conclusion

From the foregoing it would appear that the long
fasts of the Scripture were not undertaken, they were caused.
Because of the great spiritual experience with God, all
desire and need for food ceased. The abstinence from food
resulted from a spiritual experience with God, it did not
effect or induce one. Therefore, these particular fasts
should not be held as examples for man's fasting. God gave
man his manner of fasting, as described by Isaiah. (Considered
in Chap. III).

It may be noted that the three men whom God prepared
with those forty day fasts (1) did not die the manner of
death that other men die, (2) had special missions to per­
form for the salvation of man, and (3) have reappeared to­
gether to the earth on several occasions to perform their
functions.

Their death--

So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the
land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.
And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over
against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre
unto this day. (Deut. 34:5,6).
And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. (2 Kings 2:11).

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. (Luke 23:46).

Their associated appearances--

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart.

And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. (Matt. 17:1-3).

The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened.

We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber. . . .

After this vision closed, the heavens were again opened unto us; and Moses appeared before us, and committed unto us the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north.

After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us; for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, . . . (D. & C. 110:1,2,11,13).
CHAPTER V

THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST AND HIS DISCIPLES

The spiritual effect of fasting is expressed in Hel-aman 3:35 in the Book of Mormon:

Nevertheless, they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God.

The Place of Fasting in the Gospel Plan

Having laid a foundation for the subject of this thesis through an examination of its basic meaning and its history, an examination of Jesus' teachings of the principle is in order. On December 27, 1832, Joseph Smith purportedly received a revelation from God, part of which deals with the purpose of man's life here on earth. Contained therein are the following words.

And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.
Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God. (D. & C. 88:118,119).

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In the above writing, God is concerned because the faith, which man should have, is not present, and He instructs him as to an acceptable course to follow in order to obtain this faith. He must, first, learn; secondly, be organized; thirdly, prepare every needful thing, i.e. aiding the needy as well as caring for his own temporal needs; and fourthly, establish a house of worship. Note the descriptive order of the last sentence of the scripture. The first step in the achievement of life's goal is to learn to pray. Soon thereafter, one must learn the true significance of fasting; this accompanied by prayer will produce faith. When one's faith is rich, it will result in learning, as noted in v. 118. This learning should then carry man to, and provide him with glory, light and truth, which, if treasured, will supply him with truth regarding the order of all things. Having then received these things, he is in a position to assume the role of a god. It is significant to the development of this paper that fasting is mentioned as the second fundamental step in attaining godhood.

It is enlightening to compare the Sermon on the Mount with the order of principles just described in D. & C. 88:119. Such a comparison would seem to indicate that (1) the extreme logic and orderliness with which God has presented the gospel principles to all peoples is something to be seriously con-
sidered, and (2) all books of scripture—ancient and latter-day—support each other and present the same profound order of gospel teachings.

Matthew, in Chapters 5-7 records the most basic tenents which Jesus left for man to live by. Chapter five deals entirely with the basic purposes of fasting—love for and unity with God and one's fellow men, and purifying and enriching one's own life. Notice the eight thoughts which are commonly call the Beatitudes. The first four have to do with oneself and personal characteristics of repentance, humility, teachableness, and a desire for truth. The second four have to do with one's dealings and association with his fellow men. At the conclusion of the chapter in which Christ establishes the ideal mode of living, He gives the admonition, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

It is said that the savior never gave a command or a suggestion save He indicated the manner in which it should be accomplished. This He does in Chapter VI regarding the steps to be taken in achieving the things of which He spoke in Chapter V. Note that the order of principles is the same in Chapter VI as described above in D. & C. 88:119, with one exception. Faith is mentioned last instead of seventh, but this is done in order to emphasize the immediate principle for
which His disciples were striving. Certainly faith must come before great learning, glory, and godhood.

A breakdown of Matthew 6:

**Prepare every needful thing**—v. 1-4. Here Christ describes the true spirit in which alms [offerings] should be given.

**Pray**—v. 5-15. The spirit and pattern of prayer are cited, and the necessary relation of forgiveness there­to.

**Fasting**—v. 16-19. Rejection of hypocritical ab­stinance and mere form, and establishment of the real spirit­ual power thereof are described.

**Learning**—v. 19-21. It was Benjamin Franklin who paraphrased these verses when he advised, "Put your money in your head, and then no man can take it from you." Other writings also supports this message. For example:

> Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come. (D. & C. 131:18,19).

**Glory**—v. 22,23. Jesus here speaks of this light which will fill our minds and "whole body," which results in great spiritual and physical blessings.

**Order**—v. 24. One cannot, by following two plans
or philosophies, achieve the perfection of Godhood. There is a given order to the higher realms of God which all who desire to be there must learn.

**Faith**—v. 25-34. An unwavering, doubtless faith must exist in order to accomplish these things.

Chapter VII describes the additional works and principles of judgments, sacred things, trust, love, ordinances, teachings, good works, the validity and recognition of works, personal and moral courage:

... when Jesus ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, ... (Matt. 7:28,29).

In summary for the teachings described above it appears that fasting is the second step in the gospel plan. It must be learned early, very soon after prayer. It's usage precedes the overcoming of the temptations of Satan and the gaining of the faith necessary for exaltation. It is the writer's opinion that too many people seek to obtain faith without an acquaintance with the two principles which produce it. In all scripture, God has set down the step-by-step order of gaining his presence. Omission of any of these steps in their proper order will preclude man's achieving this goal.
Did Christ Establish a Fast?

This question should be handled here because many commentators have answered 'No' to the query. Compare this negative answer with the following information most of which has been presented earlier in greater detail.

As discussed in an earlier chapter, at the time of Moses, the Day of Atonement was established with the intent that all should keep it.

... on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement. ... And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. (Lev. 23:27,30).

Later, God said through Isaiah that He had established this as a positive commandment--"Is not this the fast that I have chosen?" (Isaiah 58:6).

Twice during Christ's earthly ministry He stated that it was His desire and intention that His disciples should fast.

When thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face; ... and thy father ... shall reward thee openly. (Matt. 6:17,18).

... the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast. ... (Mark 2:20).

These same instructions were given the people of Israel on the American Continent during His visit there (3 Nephi 13).

Distinct commandments were given to His people in
the latter-days that, in order to prepare them for the second
coming of the Christ, they should fast.

Also, I give unto you a commandment that ye shall
continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth.
(D. & C 88:76).

In spite of these things, some of the world's famous
Bible scholars have made statements such as the following:

No law was enacted by Christ and his apostles con­
cerning fasts; but the custom obtained, that most Christ­
ians occasionally and privately joined abstinence from
food with their prayers, and especially when engaged in
undertakings of great importance.¹

Christ has never established any definite rules re­
garding length of time for His fast, just as He has never
said that we should pray so many times or hours in a day.
Yet, He did give us definite instructions that we should
practice the ordinance. Of this Hastings says:

Although He Himself fasted for forty days before
beginning His ministry, and probably, as a devout Jew,
kept the one fast-day that was obligatory at the time--
the Day of Atonement--, He left no regulations for fast­
ing; He gave the principles, and left His church to make
rules for carrying them out.²

¹ James Murdock (translator), Mosheim's Institutes of
Ecclesiastical History (London: Simms and M'Intyre, 1848), p. 44.
² James Hastings (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Religion and
Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), Vol. V.
Examples of Purposes and Results of Fasting

(1) The children of Israel fasted for wisdom and strength in battle. (Judges 20:26).

(2) As recorded in the Book of Mormon, Christ appeared to the Nephite disciples to reveal the name of the church after they had fasted and prayed. (3 Ne. 27).

(3) It is claimed that a testimony may be greatly strengthened through fasting.

I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself." (Alma 5:46).

(4) Scripture indicates that fasting aids man in the acquisition of truth and of the spirit of prophecy and in maintaining a testimony. An example is the reunion of Alma with the sons of Mosiah after they had been separated for fourteen years in their capacity as missionaries:

... they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scripture diligently, that they might know the word of God.

But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God. (Alma 17:2-3).

(5) Revelation seems to have come in connection with fasting. Consider the calling of Paul and Barnabus on their missionary journey. The choice was aided by fasting and prayer:
Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers: 

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent they away. (Acts 13:1-3).

Omni, the prophet, admonished his people thusly:

And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved. (Omni 26).

(6) Another claimed purpose of fasting is that it aids man in his repentance. Paul wrote that fasting is a great factor in keeping family solidarity.

Defraud ye not one the other . . . that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. (1 Cor. 7:5).

Fasting seems to be necessary to man's ministry of reconciliation in order to fulfill his part of the atonement, i.e. in reconciling his differences while here on earth. (See 2 Cor. 5:18).

The three following verses were selected from among the many in the Old Testament which refer to fasting as a means to repentance.

When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. (Psalms 69:10).

Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to
me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping and with mourning. (Joel 2:12).

And they (Israel) gathered together at Mispeh and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said then, We have sinned against the Lord. (1 Samuel 7:6)

Fasting and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

The purpose of the sacrament would indicate that there is no more fitting time to partake of the sacrament than at the conclusion of a fast. At this time, one should be more humble and stronger spiritually than at other times. During his fast, he should have repented of his weaknesses, sought forgiveness and forgiven others, and gained a new nearness with God. In this condition the covenant of the sacrament has its greatest value. Real worth would result as man then renews the covenant made at baptism (D. & C. 20:37) and promises again to (1) take upon himself Christ's name—and represent Him in every word, thought, desire, and action, (2) always remember Him—and do things as He would have done them, and (3) keep His commandments which He has given.

Paul and his companions partook of this holy ordinance just prior to breaking a two-week fast. (Acts 27).

The partaking of the sacramental emblems does not break the fast, even though there is certain food value
therein. These emblems are taken for a sacred, spiritual purpose with an eye single to God. Any thing taken during the fast to satisfy physical wants would, of course, turn the mind from the singleness of purpose. In fact, in the strictest sense, desires or thoughts of temporal gratifications, whether food, pleasure, or whatever, breaks the fast whether or not there is an actual partaking of the thing desired. Such desires draw the attention from the great spiritual exercise to be accomplished during the fast period. The negative side of fasting is of little value without the positive.

For other teachings of Christ on fasting, see the chapters on Old Testament Times, Isaiah's Teachings, and Fasting and the Hereafter.
CHAPTER VI

THE FAST DAY

The first Sunday of every month has been set aside by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as a fast day—a period of abstinence from food and drink, work, pleasure and recreation, and all other bodily gratifications so that this twenty-four hour period might be devoted to the great spiritual purposes of fasting. Other denominations have also designated various days or periods for fasting purposes. It is not the intent of this chapter to point out the things which should not be done on these days. The underlying power of the gospel would be overlooked by emphasizing the negative aspects thereof. A song, which was published a few years ago has an interesting title, which was "You Can't Do Wrong, Doin' Right." If man spent his entire time doing the things which Christ gave him to do on these days, he wouldn't have time to worry about the borderline activities in which he might participate. Even by thinking of food, pleasure, work, etc., he would already have broken the fast which God has ordained.

In considering the things one ought to do on this day, refer again to Isaiah's teachings on fasting. He points out
several purposes of this doctrine. Further reference is made
to fast day duties in a question and answer type essay written
by an English scholar, Robert Nelson, born in 1656. He writes
from the point of view of the Church of England. Many of his
thoughts appear to this writer to be extremely beautiful.
Even though the essay is somewhat lengthy, it is valuable and,

Q. What do we mean by fasts?
A. Days set apart by the Church, or by Civil Author­
ities, or by our own Appointment, to humble ourselves
before God, in punishing our Bodies, and afflicting our
Souls, in order to a real Repentance. By outward Signi­
fication testifying our grief for Sins past, and by using
them as means to secure us from returning to those Sins,
for which we express so great a Detestation.

Q. Wherein consists the Nature of Fasting?
A. In a strict Sense it implies a total Abstinence
from all Meat and Drink the whole Day, from Morning to
Evening; and then to refresh ourselves sparingly as to the
quantity, and not delicately as to the Quality of the
Food. And in this manner not one but more Days were past
in a Continual Fast by the Primitive Christians before
Easter.

Q. How is a Day of fasting to be observed by serious
Christians?
A. Not only by interrupting and abridging the Care
of our Bodily Sustenance, but by carefully inquiring into
the State of our Souls; charging ourselves with all those
Transgressions we have committed against God's Laws, humb­
ly confessing them with shame and confusion of Face,
with hearty Contrition and Sorrow for them; deprecating
God's Displeasure and begging him to turn away his Anger
from us. By interceding with him for such Spiritual and
Temporal Blessings upon ourselves and others as are need­
ful and convenient. By improving our knowledge in all the
Particulars of our Duty. By improving our knowledge in
all the Particulars of our Duty. By relieving the Wants
and Necessities of the Poor, that our Humiliation and
Prayers may find Acceptance with God. If the Fast be publick, by attending the publick Places of God's Worship.

Q. What ought we chiefly to beware of in our exercises of fasting?
A. We ought to avoid all Vanity and Valuing our selves upon such Performances; and therefore in our private Fasts, not to proclaim them to others by any external Affectations; that we may not appear unto Men to fast [Mat. 6:18]. Not to despise or judge our Neighbor, who does not, and it may be has not the same Reason to tie himself up to such Methods. Not to destroy the Health of our Bodies, and thereby make them unfit Instruments for the Operation of our Minds, or the discharge of our Employments. Particular Care ought to be taken, that we do not grow thereby morose and sour, peevish and fretful towards others, which Severity to our selves may be apt to incline us to; for that is so far from expressing our Repentance, increasing our Guilt.

Q. How does it become a devout Christian to spend his time during the Holy Season of Lent?
A. ... to express his Humiliation before God for his past Transgressions. The Ornament of Attire may be laid aside, as improper to express the Sense of Mourners, and the frequency of receiving and paying Visits may be interrupted as unseasonable when our Minds are opprest with Sorrow. Publick for Pleasure and Diversion should be avoided as Enemies to that Seriousness we now profess. Our Retirements should be filled with reading pious Discourses, and with frequent Prayer, and with examining the State of our Minds. The publick Devotion should be constantly attended, and those instructing Exhortations from the Pulpit which are so generally established in many Churches in this Season. We should be liberal in our Alms, and very ready to employ our selves in all Opportunities of relieving either the temporal or spiritual Wants of our Neighbours. And we should frequently exercise our selves in the Meditation of divine Subjects, the best means to make all Discourses from the Press and the Pulpit effectual to our Salvation.

Q. What do you mean by Meditation in a religious sense?
A. Such a serious Application of the Mind to the Consideration of any divine Subject, Whether any Mystery
of the Gospel Institution, or any Truth or Virtue of the Christian Religion, as may dispose it firmly to believe and embrace it, and stir up all the Faculties of the Soul to a vigorous Prosecution of it. And 'tis this exercise of the Will and Affections that distinguishes Meditation from what we call Study.

Q. How ought we to prepare our selves for the Exercise of this Duty?

A. By remembering that we are in the Presence of God, who knoweth all our Thoughts, and searcheth out all our Ways; that we are unworthy by reason of our Sins to present our selves before him; . . . and therefore adoring his infinite Majesty with profound Reverence, we should humbly beg his Aid and Help, so to enlighten our understandings, and to influence our Wills, that the present Action may tend to his Glory, and the good of our own Souls.

Q. What are the blessed Fruits of holy Meditation?

A. It has a universal influence upon the whole Life of a Christian, and is an admirable Instrument to quicken our Progress in all the Graces of God's Holy Spirit. It illuminates our Understandings with the Knowledge of our Duty, and stores our Memories with all such Arguments as are proper to excite us to the Performance of it. The Voice of Conscience is by this means attended to, and we can never make any considerable Breaches upon it, without being allarmed with severe Reproaches. It wings our prayers with Reverence and Devotion, and increases our importance by impressing a lively sense of the Necessity and Importance of those things we beg of God. It habitates our Minds of spiritual Objects, and raises them above the perishing things of this life. It strengthens our holy Purposes, arms us against Temptations, and enflames all the Faculties of our Souls with earnest Desires of attaining and enjoying our chiefest good.\(^1\)

Care of the Poor and Needy

In all ages according to the scriptures, God has

commanded his saints to care for the poor in their midst.

Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day.

If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother:
But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth

Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee.

Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto.

For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land. (Deut. 15:5, 7-11).

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:
For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in;
Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?
When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?
Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?
And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.
(Matthew 25: 34-40).

And now, if God, who has created you, on whom you are
dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, in faith, believing that ye shall receive. O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another.

And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you—that is, for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants. (Mosiah 4:21-26).

Behold, I say unto you, that ye must visit the poor and the needy and administer to their relief, that they may be kept until all things may be done according to my law which ye have received. Amen. (D. & C. Sec. 44:6).

And remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, for he that doeth not these things, the same is not my disciple. (D. & C. Sec. 52:40)

The giving of one's temporal possessions to his less fortunate brethren is one of the greatest exercises in which he can indulge to grow in ability to keep the second great commandment. He goes without food so that, by being hungry, he might experience the same feeling of need as the one whom he has assisted with his fast offering. This produces within him a greater appreciation for his fellowman's situation and one's love for his fellowman is increased as he generously shares his means with others. Such was an attribute of Christ's atonement—He had to suffer part of the realignment of men's lives with eternal truth before His great gift of
mercy could be granted to them.

People give tithes and offerings to the churches for three basic reasons. First, they are commanded to do so. They receive some blessing for this rigid obedience to command; so did the children of Israel as they were being taught. Second, they seek some blessing for themselves. It seems to be a worthy thing to give something to God in exchange for a thing you desire more. Thirdly, they have a deep and abiding love for God, for all of His children, and for the gospel plan and purposes. Whenever man is great enough to pass over reasons one and two, and impart of his temporal possessions in order to assist his fellowmen and further the works of God here on earth, he has then begun his long road back to the presence of his Father, according to Christian Theology.

In order to better organize the care of the poor, that money which would have been spent for the two meals from which man abstains on the fast day, is left with the Bishop, Priest, or Minister. All cases of need are reported to him and he is able to assist these peoples from the collective contributions of the membership of the churches.

**Church Service and Testimony Bearing**

Anciently the children of Israel used to meet together on fast day, to bear testimonies and learn of God:

Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the
children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them.
And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.
And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God. (Neh. 9:1-3).

A commandment is recorded in one sacred book in these last days regarding the fast days and the spiritual exercises to be accomplished thereon:

Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him.
Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it.
Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things.
Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.
And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;
For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High;
Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times;
But remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord.
And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect. . . .
. . . or in other words, rejoicing and prayer.
(D. & C. 59:5-14).

Herein is described a representative fast and the
fruits thereof. In order to increase in love for God and man and to guard oneself from gross transgressions, he should repent (i.e. offer a sacrifice of a broken heart), pray, partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, praise God, confess weaknesses to his brethren.

In fast and testimony meetings, one partakes of the sacrament. At the conclusion of a fast--during which one has reconciled himself with God, has repented of his short-comings, etc.--he should feel closer to God than any other time. In this new spirit of oneness, he eats of the bread to renew the covenant which he made at baptism (D. & C. 20:37), promising once again that (1) he is willing to take His name upon him, and be a true representative of Christ, (2) he will think of Him always—in everything he does, and (3) that he is willing to keep His commandments. The seriousness with which one has considered the eternal purposes of God during this twenty-four hour period of prayer and fasting causes this sacrament to be a thing of great beauty and significance.

During the bearing of testimonies one hears many different things. In the previously quoted scripture, God says man should do these things: (1) "confess thy sins unto thy brethren," and ask their forgiveness, (2) "thank the Lord thy God in all things," (3) "do these things in thanksgiving," (4) "remain steadfast in your minds in solemnity and the
spirit of prayer, in bearing testimony to all the world of
those things which are communicated unto you" (D. & C. 84:61).
Too often testimonies become travelogues, preachings of
sermons, etc. which belong in other meetings designed for
those purposes. The bearing (baring or revealing) is the
unveiling of one's testament or witness regarding the eternal
purposes of God in order to (1) give God honor therefore,
and (2) strengthen the faith of those brethren who may hear.

**Preparation of Food on Fast Day**

As all are not able to go without food for 24 hours,
as discussed elsewhere in this treatise, it is probably nec­
essary to engage in the preparation of some food on this
day. Hence, God's statement "only let thy food be prepared
with a singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect." The aged or young children may need a certain quantity of
food on this day to prevent serious health difficulties.

Such preparation of food should be done very simply using
foods so that the "singleness of heart" for the carrying out
of the spiritual purposes of fasting will not be interfered
with. Some, who are physically able to fast, may use this
as an excuse to "justify" their eating on fast day because
they get a headache, etc. Fasting, in moderation, is not
harmful to the human body--it is very beneficial, according
to medical authorities cited in Chapter XI. Twenty-four hours is a moderate fast. He who will not fast deprives himself of one of the physical and spiritual benefits of life, and prohibits himself, according to Christ's words, from obtaining the faith necessary to overcoming the evil one and thus from entering the celestial kingdom.

Meditations

Much of one's time on Fast Day which is not spent in meetings or caring for the sick and needy, should be spent in quiet meditation.

In Psalms one may read of some benefits of thought:

O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. (Psalms 119:97-100).

In his letter of instruction to the youthful Timothy, Paul refers to the redemption of all men and of a special salvation for those who believe. He then refers to many activities in which man should engage and virtues which he should acquire. He then commands, "Meditate upon these things" and do them, and promises salvation as a result thereof.

For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe (italics mine). These things command and teach.
Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine: continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. (1 Timothy 4:10-16).

To the saints at Philippi, Paul writes his famous admonition regarding things virtuous, lovely, and of good report, and tells his converts, "Think on these things."

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Philippians 4:8).

Sufficient thought enables us to control ourselves. Regarding this point, two early church leaders in these last days had this to say:

It is necessary that we should control our passions, for if we do not control them they will control us, and under such control we do wrong. When we control ourselves, the result is equanimity of feeling such as is necessary to the exercise of an enlightened judgment.

Latter-day Saints, is this the course for us to take? Shall we glorify the creature at the expense of the Creator? . . . Brother Rich said this morning that he believed some people were too lazy or too indifferent--it may be indifference and not laziness in every instance,

1 John Taylor and others, Journal of Discourses, XXVI Volumes, (Salt Lake City), Volume X, p. 87.
--to think, to feel after, to seek for and receive the blessing of God, although they make the profession of being Latter-day Saints.

Now, I do not think a man's religion amounts to anything if he only makes a profession of it and does not practice it. I would rather have an intelligent heathen, if he is honest and determined to do the best he can, living up to the light he has, than a Latter-day Saint who is careless and indifferent, who does not seek to enjoy the spirit of his religion.

Men and women think evil thoughts, they give place to angry feelings; and they think it a meritorious act, and pride themselves upon their conduct because they give them utterance instead of quenching them! . . . If my heart is wicked does that justify me in giving utterances to its foul conceptions? Certainly not. If my heart were such that I could not think good thoughts nor entertain good feelings; if I were possessed of anger and could not contain myself, then it were better for me to sew up my mouth and stop my utterance. It is no merit in a man or woman because he or she thinks an evil thought or indulges in an angry spirit to give utterance to it;

It is my duty and your duty to think pure thoughts, to have holy desires, to be charitable, to be kind, to be long suffering, to be full of love, and not any of those evil influences. . . . What is our duty? It is not to lend ourselves in any particular to the devil, but it is to obey God; to let the fruits of righteousness be manifested in our lives. If we are Latter-day Saints, let us live up to the profession and be that truth and in deed, and not think that we have no labor to perform in controlling of our thoughts and our evil desires; Neither to allow ourselves to imagine that because we have become members of the Church God will do it all without any efforts on our part.

In support of George Q. Cannon's contention of lack of serious thought, Knowlson had the following to say and quote in his book, The Art of Thinking.

A short time ago one of our most distinguished state-

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1 Ibid., Volume XXI, pp 77-79.
men, in giving an address on education, said: "What you want to develop in your race is the art of thinking, and thinking is an art which stands a very good chance of perishing from amongst us altogether. The risks to which independent thinking is exposed, when you come to reckon them up, are manifold and dangerous. I think the Press, with all its merits, is one of the greatest enemies of independent thinking." If by the Press we are to understand newspapers, magazines, and cheap literature, then we shall be in substantial agreement with this opinion.

People read a great deal more than they used to do--there is more to be read--but they think less. The chief danger today is that of intellectual apathy. Life is so complex, the struggle for existence so keen, and pleasures of various kinds are so cheap and abundant, that men and women seem to live entirely on the surface of things. What we need is a call to independent thought.

Thinking for thinking's sake, says the Spectator in an article to which we are here indebted, has become to most men positively repellent.

Madame Swetchine says that to have ideas is to gather flowers; to think is to weave them into garlands.

It is not erudition that makes the intellectual man, but a sort of virtue that delights in beautiful and vigorous thinking, just as moral virtue delights in vigorous and beautiful conduct. Hamerton: The Intellectual Life.

And friend, when dost thee think? was the reply made by a quaker lady to whom Southey had explained with no little satisfaction how he spent the day. He told her how he studied Portuguese grammar whilst he was shaving, how he read Spanish for an hour before breakfast, he wrote or studied till dinner; how in a word, his whole time was filled by writing, reading, eating, talking, taking exercise and sleeping; and she replied with the very pertinent question we have just given. It is one we should ask ourselves. Profound students of the times tell us that we are great absorbers of print, but that the art of thinking is gradually becoming a lost art.

A thinking man is the worst enemy the Prince of Darkness can have. (Carlyle)

Schopenhauer says somewhere that experience is our text and reflection is the commentary. It is to be feared that in this sense there are many lives made up of bare text; not a sign of query, note, or comment. Experience
is full enough but it passes reflection's sentry-box without a challenge.

A man can more easily burn down his own house then get rid of his prejudices. (Descartes)

The light of the understanding is not a dry or pure light, but receives a tincture from the will and affections, and it forms the sciences accordingly, for men are most willing to believe what they most desire. (Bacon, *Novum Organum*, Apt. 49)

Moral culture must begin with a change in the way of thinking, and with the founding of a character. (Kant)

Consideration of thought, its origin, and the relationship of the body and other influences to it may help us a great deal in understanding more fully the relationship of thought to fasting, prayer, the light of Christ, and the functions of the Holy Ghost.

According to one book Abraham was permitted in vision to see all of the intelligences which were organized under our Heavenly Fathers leadership. (Abr. 3). Thinking is a prime function of these intelligences which have always existed. Of this Brigham Young said:

The origin of thought was planted in our organization at the beginning of our being. This is not telling you how it came there, or who put it there. Thought originated with our individual being, which is organized to be as independent as any being in eternity. . . The origin of thought and reflection is in ourselves. We think, because we are, and are made susceptible of external influences, and to feel our relationship to external objects. Thus thoughts of revenge, and thoughts of blessing will arise in the same mind, as it is influenced by external circumstances.  

2 Taylor, Volume 2, page 135.
Knowlson speaks of the origin of thought and of the factors which influence it.

It is highly probable that we shall never dispense with the word inspiration, but speaking psychologically, it is used quite inaccurately. A new idea is not breathed into the mind from without by a Force, a Person, or an Influence; it is an origination within the boundaries of the human mental frontier, and a better word, though one less magical, would be cerebration. . . . Our function is to discover, if we can, some of the origins of new ideas and to trace them through the elementary stages of their career. There are three factors involved; the physical, the mental, and the social. No one factor can be clearly separated from the others; we can only discuss them as the psychologist would the threefold unity of the mind. The physical factor has to do with all those organs which in the interaction between mind and body, during health and disease, affect the number and quality of our thoughts. There are bodily conditions, as well as general environments, that promote fortunate trains of thought just as there are repressive conditions that either make thinking difficult or impart a quality to it that is pessimistic, cynical, taciturn. And where natural ability is considerable these good or bad conditions foster or destroy the moods that are conducive to inspiration and hence to originality. The second factor is mental, depending primarily for its efficiency on the state of the body and its general surroundings. (italics mine). When working in a manner that we may call happy, this factor renders the mind highly susceptible to external or internal stimuli; and the two fused together with imaginative warmth often eventuate in a new combination of thoughts; in a word, an inspiration. The third factor is social, and has already been included in the description of the other two. It is represented in the widest sense by the effect of mind on mind, in whatever form the mind may manifest itself.¹

As indicated in the chapter entitled "Physiological Aspects of Fasting," fasting benefits the thought processes

by cleansing the body of toxins and poisons which limit the effectiveness of thought. The mind can work best when the body is healthiest.

... Ideas that are superlatively excellent may be found to originate in the same manner as those of less importance, the difference being that the former are born when the brain is working at high pressure, and when all the necessary conditions are harmonious, whilst the latter fall into consciousness during its more prosy periods and when conditions are in no sense unusual ... 1

Our intelligence or mind can be activated or aided in its thought processes and "discovery" of eternal truth by being cleansed, and energized by the light of Christ "which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space." Scientists have touched upon this principle, but failing to consider revelation from God, have never quite been able to understand the real significance thereof.

... Finsen, the celebrated Danish light-cure specialist, was one summer's day looking out of his study window. He saw a cat on the roof of a shed, stretching itself and luxuriating in the sun. It slept on, and Finsen watched it--almost aimlessly. Then he noticed that soon the shadow deepened and reached the cat; whereupon the tabby arose and went farther into the sun. Finsen was interested now, and he watched until he saw the act several times repeated. He came to the conclusion that light and heat were of some particular benefit to the animal; and that was the starting-point of his now famous work ... .

It is certain, therefore, that the vital element in originality is the quality of mind which makes use of the material supplied by the senses; for, after all, even

1 Ibid., p. 78.
the things we see and hear, and which may impress us deeply and wonderfully, are internal conceptions. The idea that arises in the mind—whether from without, by vision, or within, by reflection—is a problem we have to solve; and we may repeat appositely the general question with which we commenced this section: In what way do ideas come to us? The only proper answer is: By the action of the laws of association. Those laws are the great trade routes of intellectual exchange, wherein things alike tend to coalesce and things unlike are made vivid by contrast. Ideas themselves are still a mystery: No psychology has ever yet fathomed them. But we believe that the movements of ideas are traceable, even those which are suddenly unified into other and new ideas. Both science and poetry afford interesting illustrations. "I have been speculating last night," said Charles Darwin to Horace Darwin, "what makes a man a discoverer of undiscovered things; and a most perplexing problem it is. Many men who are very clever—much cleverer than the discoverers—never originate anything. As far as I can conjecture the art consists in habitually searching the causes and meaning of everything that occurs." This is only partially correct, for discovery is always something more than a strictly logical process, as Prof. E. B. Poulton pointed out long ago.

Regarding these new ideas spoken of above, Webb, in his A Technique for Producing New Ideas, says that new ideas are merely different combinations of existing facts. Therefore as one strives to study the gospel and to learn all things, he should endeavor to relate each principle to all others. In the writer's opinion, great new beauties arise in this way. The gospel is most glorious when one finally realizes that each phase harmonizes with and is dependent upon all others for its eternal function.

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1 Ibid., p. 82.
On fast day as one makes a practice of turning himself from every worldly consideration to "think on these things" he becomes more adapt at thinking.

To reason a thing out is to turn to a collection of facts, to study their pros and cons, and to weigh them with a view to securing a preponderance on one side or another. The task is often laborious, and it shows intellect in its least attractive light; whereas in intuition we see the mind working on its highest levels; the process is rapid almost to instantancy, but its rapidity is the sole difference dividing it from the slower method of reasoned argument.

For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have.

Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, same their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost (2 Ne. 28:30,31).

According to Scripture, during the Millenium the light of God will be upon the earth to such an extent that man shall be able to learn much faster than at present. All things will be revealed to him to reason with.

Wherefore, the things of all nations shall be made known; yea, all things shall be made known unto the children of men.

There is nothing which is secret save it shall be revealed; there is no work of darkness save it shall be made manifest in the light; and there is nothing which is sealed upon the earth save it shall be loosed.

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1 Ibid., p. 84.
Wherefore, all things which have been revealed unto the children of men shall at that day be revealed; and Satan shall have power over the hearts of the children of men no more, for a long time. And now, my beloved brethren, I must make an end of my sayings. (2 Ne. 30: 16-18).

God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now; Which our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation to be revealed in the last times, which their minds were pointed to by the angels, as held in reserve for the fulness of their glory; A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest.

All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ. And also, if there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars—All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, and all the days of their days, months, and years, and all their glories, laws, and set times, shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times—According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest. How long can rolling waters remain impure? What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints. Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—(D. & C. 121:26-35).

In gaining this heavenly knowledge and turning one's
heart from the things of this world, fasting appears to be a great aid.

As will be noted later fasting aids health, and one law of health (D. & C. 89) promises that man "shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures" if he adheres to it.

Prayer

Considerable time should be spent on the fast day in prayer. See the following chapter for a discussion thereof.
CHAPTER VII

PRAYER AND FASTING

More things are wrought by prayers
Than this world dreams of, wherefore let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me day and night.
For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call him friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by golden chains about the feet of God.

-Tennyson

The scope of this chapter is to examine (1) the
nature and purposes of prayer, and (2) the relationship of
prayer and fasting.

Definitions

There are, of course, many concepts and expressions
of the nature of prayer. Only a few will be cited here.
To many, prayer is a broad concept, and it may take forms
and have meanings to peoples the world over which those who
read this work have not considered. Notwithstanding the
varied practices of prayer, true Christian prayer is a very
simple principle.

Jeremy Taylor defines prayer broadly as:

... an ascent of the mind to God. All the forms
of such ascent—adoration, confession, thanksgiving as well as petition, seeking for definite gifts—may be included in the generic term prayer. Prayer is in general the *communion of the human soul with God*. (Italics mine)\(^1\)

The great Bible scholar, James Hastings, defines this principal thusly:

Prayer may be understood widely, so as to include every form of address from man to God, whatever its character. Hannah's song is a thanksgiving, yet it is introduced by the words "Hannah prayed and said." The prayer of Habakkuk is a psalm. . . .

There is a direct and mutual communion of spirit with spirit between ourselves and God, in which He receives our affection and gives a responsive breathing of His inspiration. Such communion appears to me as certain a reality as the daily intercourse between man and man; . . . \(^2\)

William James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience* described prayer as "every kind of inward communion or conversation with the power recognized as divine."\(^3\)

One B. P. Bowne lends to prayer an inner significance with very little importance in form:

. . . We must be practiced in industry, in self-control, in integrity and faithfulness, in helpfulness and mutual trust, in the love and practice of righteousness, and in faith in God. . . . This religious desire and effort of the soul to relate itself and all its interests to God and His will is prayer in the deepest sense. This


\(^3\) Ibid., p. 22.
religious desire and effort of the soul to relate itself and all its interests to God and His will is prayer in the deepest sense. This is essential prayer. Uttered or unexpressed, it is equally prayer. It is the soul’s desire after God going forth in manifestation. It may find expression in petition, or in worship, or in obedience, or in multidinous forms of activity; but the thing itself is always the same—the soul’s striving after God. This is the prayer which may exist without ceasing, consisting, as it does, not in doing or saying this or that, but in the temper or attitude of the spirit.

In the foregoing ideas, little stress is laid on the bodily form which accompanies prayer. The bended knee and body, the bowed head, the clasped hands, and the closed eyes are mere symbols of humility and concentration. They should in no wise be mistaken for prayer itself, but neither should they be discarded as unnecessary. Christ has told us that one day every knee shall bow in prayer and confession of his divinity.

The Soul’s Sincere Desire

Many sing, "prayer is the soul’s sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed." A careful analysis of this phrase reveals many beautiful thoughts.

1. Prayer is of the soul.

In 1864, George Q. Cannon had this to say about the origin of prayer:

It is recorded in the Book of Mormon that when the

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1 Ibid., p. 23.
Nephites were oppressed by the Lamanites, who would not suffer them to pray orally unto God, they prayed in their hearts, while engaged in their labors, for the blessings of God to be granted unto them, for His deliverance to be extended to them, and that their enemies might not have power to hold them in bondage; and the word of the Lord came to them and whispered peace, and told them that the day of their deliverance was nigh at hand, the day in which He would emancipate them from the thraldom of their enemies. This is a good example for us to follow. It is possible for us to bring ourselves into such a condition that we can pray unto God in our hearts, no matter what labor we are performing. We are exhorted to pray constantly unto Him, and it is possible for us to concentrate our thoughts on the things of God while we are doing our labor, and our thanksgivings can ascend silently unto God, and they are not unheard by Him, and His blessing can descend upon us, and His joy can fill our hearts, and we can become the happiest and the most blessed people upon all the face of the earth. I know it requires a struggle to concentrate our thoughts on the things of the kingdom of God, while we are engaged in business; but this is one of the things which we have to train ourselves to and to overcome.  

In the chapter on the Long Fasts of the Scripture, the light of God and its effects upon man as this emanation of light from His being fills the universe has already been discussed. His children, created in His likeness, have, potentially, all of the same powers and functions which He has. They are gods in embryo. Medical science indicates that every thought man thinks, every desire he has in his heart produces an energy which is emitted from his being. Being eternal in nature and fundamentally righteous (according

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to most religious teaching), everytime man desires anything which is contrary to eternal truth, an unusual release of energy is created which enters his life's blood and is thrown out into space. The "lie detector" is based upon this principle. Some people suppose that God cannot know their thoughts and desires when man can measure them with a machine! Brain specialists indicate that through the process of thought, an electrical energy is produced and given off from man's being. Again by means of machines, physicians can measure the intensity of this force even though they cannot interpret it.

But according to Scriptures spirit can interpret or understand the messages of spirit. The Bible indicates that Christ perceived the thoughts of those with Him (e.g. Luke 9:47). Man often does the same thing. The reader may have had the experience entering a home, and before he sees or hears anything, he senses the anger and strife, or joy and happiness which abides there. This communication of spirit to spirit is the only way man knows--of a surety--most things. For example, man knows that he is loved by others, not basically through words or actions, but by the spiritual messages of energy which are emitted from their souls and are received by his own.

2. Prayer is sincere. The English "sincere" is derived from two Greek words meaning literally "without wax."
The story is told, to illustrate this point, of the commerce in ancient Greece. A popularity of the time was to have stone idols or figures as ornaments or to worship. Of course, those images which were carved from the perfect white marble were most precious and brought the highest price. Some stone-cutters, in order to get worldly wealth, would select near-perfect stones for their work, and, after the idol was shaped, would fill the small flaws and pits in the stone with white wax. These figures appeared to be something they weren't. Only those which were "sincere," or without wax, had a lasting value.

Today man uses the same processes in his life, both with his physical possessions and his character. He puts wax on beautiful hardwoods in order to add a superficial luster, but by so doing he hides the genuineness and natural beauty. And in his personal life, he spends much time and effort applying artificial "waxes" with which he endeavors to impress others with unreal and less-than-eternal abilities. By so doing, he hides the real beauties of his character and eternal nature.

God is not deceived nor should His children mock Him by these things. Luke said to the Pharisees, "ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomin-
in the sight of God."¹ God judges us by the feelings of our hearts as expressed in words:

Behold and hearken, O ye elders of my church, who have assembled yourselves together, whose prayers I have heard, and whose hearts I know, and whose desires have come up before me. (D. & C. 67:1).

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh (italics mine).
A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.
But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.
For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. (Matt. 12:34-37).

Prayer is Desire

The foregoing indicates that prayer comes from the heart, not from the mouth. Prayer sinks to its lowest ebb when it becomes memory work.

Hastings has the following to say regarding prayer as desire:

. . . Prayer is desire; desire enters into everything in life, so that life is an unceasing prayer. . . . Our lives, whatever they may be, are the true expression of our prayers. We should know that our false as well as our true desires are alike expressed, each desire as a seed carrying within itself its own fruition, each bringing its own punishment or reward. If we could all realize the truth of this, what a difference it would make in our prayers. If we knew that a true desire always related us to the good and the true, ever becoming the seed for

¹ Luke 16:15.
greater and more perfect expression, or if we realized that our false desires not only brought into our lives unpleasant and disagreeable things, we would try to shape our desires in order to have them conform to the true requirements of the law of desire and its fulfillment.

True prayer is something more than desire. It is no mere subjective instinct—no blind outreach. If it met no response, no answer, it would soon be weeded out of the race. It would shrivel like the functionless organ. We could not long continue to pray in faith if we lost the assurance that there is a Person who cares, and who actually corresponds with us. Prayer has stood the test of experience.

... this inner communing, thought to thought, with God; this reflection of spirit in Spirit; this perfecting of character is reciprocal intercourse; this shaping, in mutual converse, of mind, meaning, and will; this response of love to love; . . .

Meditation and Prayer

It is claimed by some that prayer can be most effective if preceded by a period of quiet meditation. Too many people greatly weaken their prayers because they hurry from their labors to their bedside, tired, and endeavor to offer an acceptable communication to God. They kneel there only to find that during the course of this "prayer," they find themselves planning tomorrows activities, or contemplating the results of todays' ventures, or wondering about the family's economic status, etc. This type of activity, while it may not reach the presence of God with the desired spiritual force, is not without some value. Such prayer may be

1 Hastings, p. 24.
mere auto-suggestion, and as such has great psychotherapeutic value. However, if one would spend fifteen minutes in quiet, uninterrupted meditation just before he prays, during which time he organizes his jumbled thoughts and plans satisfactorily his temporal course, then he could commune sincerely with his Father regarding the great eternal matters of life:

Shut thy door. The reason is plain. He who would pray must first retire: the spirit of the world and the spirit of prayer are contrary the one to the other. Business or pleasure, or even common conversation if it continue for any long time, will strangely indispose the mind for devotion; and the soul before she can take her flight to heaven, must plume and balance her winds by holy meditation; she must rally her scattered and dissipated thoughts, and fix them on the business she is going about; she must consider the nature of God to whom she is to pray; of herself who is to pray to Him: she must know the sins she has been guilty of to confess them; and the grace she stands in need of to petition for it. All this is not to be done but by deep meditation, which is the mother of devotion and the daughter of retirement. They who do not meditate cannot pray; and they who do not retire can do neither.

Prayer is the expression of a good desire. The human heart is full of restless desires, and the prayers of men consist for the most part of the unsifted petitions which are urged by their varying passions. But nothing can be plainer than this, that prayers can never be answered unless the desires that prompt them are right. And doubtless the main reason why prayers remain unanswered is that the desires have not been corrected by meditation.

... (italics mine)²

Rev. Gordon Cove of England recently published a

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¹ Ibid., p. 200.
² Ibid., p. 25.
...It seems to be Luke's special purpose to call attention to the prayerfulness of Christ. He refers at least six times to various cases where Christ prayed, which have been unnoticed by the other Evangelists. He refers His prayer (1) at His Baptism; (2) the cleansing of the leper; (3) before He called the twelve apostles; (4) at His Transfiguration; (5) on the Cross for His murderers; (6) with his dying breath. Prayer formed the habit rather than the exception of His life on earth, else what mean such expressions as these: "He went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when the evening was come He was there alone." "He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed." "He went into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." "He was alone praying." "He took Peter, and James and John, and went up into a mountain to pray.""}

CHRIST HIMSELF SPENT MUCH TIME IN SOLITUDE AND URGED HIS DISCIPLES TO DO THE SAME. "And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a MOUNTAIN APART TO PRAY, and when the even was come, HE WAS THERE ALONE" (Matthew 14:23). "And from thence He arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into a house, AND WOULD HAVE NO MAN KNOW IT" (Mark 7:24). Not only did He do this Himself, but He encouraged His disciples to do the same. "And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James and John his brother, and BRINGETH them up into a HIGH mountain APART" (Matthew 17:1). He evidently chose a high mountain, so that others would not attempt to scale it and thus disturb their devotions. "And He said unto them, 'COME YE YOURSELVES APART INTO A DESERT PLACE, and rest awhile'; for there were many coming and going. . . ." (Mark 6:31). "And the apostles, when they were returned,

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1 Gordon Cove, Revival Now Through Prayer and Fasting Published by author, p. 35.
told Him all that they had done. And He took them, and WENT ASIDE PRIVATELY INTO A DESERT PLACE. . . . " (Luke 9:10).

It is also very noticeable that many of the great miracles wrought by Christ and the prophets, were done through times of private prayer. . . .

Concerning the desires which give rise to prayer, and answered and unanswered prayer much has been written. The following thoughts are well expressed and will serve to summarize great volumes.

The lowest and crudest notion concerning prayer is that it consists in asking God for things, and its value consists in getting the things for which we ask. This is the notion with which childhood always begins, and the only one which childhood can entertain. This notion is also prominent in popular religious thought, and underlies much of what is said concerning answers to prayer. This view is very superficial, and is the thing to find young persons sceptical with respect to prayer because they have failed to get the things for which they have prayed; . . . Such cases abound and, if we would escape the painful doubts arising thence, we must revise and deepen our conception of prayer and its relation to the religious life. Plainly, the view of prayer simply as a talisman or as a means of getting things is inadequate to experience. . . .

Prayer means the discipline of desire. Embalmed in the 106th Psalm is the record of one of those weirdly tragic stories of the wilderness journey of the Israelites. . . . The comment is familiar:—

He gave them their request;  
But sent leanness into their soul. . . .

The cases of Lot, Esau, Ballam, Ahab, Gehazi, Judas, and Demas illustrate the same strange possibility of inward treachery of desire. It is the fate of all who have been

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1 Ibid., p. 71.
cursed with the burden of a granted prayer.

How does God deal with it? For a long time He may in compassion withhold the fatal gift. He may in pity disregard our petulant clamour. And He may in many ways bring home to our minds that the thing we crave is in several respects unsuitable. We may become conscious under His discipline that without it we are less entangled with the world and with temptation; that we can live more holily and more freely as we are, and that to quench the desire we have would be to choose the better part. God may make it plain to us that it is childish to look upon this one thing as the supreme and only good. Providential obstacles are thrown in our way, difficulties amounting almost to impossibilities absolutely prevent us for a while from attaining our object, and give us time to collect ourselves and take thought. And not only are we prevented from attaining this one object, but in other respects our life is enriched and gladdened, so that we might be expected to be content.

But man's will is never forced; and therefore if we continue to pin our happiness to this one object, and refuse to find satisfaction and fruit in life its bare earthly form, so that as soon as we receive it our soul sinks in our shame. Instead of expanding our nature and bringing us into a finished and satisfactory condition, and setting our life in right relations with other men, we find the new gift to be a curse to us, hampering us, cutting us off in unexpected ways from our usefulness, thwarting and lighting our life round its whole circumference.

Pray Always

Based on the preceding descriptions of prayer, it no longer seems so impossible to follow the admonition of Christ that man should pray always. John Wesley, the reformer, had the following to say regarding continuous prayer.

It is given him (man) "always to pray, and not to faint." Not that he is always in the house of prayer, though he neglects no opportunity of being there. Neither is he always on his knees, although he often is, or on his face, before the Lord his God. Nor yet is he

\[1\text{Ibid., p. 26,27.}\]
always crying aloud to God, or calling upon Him in words: for many times "the Spirit maketh intercession for him with groans that cannot be uttered." But at all times the language of his heart is this: "Thou brightness of the eternal glory, unto Thee is my heart, though without a voice, and my silence speaketh unto Thee." And this is true prayer, and this alone. But his heart is ever lifted up to God, at all times and in all places. In this he is never hindered, much less interrupted, by any person or thing. In retirement or company, in leisure, business, or conversation, his heart is ever with the Lord. Whether he lie down or rise up, God is in all his thoughts; he walks with God continually, having the loving eye of his mind still fixed upon Him, and everywhere "seeing him that is invisible."

The ancient church fathers also spoke on this subject.

... Clement of Alexandria conceives the life of a genuine Christian as an unbroken prayer. 'In every place he will pray, though not openly, in the sight of the multitude. Even on his walks, in his intercourse with others, in silence, in reading, and in labor, he prays in every way. And though he commune with God only in the chamber of his soul, and call upon the Father only with a quiet sigh, the Father is near him.' The same idea we find in Origen, who discourses in enthusiastic terms of the mighty inward and outward effects of prayer, and with all the enormous learning, regards prayer as the sole key to the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures.

Results of Prayer

Tertullian, early church writer, aptly summarizes the results of prayer:

... 'Prayer' says Tertullian, 'blots out sin, repels temptations, quenches persecutions, comforts the

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1 Ibid., p. 419.
desponding, blesses the high-minded, guides the wonderers, calms the billows, feeds the poor, directs the rich, raises the fallen, holds up the falling, preserves them that stand. ¹

Relationship of Fasting to Prayer

Throughout the entire history of mankind, these two basic principles have been preached and practiced in connection with each other. Both have been tried and tested, and have survived the changes of time as principles of strength. Regarding this test of history, Hastings says of prayer:

It is for experience to decide whether prayer is of practical use, and it is always better to depend upon expert witnesses—to hear Darwin rather than a gardener on the variation of plants; Lord Kelvin rather than a telegraphist on the properties of electricity; and the saints rather than amateur critics of religion on prayer. One turns to Abraham, who interceded for Sodom, to Jacob, who wrestled with the angel until the day broke, to Moses, who in the darkness of Sinai obtained God's mercy for his nation, to Elijah, who opened and sealed the heavens by prayer, and to the unknown poets who gave us the matchless liturgy of the Psalms.

But we can go further. As we look back over the history of the world, we cannot help being struck by the fact that the men of prayer are the men of power. There is a connexion in history between prayer and power. ²

These doctrines of power are impressive when used separately, but when joined together to support and complement one another, "nothing shall be impossible unto you"

(Matt. 17:20).

¹ Ibid., p. 377.
² Hastings, p. 41-42.
A study of the scripture reveals that fasting is both a cause and an effect; related to prayer, it may either humble and prepare a person for prayer or it may harmonize with prayer to enhance and strengthen the supplication. The spiritual nature of the person dictates the purpose which fasting is to serve. In times of weakness and need of repentance, fasting is used to induce a humble heart which may speak to God. Under the law of Moses, which was essentially a schoolmaster to prepare the children of Israel for the Gospel as introduced by Christ during His ministry, this was the major use of fasting. The psalmists wrote oft of this purpose:

But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. (Psalms 35:13).

When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. (Psalms 69:10).

However, in New Testament times, the expression was not "fasting and prayer," but "prayer and fasting." Christ always spoke of it by the later term. When a person is spiritually strong and in seeking God in earnest prayer, he can do nothing else but fast. From the Scriptures it appears that it is not possible to be in deep, intense communication with God and be seeking earthly pleasures, bodily satisfactions, etc. Thus was Christ's example, as cited above: He not only left people and the business of the world, but undoubtedly did not seek other earthly comforts, such as food,
drink, etc., while in prayer. It is this fasting which results from earnest prayer, not the fast which prepares us for it, of which Christ spoke when He promised that we could have great power over evil.

Schaff mentions this apparent change in the purpose of fasting in early times.

After the Jewish custom, fasting was frequently joined with prayer, that the mind, unencumbered by earthly matter, might devote itself with less distraction to the contemplation of divine things. The apostles themselves sometimes employed this wholesome discipline (Acts 13:2, 14:23, 2 Cor. 6:5), though without infringing the gospel freedom by legal prescriptions.

Paul taught that fasting adds great strength to our character which results in support to prayer. Hastings quotes Thomas on this point.

Fasting represents an attitude of detachment from the things of time and sense, whether it be from food, or pleasure, or lawful ambition. Prayer represents the complementary attitude of attachment to the things of God and the spiritual world. When we thus realize our need of detachment from earth we shall readily determine, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, what particular forms our fasting shall take. In the times of our Puritan forefathers the spiritual value of fasting from food was fully realized, and there can be no doubt whatever of the relation of physical food to spiritual blessing. The sin of over-eating is only too apt to hinder spiritual power in prayer, while if we "keep under the body" we shall certainly be conscious of more liberty and blessing as we fulfill our work of prayer and intercession. What we need concerning food, dress, books, recreation, friendship, ambition, is the resolute determination to be above them, superior to them, in order that the spiritual may

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1 Schaff, p. 379.
rule everything. Like St. Paul we should say, "All things are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. VI. 12). This is the true idea of fasting, and in this spirit of detachment from things earthly we obtain one of the true accompaniments of, and helps to, that spirit of attachment to God which is found in prayer.

Writers in this day, who have approached this relationship of prayer and fasting more scientifically come to a similar conclusion.

... Moderate, or excessive, fasting is a mental discipline which constructs a competent personality. To hold in check the craving for food is an aid in bringing under subjection thoughts prone to wander from the prayer. ... The voluntary overcoming of the capricious wandering of the attention imparts to the faculties such a powerful stimulus that an overplus of energy is set free for the task in hand. In like manner he who overcomes the temptation to gratify the desire for food releases a generous amount of energy which may be devoted to the prayer life. Furthermore, in too many instances superfluous nutrition makes a tremendous draught upon the life-forces of the human organism. "Probably from four to six times as much food is eaten as the body actually requires, and this great amount of excess must be disposed of at the expense of the vital powers." (H. Carrington, Vitality, Fasting and Nutrition, p. 112). Living to eat, many persons expend their powers in vegetating, while those who eat to live may direct into other and more useful channels the energy wasted by others. Moderate fasting, springing from a religious motive, may expend energy in fixing a prayer in mind, which effort might otherwise have been devoted to useless nutritive processes. 2

Turning again to Rev. Cove for some thoughts on fast-

1 Hastings, 201.
ing and its' support of prayer.

... the denial of any of the bodily appetites will help us spiritually, because it will train the corresponding appetites of the soul. That is what fasting means. It is not mere abstinence from food or from any other pleasure, in itself. It is abstinence with a purpose.1

Then further, fasting is a kind of mortification or self-chastisement. Which aims at self-control. Fasting is not meant to weaken the body, but to strengthen the will. Fasting primarily means, of course, going without food, but it also includes fasting from sin. Fasting above all things helps to subdue the flesh. Our greatest goal in life should be, to be men and women after God's own heart. How often we have felt this great purpose to have been frustrated through fleshly and carnal appetites? It arrests the appetite of sex, because food feeds all desires and appetites of the flesh, and fasting starves them. "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth" (Colossians 3:5). A luxurious diet, habitual overfeeding, produces an unbalanced animalism and induces spirit-blindness which can see nothing beyond the natural...2

Fasting will often prevent self-indulgence in its grossest forms—not by crushing out God-given desires, but by preventing them from being used in God-forbidden ways, by keeping them within the barriers of God-imposed limits...3

... Fasting is a voluntary disuse of anything innocent in itself, with a view to spiritual culture. It does not necessarily apply to food only. It applies to everything which a man may desire. So fasting is really putting God first when one prays, wanting God more than one wants food, more than sleep, more than one wants fellowship with others, more than one wants to attend to business...4

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1 Cove, p. 161.
2 Ibid., p. 162.
3 Ibid., p. 162.
4 Ibid., p. 163.
Fasting reveals a greater desire, a greater determination and greater faith, and God observes this when He sees one of His children fasting and praying. He sees that His child has forsaken all pleasures, of which, the eating pleasure is one of the major pleasures of life. Fasting is the deliberate clearing of the way to be more effective with God in prayer. It is the laying aside of all weights and hindrances (Hebrews 12:1). To lay aside every weight, is to lay aside all the hindrances to prayer, and a heavy stomach is certainly a hindrance! 

When a person wants a thing so much that he is willing to go without food to obtain that thing, then THE FAST ITSELF BECOMES A PRAYER. It is an inward, unspoken heart cry, a deep-rooted longing and a reaching out to contact Jesus, the only One Who has the power to grant the desire of the heart. 

Our bodies are to be the temples of the Holy Spirit and to fast is an act of reverence to our own bodies. It gives all the waste matter and poisons in the system time to clear away, and cleanses the blood stream throughout. Fasting then, is both an act of reverence to God and also to yourself.

Paul, speaking on the subject of family unity, stresses the need of the husband and wife for each other. He indicates that there is only one time that they should deny (defraud) themselves of each other, and that is during their periods of fasting and prayer. (1 Cor. 7:5).

A Latter-day Commandment and Explanation

A revelation given to Joseph Smith on December 27, 1832, stresses anew that the purpose of prayer and fasting is

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1 Ibid., p. 165.
2 Ibid., p. 166.
3 Ibid., p. 166.
to purify oneself and come closer to God. In this message from God, He promises that if man will cleanse his body, mind, and heart so that his light (energy) might shine forth to Him with greater sanctity, then He will reward him with even more light and truth. This principle is considered to be eternal, that "light cleaveth unto light" (D. & C. 88:40). In the verses which follow, God urges man to cleanse himself that He might further cleanse him, and commands man to continue in prayer and fasting from that time forth.

Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. (D. & C. 88:63).

Behold, that which you hear is as the voice of one crying in the wilderness—in the wilderness, because you cannot see him—my voice, because my voice is Spirit; my Spirit is truth; truth abideth and hath no end; and if it be in you it shall abound.

And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.

Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will.

Remember the great and last promise which I have made unto you; cast away your idle thoughts and your excess of laughter far from you. (D. & C. 88:66-69).

And I give unto you, who are the first laborers in this last kingdom, a commandment that you assemble yourselves together, and organize yourselves, and prepare yourselves, and sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean; (D. & C. 88:74).
Also, I give unto you a commandment that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth. And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom. Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand; (D. & C. 88:76-78).
CHAPTER VIII

FASTING AND THE HEREAFTER

As an introduction to a discussion of what the future holds for the principle of fasting, the following words of Christ may be examined:

The disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not.

And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast (italics mine).

But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and rent is made worse.

And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. (Mark 2: 18-22, and Luke 5:38).

This same incident appears in all of the synoptic gospels (Matt. 9:14-17, and Luke 5:30-39). The three reports fail to indicate clearly who it is that asks the question. Matthew definitely points out that the disciples of John are the inquirers. Luke is equally firm in saying that it was the Pharisees. But Mark seems to imply that both came simul-
taneously to him with their joint inquiries, even though the Pharisees are mentioned alone two verses previously. There are three possible answers: (1) Matthew's record is incorrect and Luke is right. This seems likely, since in most other instances during Christ's ministry it was the Pharisees who were trying to corner Him on some point of doctrine. (2) Matthew's statement is correct and Luke is wrong. This is possible since these men who were fasting are definitely referred to as disciples of John. John taught the gospel of repentance—of which fasting is an essential part, as has been pointed out—and his followers were not aware of Christ's true identity. John, himself, even though he was a second cousin of Christ on their mothers' sides, did not recognize Christ as his Savior until it was revealed to him. If this were the case, their inquiry would have been advanced in a much different spirit than that of the Pharisees, since they, having not been fully converted to the full gospel, were earnestly seeking the truth from Christ. (3) Mark's writing is correct. It seems unlikely that these two groups would join together to confront Christ with the question since their purposes were so contrary. President J. Rueben Clark of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints casts some light on the subject in his introductory remarks to Section 54 of Our Lord of the Gospels. He supports contention
number 2, in saying, "The disciples of John came to Jesus and asked why do not the disciples of Jesus fast as do they and the Pharisees." Regardless of the decision, the person or persons asking the question is not as important as the answer which was given.

Christ then turned to His effective word-picture manner of speaking so that His questioners could more readily understand why His disciples had not been fasting. The wedding ceremony is a very important occasion to the oriental peoples. Because of the adequacy and clearness of this occasion which is given by George M. Mackie, the writer should like to quote his text. In reading this paragraph, one should keep in mind the reference which Christ has made to Himself as the Bridegroom. During the day of preparation, He is away at the home of one of His relatives, His Father in Heaven. At the last hour, His friends who will gather around Him will be prophets of old and of recent times, his saints who have been resurrected, and the people of Enoch (Moses 7:63).

The other voices to which Rev. Mackie refers in the following paragraph are the many missionaries who are in the world now, who have been, or who will be, all of whom cry,

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"He is coming." One other thing which should be noted is that those who belong to the bridegrooms family go in with Him, and partake of a wedding feast. It is not a time of going without.

Oriental marriages usually take place in the evening. . . . During the day the bride is conducted to the house of her future husband, and she is there assisted by her attendants in putting on the marriage robes and jewellery. During the evening, the women who have been invited congregate in the room where the bride sits in silence, and spend the time commenting on her appearance, complimenting the relatives, discussing various family matters, and partaking of sweetmeats and similar refreshments.

As the hours drag on their topics of conversation become exhausted, and some of them grow tired and fall asleep. There is nothing more to be done, and everything is in readiness for the reception of the bridegroom, when the cry is heard outside announcing his approach.

The bridegroom meanwhile is absent spending the day at the house of one of his relatives. There, soon after sunset, that is between seven and eight o'clock, his male friends begin to assemble. Their work for the day is over; they have taken a hasty supper, and dressed themselves, and have come to spend the evening with the bridegroom and then escort him home. The time is occupied with light refreshments, general conversation and the recitation of poetry in praise of the two families chiefly concerned and of the bridegroom in particular. After all have been courteously welcomed and their congratulations received, the bridegroom, about eleven o'clock intimates his wish to set out. Flaming torches are then held aloft by special bearers, lit candles are handed at the door to each visitor as he goes out, and the procession sweeps slowly along towards the house where the bride and her female attendants are waiting. A great crowd has meanwhile assembled on the balconies, garden-walls, and flat roofs of the houses on each side of the road. It is always an impressive spectacle to watch the passage of such a brilliant retinue under the starry stillness of an Oriental night. The illumination of the torches and candles not only makes the procession itself a long winding array of moving lights, but throws into
sharp relief the white dresses and thronging faces of the spectators seen against the sombre walls and dark sky. The bridegroom is the centre of interest. Voices are heard whispering, "There he is! There he is!" From time to time women raise their voices in the peculiar shrill, wavering shriek by which joy is expressed at marriages and other times of family and public rejoicing. The sound is heard at a great distance, and is repeated by other voices in advance of the procession, and thus intimation is given of the approach half an hour or more before the marriage escort arrives. It was during this interval that the foolish virgins hurried out in quest of oil for their lamps. Along the route the throng becomes more dense, and begins to move with the retinue bearing the lights. As the house is approached the excitement increases, the bridegroom's pace is quickened, and the alarm is raised in louder tones and more repeatedly, "He is coming. He is coming."

Before he arrives, the maidens in waiting come forth with lamps and candles a short distance to light up the entrance, and do honour to the bridegroom and the group of relatives and intimate friends around him. These pass into the final rejoicing and marriage supper; the others who have discharged their duty in accompanying him to the door, immediately disperse, and the door is shut.

Christ's next statement is the most significant item in this chapter. "As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast." Why is it impossible to fast when one is in the presence of Christ? Surely the disciples could have gone without food! Nevertheless, they could not fast. The wedding is a festive occasion. Christ was there personally to feed his disciples. Fasting has been defined as returning to a oneness with God, others, and being true to ourselves. They, the apostles, had no need to return to

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the gospel—-it was with them—, nor to seek Christ—-He was there. Would it be possible for one to return to Provo if he were already there? It is important to recognize that one doesn't read in the four gospels of anyone who knew of Christ's true identity who fasted while he was there—with one possible exception. The multitude of 4000, who had been following Christ, had been without food for three days when He created the fishes and the loaves to feed them. The people were not certain of Christ's true identity, but followed Him out of curiosity and because of the miracles which He worked, for we read "that the multitude wondered." It is probable, however, that during the three days He taught, He had explained to them the spiritual function of fasting and they probably participated therein.

Christ's words which were referred to above in Mark 2:20 now seem to have greater significance. "But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from the, and then shall they fast in those days." After Jesus' death many were the instances where members of His church fasted, including those disciples of whom He said, "They cannot fast." (See Acts 14:23, Acts 27:33, Acts 13:1-3). In His absence, it is more difficult to live in complete harmony with the gospel. Realizing this, Christ promised His people a Helper who would bring this same joy or peace to them and help them
in their fasting or rejoicing. He then tells them that if they really love Him, they would, through the help of the Comforter, continually try for a oneness with the gospel. He also mentions that He, the bridegroom would go to the presence of His Father, and that they should rejoice. It is said that he did not mean that they should be particularly happy because He was not there, but that while He was away, they should prepare, repent, gain wisdom, etc. (Note: the parable of the virgins hold great significance here for those who remain behind.)

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If you loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father. . . . (John 14:26-28)

Of great worth to this treatise in the determination of Christ's teachings is the formentioned parable of the new wine and old bottles. This is recorded in all of the synoptic gospels. Wherever it appears in commentaries, it is usually used in connection with the Law of Moses as compared with the preparatory gospel which Christ taught. It is this writer's opinion that this parable does not refer to the Law of Moses. It was not Christ's intent that it
should; and where it does in commentaries, it is only because it has been taken out of context and used as an analogy. The parable is used in the scriptures in every case in connection with fasting and refers to the preparatory gospel which Christ left and to the full condition of joy and glory which is anticipated for a later time. Christ is saying that fasting belongs only to this time—this earthly life, and to man's purpose, that of preparing himself to meet God. He rebuked the Pharisees' understanding when He said, "no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, (i.e. this full glory of oneness is not revealed to man until he is made new and is purified. If man has not the capacity to receive a blessing, it would only be "spilled" if given to him in great abundance) and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles." Jesus indicated that when the actual Kingdom of Heaven is on earth, men shouldn't try to mix it with the preparatory system. If they try to combine the two, each system will be marred; leave each within its environment and let it be effective. In other words, those who have gained the oneness which will admit them to association with the Lord
needn't retrogress to their preparatory system.

The two purposes of fasting, as outlined earlier by Isaiah are: (1) spiritual preparation for unity, and (2) to care for the poor by offerings which result from man's going without. In reading the following verses, the reader should ask himself whether a greater oneness than this could be achieved by those gaining the celestial glory:

They are they who are the church of the Firstborn. They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—

They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;
And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.
Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—

Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.
And they shall overcome all things.
Wherefore, let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who shall subdue all enemies under his feet.
These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever. (D. & C. 76:54-62)

Regarding the order of Enoch, God's words to him help understand why they gained His presence.

Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; . . .

And Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion; and it came to pass that Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom; and from thence went forth the saying, Zion is fled. (Moses 6:57, 7:69).
Now regarding the temporal purpose of fasting. In the kingdom of Heaven the perfect economic law will exist which is the law of consecration. This order will there replace our substitute law of tithes and offerings. God explained the law of consecration to Joseph Smith on February 9, 1831, by revelation. The principle is here given.

And behold, thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support that which thou hast to impart unto them, with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken.

And inasmuch as ye impart of your substance unto the poor, ye will do it unto me; and they shall be laid before the bishop of my church and his counselors, two of the elders, or high priests such as he shall appoint or has appointed and set apart for that purpose.

And it shall come to pass, that after they are laid before the bishop of my church, and after that he has received these testimonies concerning the consecration of the properties of my church, that they cannot be taken from the church, agreeable to my commandments, every man shall be made accountable unto me, a steward over his own property, or that which he has received by consecration, as much as is sufficient for himself and family.

And again, if there shall be properties in the hands of the church, or any individuals of the church, more than is necessary for their support after this first consecration, which is a residue to be consecrated unto the bishop, it shall be kept to administer to those who have not, from time to time, be amply supplied and receive according to his wants. (D. & C. 42:30-33).

Zion can only be built up by the law that God revealed for that purpose, which is the law of consecration—not the law of tithing [or fast offerings]. The law of tithing was instituted because the people could not abide the greater law. If we could live up to the law of consecration, then there would be no necessity for the law of tithing, because it would be swallowed up in the greater law. The law of consecration requires all; the law of tithing only requires one-tenth of your increase.
annually.¹

Therefore, as Christ fulfilled some of the practices under the Law of Moses, so will He fulfill the purposes of fasting through His infinite atonement, the revealed gospel, and by helping man into His presence by means of the Comforter:

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (Rom. 14:17).

CHAPTER IX

GANDHI ON FASTING

No treatise on fasting would be complete in the absence of an adequate examination of the teachings of Mohandas K. Gandhi on the subject. For many years this powerful little man interested and influenced the world with his determined fasts which he used to institute many of his great reforms. Unfortunately, many people were prone to tab his fasts as stubborn, sulky moves. A closer analysis will show that Gandhi possessed a deep understanding of this ancient principle and, generally, was able to use it wisely and for righteous purposes.

(There will be a conspicuous absence of footnotes in this chapter since all material is quoted from Ethics of Fasting by Mohandas K. Gandhi, published in Lahore, India, by Indian Printing Works, in 1944. This book is a compilation of all known articles, speeches, letters, or interviews by or with Gandhi on this subject. In connection with each quoted paragraph the place and date of origin is indicated, and the page of the book on which it is to be found. The writer personally knows of only one copy of the book which
is in the library of the University of California. He has tried to select the most representative parts of his teachings for inclusion here).

Many of his fasts have had great political consequences, although Gandhi claims that the sociological aspect was not the prime purpose. He speaks of his most famous fasts as follows:

My own fasts have always, as I hold, been strictly according to the law of Satyagraha. Fellow Satyagrahis too in South Africa fasted partially or wholly. My fasts have been varied. There was the Hindu-Muslim Unity fast of 21 days in 1924 started under the late Maulana Mohamed Ali's roof in Delhi. The indeterminate fast against the MacDonald Award was taken in the Yerawada Prison in 1932. The 21 days' purificationary fast was begun in the Yerawada Prison and was finished at Lady Thackersay's as the Government would not take the burden of my being in the prison in that condition. Then followed another fast in the prison in 1933 against the Government refusal to let me carry on anti-untouchability work through Harijan (issued from prison) on the same basis as facilities had been allowed me four months before. They would not yield, but they discharged me when their medical advisers thought I could not live many days if the fast was not given up. Then followed the ill-fated Rajkot fast in 1939. (Harijan, July 20, 1942, p. 99).

Of this last 1939 fast, Gandhi was very sorrowful, for even though the results for his countrymen were beneficial, he compromised his position and was thereafter extremely critical of himself for having done so.

According to this Indian leader, there are three primary purposes of fasting: (1) Spiritual self-development;
(2) Maintenance of health; (3) For the benefit of one's fellowmen. From all of Gandhi's pronouncements on the subject, this writer has attempted to organize his teachings into these three areas, and to select for restatement here those which, in the writer's opinion, are the most beautiful and of lasting worth.

**Spiritual Development**

A. Several are the purposes which Gandhi contributes to fasting. Fasting is:

1. For control of self and evaluation of the soul.

   What is bread to a hungry stomach, fasting is to a soul struggling for self-realization. . . . To cater to the needs of the body is to retard the progress of the soul. . . . It is presumed that the soul rises in direct proportion to the suppression of physical cravings. When passions are controlled, the soul thrives and prospers. (Lahore, 1944, p. i.)

2. For purification, physical and spiritual.

   I should like to note that I have not here dealt with fasts undertaken for bodily or spiritual purification. Nature cure doctors should be consulted for the former. The greatest of sinners can undertake the latter. And for this type of fast we possess a veritable mind of literature. Fasts for spiritual purification have really been forgotten in our day. If they are ever undertaken, they are either purely imitative or merely, for the sake of tradition, and we cannot therefore derive the benefit from them that we should. Those who want to go in for a Satyagrahi fast should certainly possess some personal experience of fasts for spiritual purification. Fasts for ridding the body of impurities are also beneficial. In the end, of course, there is only one basis of the whole ideal of fasting, and that is purification. (Harijan, September 8, 1940, p. 98).
3. For achieving love.

My fast is among other things meant to qualify me for achieving that equal and selfless love. (Sept. 18, 1924, p. 16.)

4. For obtaining aid in moral and intellectual difficulties.

... The effects of fasting are not only increased bodily activity, but also spiritual enlightenment, if we fast for a purpose, in order to obtain a result. Whenever I have a moral or intellectual difficulty I fast... I have found fasting and prayer efficacious in most difficulties with men and things. (Young India, March 29, 1928, p. 34.)

5. For overcoming distress.

My religion teaches me that whenever there is distress which one cannot remove, one must fast and pray. (Sept. 18, 1924, p. 12.)

6. For penance and punishment (the punishment concept is more fully explained in the section on the social aspects of fasting.)

All fasting and all penance must as far as possible be secret. But my fasting is both a penance and a punishment for those whom I try to serve, for whom I love to live and would equally love to die... The only way love punishes is by suffering. (Feb. 16, 1922, p. 11.)

B. Gandhi stresses the fact that there are certain prerequisites of an efficacious fast, the absence of which makes rather pharisaical in our abstinence.

1. A mental attitude conducive to repentance.

... Confession of error is like a broom that sweeps away dirt and leaves the surface cleaner than before. (Feb. 16, 1922, p. 7.)... There is nothing so helpful
and cleansing as a fast accompanied by the necessary mental co-operation. (Feb. 16, 1922, p. 9.)

I know the mental attitude is everything. Just as a prayer may be merely a mechanical intonation as of a bird, so may a fast be a mere mechanical torture of the flesh. Such mechanical contrivances are valueless for the purpose intended. Again, just as a mechanical chant may result in the modulation of voice, a mechanical fast may result in purifying the body. Neither will touch the soul within.

But a fast undertaken for fuller expression, for attainment of the spirit's supremacy over the flesh, is a most powerful factor in one's evolution. (Feb. 16, 1922, p. 10)

2. An abiding faith in God.

My religion says that only he who is prepared to suffer can pray to God. Fasting and prayer are common injunctions in my religion. But I know of this sort of penance even in Islam. In the life of the Prophet I have read that the Prophet often fasted and prayed. . . . He achieved most of his great things by fasting and prayer. I learnt from him that only he can fast who has inexhaustible faith in God. (Oct. 23, 1924, p. 21)

Fasting is a potent weapon in the Satyagraha armoury. It cannot be taken by everyone. Mere physical capacity to take it is no qualification for it. It is of no use without a living faith in God. It should never be a mechanical effort nor a mere imitation. It must come from the depth of one's soul. It is therefore always rare. (Harijan, March 13, 1939, p. 68)

Only trust can beget trust. (Harijan, April 8, 1939, p. 79)

3. A love of truth.

But a mere fast of body is nothing without the will behind it. It must be a genuine confession of the inner fast, the irrepressible longing to express truth and nothing but the truth. Therefore those only are privileged to fast for the cause of truth who have worked for it and who have love in them even for opponents, who are free from animal passion and who have abjured earthly possessions and ambition. No one, therefore,
may undertake without previous preparation and discipline the fast I have foreshadowed. (Harijan, May 3, 1933, p. 58)

4. Selflessness, patience, etc.

Fasting is a fiery weapon. It has its own science. No one as far as I am aware, has a perfect knowledge of it. Unscientific experimentation with it is bound to be harmful to the one who fasts, and it may even harm the cause espoused. . . . There can be no room for selfishness, anger, lack of faith, or impatience in a pure fast. . . . But we have learnt how infinitely watchful and prayerful he who fasts has to be and how even a little carelessness can damage a good cause. It is now apparent that in addition to truth and non-violence a Satyagrahi should have the confidence that, God will grant him the necessary strength and that, if there is the slightest impurity in the fast, he will not hesitate to renounce it at once. Infinite patience, firm resolves, single mindedness of purpose, perfect calm, and no anger must of necessity be there. (Harijan, Sept. 8, 1940, p. 98).

C. Gandhi, as Christ, taught that fasting is an absolute necessity to one's obtaining peace.

But the public will have to neglect my fasts and cease to worry about them. They are a part of my being. I can as well do without my eyes, for instance, as I can without fasts. What the eyes are for outer world, fasts are for the inner. . . . Is it not better that I satisfy my conscience though misguided, because not perfectly pure, than that I should listen to every voice, be it ever so friendly but by no means infallible? (Dec. 25, 1925, p. 24).

D. All of his fasts were on a high spiritual plane.

He remarked on one occasion, "my fast is a matter between God and myself." He believed very definitely that God gives assistance to those who approach Him in fasting.

If God has more service to take from this body, he will hold it together despite the deprivation of earthly food. He will send me spiritual food. (Tribune, May 3,
The safety lies in the fact that it involves no risk excepting to one's own life. All this really ought not to be difficult for a true Christian to understand. Psalm 23 is on the lips of most Christians. How few of them realize that the philosophy of Satyagrahi fasting is fully contained in these matchless verses:

"He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me."

When the Prophet Mohamed said that Allah sent his soul food whilst his body was starving he said the same thing. The stricken and agonized soul cannot otherwise resorted. But we of the present day have forgotten our spiritual treasurers. (Harijan, March 20, 1939, p. 70, 71).

E. So strongly did Gandhi believe in the principle of fasting that on one occasion he extolled the benefits thereof as follows:

... I venture to say that there is nothing so powerful as fasting and prayer that would give us the requisite discipline, spirit of self sacrifice, humility and resoluteness of will without which there can be no real progress. (March 10, 1920, p. 3).

Teachings on Physical and Health Aspects

Inasmuch as an entire section is devoted to the physiological effects of fasting, Gandhi's counsel will be limited in this regard.

A. Benefit may be derived by reviewing an account of one fast in which he points out several phenomena which one may encounter during a fast, and how to break a prolonged
It is my conviction that the body gains by a well regulated fast. For during fasting the body gets rid of many of its impurities.

... On the fourth day I developed a violent headache and the strain was proving unbearable. In the afternoon of the fourth day I stopped all work. The following day I felt recuperated, the feeling of exhaustion was gone, headache had almost subsided. On the sixth day, I felt fresher still and on the seventh day which was also my silent day I felt so fresh and strong that I was able to write with a steady hand my article on the fast.

I am not aware during the whole of the fast of having suffered any pangs of hunger. Indeed on the day of breaking the fast I was in no hurry, I broke it half an hour later than I need have. ...

I broke the fast on orange juice and grape juice, about six ounces altogether, and I sucked the pulp of an orange. I repeated the performance two hours after, adding ten grapes, which too were slowly sucked, leaving out all the skin. ...

At the time of writing these notes it is the twelfth day after the breaking of the fast. I have not yet taken any solid food. ...

My own opinion is that I have lost physically nothing as a result either of the twenty one days' fast or this the latest seven days' fast. (December 10, 1925, p. 31).

B. Regarding long fasts, Gandhi has set down some basic rules to follow for those not acquainted with fasting procedure. It will be noted here, and is true of all his fasts, that he drank water during his period of abstinence.

From a layman's and from a purely physical standpoint I should lay down the following rules for all those who may wish to fast on any account whatsoever:

1. Conserve your energy both physical and mental from the very beginning.

2. You must cease to think of food whilst you are fasting.

3. Drink as much cold water as you can, with or without soda and salt, but in small quantities at a time (water should be boiled, strained and cooled). Do not
be afraid of salt and soda, because most waters contain both these salts in a free state.

4. Have a warm sponge daily.

5. Take an enema regularly during fast. You will be surprised at the impurities you will expel daily.

6. Sleep as much as possible in the open air.

7. Bathe in the morning sun. A sun and air bath is at least as great a purifier as a water bath.

8. Think of anything else but the fast.

9. No matter from what motive you are fasting, during this precious time, think of your Maker, and of your relation to Him and His other creations, and you will make discoveries you may not have even dreamed of.

With apologies to medical friends, but out of the fulness of my own experience and that of fellow cranks I say without hesitation, fast (1) if you are constipated, (2) if you are anaemica, (3) if you are feverish, (4) if you have indigestion, (5) if you have a head ache, (6) if you are rheumatic, (7) if you are gouty, (8) if you are fretting and foaming, (9) if you are depressed, (10) if you are over joyed; and you will avoid medical prescriptions and patent medicines. (Young India, Dec. 17, 1925, p. 31,32).

C. Gandhi indicates that great rewards of real rest, vitality and disease cure are the benefits of fasting.

The physical value of fasting is being more and more recognized day by day. A vast number of diseases can be . . . treated by judicious fasting. . . . Not many cases of harm done by fasting can be cited. Increased vitality is almost the universal experience of those that have fasted. For real rest for body and mind is possible only during fasting. Suspension of daily work is hardly rest without the rest that the overtaxed and overworked digestive apparatus needs in a multitude of cases. (Young India, March 29, 1928, p. 35).

D. Based on his own experience, it is his advice that older people and those of weak physical constitution should be very careful of fasting practices, and that no one should undertake a prolonged fast unless they are under the care of
a physician.

I have become a coward of late for fasting. My fast in August, 1933, though short lived was a perfect torture to me. . . . Since then I have dreaded fasts. The twenty four hours' annual fasts of 6th and 13th April have shown me since then that my system is ill able to undergo any protracted fasting. (Harijan, March 13, 1939, p. 68).

Fasting for the Benefit of Others

Included in the teachings of Gandhi which follow are doctrines which, perse, are not accepted by the Christian world. However, there is much truth therein and one should study it carefully.

The principle of non-violence was the basic weapon used by Gandhi during his rule in India. This principle was at its strongest when accompanied by fasting. However, before one can begin to appreciate the significance thereof, he must have some knowledge of the Hindu's concept of the relationship of man to his fellow beings, and their relationship to God:

Mine is a struggling, striving, erring imperfect soul. But I can rise only by experimenting upon myself and others. I believe in absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity. What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source. I cannot, therefore, detach myself from the wickedest soul (nor may I be denied identity with the most virtuous). (Sept. 18, 1924, p. 14).

Based on this concept, it is the Hindu belief that it is possible for one man to atone for the sins of others by
suffering in their behalf. Always it is the prerogative of the leader to undertake this if he is worthy.

As the king must share the sins of his subjects even as he arrogates to himself all their virtues, so must I, a tiny chosen king in the little Ashram, atone for the sins of the least among the children of the Ashram, if I may proudly claim the presence in it of many noble characters. If I am to identify myself with the grief of the least in India, aye, if I have the power, the least in the world, let me identify myself with the sins of the little ones who are under my care. And so doing in all humility I hope some day to see God—Truth—face to face. (Dec. 25, 1925, p. 26).

Gandhi teaches that there are three possible ways to handle social problems when they arise:

Think of last Tuesday, when I began my fast. Why did I take that step? There were three ways open to me: (1) Punishment. I could have followed the easy road of corporal punishment. Usually a teacher on detecting errors on the part of pupils would flatter himself with having done a good thing if he punished them. I have been a teacher, myself, though my preoccupations prevent me from teaching you during these days. As a teacher I had no option but to reject this accepted method for I know by experience it is futile and even harmful. (2) Indifference. I could have left you to your fate. Not unoften does a teacher do so. 'It is enough' he argues. 'that the boys do their lessons tolerably well and reproduce what they are taught. Surely, I am not concerned with their private behaviour. And even if I was, how am I to keep watch over them?' This indifference could not appeal to me. (3) The third was the method of Love. Your character is to me a sacred trust. I must therefore try to enter into your lives, your innermost thoughts, your desires and your impulses, and help you to detect and eradicate purities if any. For inward cleanliness is the first thing that should be taught, other things must follow after the first and most important lesson has gone home. I discovered irregularities amongst you. What was I to do? Punishing you was out of the question. Being the chief among the teachers, I had to take the punishment on myself in the form of the fast which breaks
today. (December 10, 1925, p. 27).

In this wise, the discipline of Gandhi was very similar to that of Christ. Both recognized the worth of souls, both disciplined through love, and both showed an increased amount of love to those concerned at the conclusion of the affair. Gandhi never failed to explain the purpose of his actions to others involved, nor to admonish them to righteousness. The following are his words near the end of a fast:

I have learnt a lot during these days of quiet thinking. What have you? Could you assure me that you will never repeat your mistake? You may err again but this fast will be lost on you if you do not realize the way out of it. Truthfulness is the master key. Do not lie under any circumstances whatsoever. Keep nothing secret, take your teachers and your elders into your confidence and make a clean breast of every thing to them. Bear ill will to none, do not say an evil thing of any one behind his back, above all 'to thine own self be true', so that you are false to no one else. Truthful dealing even in the least little things of life is the only secret of a pure life. (December 10, 1925, p. 27).

In conclusion, read Gandh's words again as he defends non-violence, or love, as the only basis upon which man can ever build for a peaceful world.

The fast is a more efficacious weapon in the armoury of nonviolence. That it can be used only by the fewest possible persons is no objection to its use. It would be foolish for me not to use the talents given to me by God on the ground that others or all do not possess some of them. (Harijan, April 8, 1939, p. 75.)

Non-violence in its positive aspect as benevolence (I do not use the word love as it has fallen into disrepute) is the greatest force because of the limitless scope it affords for self-suffering without causing or intending
any physical or material injury to the wrong doer. The object always is to evoke the best in him. Self-suffering is an appeal to his better nature, as retaliation is to his baser. Fasting under proper circumstances is an appeal par excellence. . . .

To practice non-violence in mundane matters is to know its true value. It is to bring heaven upon earth. There is no such thing as the other world. All worlds are one. There is no 'here' and no 'there'. As Jesus has demonstrated, the whole universe including the most distant stars, invisible even though the most powerful telescope in the world, is compressed in an atom. I hold it therefore to be wrong to limit the use of non-violence to cave dwellers and for acquiring merit for a favoured position in the other world. All virtue ceases to have use if it serves no purpose in every walk of life. I would therefore plead with the purely political minded people to study non-violence and fasting as its extreme manifestation with sympathy and understanding. (Harijan, July 20, 1942, p. 100).
CHAPTER X

BEST THOUGHTS OF THE COMMENTATORS

In an effort to present a complete assembly of teachings and practices from all ages and countries, it has been the writers pleasure to read many commentaries. Many of these include pertinent thoughts on the subject. Some of these have been selected for inclusion here. Two purposes will be served thereby: (1) these thoughts will round out this presentation, and (2) representation will be given to all branches of Christianity.

Ambrose

From a compilation entitled St. Ambrose Letters 1-91, the following is taken:

... because I hear that those foolish men ... have come to you, saying that there is no merit in fasting, no grace in frugality, and none in virginity; that all persons are of equal value, and that they are mad who chastise their body by fasting in order to make it subject to the spirit. If he had thought it madness, Paul would never have done so nor written to instruct others, but he glories in it saying: 'I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest preaching to others, I myself should be found a castaway. (1 Cor. 9:27)... Therefore, the Lord Jesus, wishing to make us strong against the temptations of the Devil, fasted when He was about to struggle with him, so that we might know that we cannot otherwise overcome the enticement of evil. Further, the Devil himself hurled the first shaft of his...
temptations regarding pleasure, saying: 'If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread.' Then the Lord said: 'Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word of God; and He would not (change stones to bread) although he could, but He taught us by a salutary precept to attend to the pursuit of our reading rather than to pleasure. Since they say we ought not to fast, let them show us why Christ fasted if not to make His fast an example for us. Then, in the words which He spoke later, He taught us that evil cannot easily be conquered except by our fasting, saying, ... "And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." (Matt. 17:20).

And what is the purpose of the Scripture in teaching us that Peter fasted and that the mystery regarding the baptism of the Gentiles was revealed to him when he was fasting and praying (Ac. 10:10), if not to show that the saints themselves, when they fast, become more illustrious? Moses received the Law when he was fasting, Exo. 34:28, and so Peter, when he was fasting, was taught the grace of the New Testament. Daniel, too, by virtue of his fasting, stopped the jaws of the lions and saw the events of future times. (Dan. 14:37,38, 9:2,3). Or what salvation can we have unless by fasting we wipe out our sins, since Scripture says fasting and almsgiving purge away sin. (Tob. 12:8,9) ... What is more excellent than fasting which makes the years of youth grow aged so that there is an old age of character? For, as advanced age is stimulated by excess in food and by drunkenness, so the wildness of youth is subdued by scanty food and by the running water. An external fire is extinguished by pouring on water, nor is it strange if the inner heat of the body is cooled by a drink from a stream, for the flame is fed with fuel or it fails. As things like hay and straw, wood and oil, are the nourishment of the fire by which it is fed, so, if you take them away or do not supply them, the fire dies. Likewise, by food the heat of the body is supported or lessened; it is aroused by food; by food it is tamed. Therefore is excess the mother of lust.

But as to Epicurus himself, the champion of pleasure ... he declares ... that neither drinking, nor banquets, nor a line of sons, nor the embraces of women, nor the abundance of fish, and other such things, which
are prepared for splendid use at a banquet, make life sweet, but sober discussion does so.¹

Athanasius

This bishop of Alexandria was one of the two strong men when great doctrinal questions were being decided in the early years of Christendom:

It is required that not only should we fast with the body, but also with the soul. Now the soul is humbled when it is not found (occupied) with wicked opinions, being nourished with becoming virtues. For virtues and vices are the food of the soul, and it can eat either of these two meats, and incline to either of the two, according to its own will. If, on the one hand, it is bent toward virtue, it will be nourished by virtues; by righteousness, by temperance, by meekness, by fortitude. Even as Paul saith, 'Being nourished by the word of truth' (1 Tim. 4:6). Such was the case with our Lord, who said, 'My meat is to do the will of My Father which is in heaven.' (John 4:34).

Peter Chrysologus

The following thoughts regarding prayer, fasting and mercy (or almsgiving) cannot but contribute.

[Cites prodigal son—how hunger forced him to come back]. If, even involuntary hunger did all this, try by experiment how beneficial a voluntary fast can be. A burdened stomach drags down the heart toward vices, and depresses the mind to keep it unable to experience heavenly piety [Quotes 1 Wisd. 9:15], "The corruptible body is a burden on the soul." Wherefore, the stomach should be relieved

by the tempering influence of a fast, that the mind can be unburdened and attend to higher things, rise to virtues.

There are three things, brethren, three, through which faith stands firm, devotion abides, and virtue endures: prayer, fasting, and mercy. What prayer knocks for upon the door, fasting successfully begs, and mercy receives. Prayer, fasting and mercy: these three are a unit. They give life to one another. For, fasting is the soul of prayer; and mercy is the life of fasting.

Let no one cut these three apart; they are inseparable. If a man has only one of them, or if he does not have them all simultaneously, he has nothing. . . . He who wants to be heard when he petitions should hear another who petitions him. He who does not close his own ear to a suppliant opens God's ear to himself. The fasting man should realize what fasting is. If anyone wants God to perceive that he is hungry, he should take notice of a hungering man. If he hopes for mercy, he should show mercy himself. If he desires fatherly kindness, he should display it first.

. . . Do you yourself show mercy to others in the same manner, amount, and readiness with which you desire it to be shown to yourself.

. . . These are things which hold fast the citadel of heaven, knock at the private chamber of God our Judge . . . they guide prosperity and ward off adversity. They extinguish vices and enkindle virtues. They render bodies chaste and hearts pure. They bring peace to the members of the body and ease to the mind. They make the senses a school for disciplinary control. They enable human hearts to become lofty temples of God. They make a man appear to be an angel, and even bring him honor from God.²

Fasting does not germinate unless watered by mercy. When mercy dries up, fasting suffers draught, for mercy is to fasting what rain is to the earth. The man who is fasting may prepare his heart, cleanse his flesh, pull

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2 Ibid., p. 90.
out his vices, and sow virtues.¹

Shepherd of Hermas

The following paragraphs are parts of the fifth parable
of the Shepherd of Hermas. They were purportedly received
by vision from God.

I. Fasting On Station Days Is Not Enough—True and
Genuine Fasting Means Keeping God's Commandments.

1. While I was fasting, seated on a mountain and
giving thanks to the Lord for all His benefits to me,
I saw the shepherd, seated beside me, saying to me,
'Why did you come here so early in the morning?' 'Be­
cause I am keeping a station, sir,' I said.

2. 'What is a station?' he said. 'I am fasting,
sir,' I said. 'And this unprofitable fast you keep for
Him is not a fast, either.' 'Why do you say this, sir?'
I said. 'I declare that this is not a fast, as you
think it is,' he said. 'I shall teach you what is a
fast complete and acceptable to the Lord. Pay attention,'
he said.

4. God does not wish vain fasting of this kind.
When you fast thus for God's sake, you accomplish nothing
for justice. Here is the fast you must keep for God.

5. Do not commit any wicked deed in your life and
serve the Lord with a pure heart; keep His commandments
by walking according to His directions and do not let
any evil desire enter your heart; have faith in God.
If you do this, and fear Him, and refrain from every evil
act, you will live to God. And by doing this you will
also perform a fast that is great and acceptable to God.²

III. A True and Genuine Fast Has a Necessary Connection with
Fraternal Charity.

5. 'This fasting, which consists in the observance

¹ Ibid., p. 94.
² "The Apostolic Fathers," The Fathers of the Church
of the commandments of the Lord,' he said, 'is very beau-
tiful. This is the way to keep the fast you intend to
observe:

6. 'Before anything else, abstain from every wicked
and every evil desire, and clear your heart of all the
vanities of this world. If you observe this, your fast
will be perfect.

7. 'Act as follows: After having done what is pre-
scribed, on the day of your fast do not taste anything
except bread and water. Compute the total expense for
the food you would have eaten on the day on which you
intend to keep a fast and give it to a widow, an orphan,
or someone in need. In this way you will become humble
in soul, so that the beneficiary of your humility may
fill his soul and pray to the Lord for you.

Augustine

Amid the many writings of Augustine is a very worth-
while essay entitled "The Usefulness of Fasting." He apparent-
ly understood the doctrine fairly well.

This duty, this strengthening of the soul, this
cheating of the flesh and enrichment of the mind. . . .

Therefore, my dearly beloved, since there is an
earthly food on which the weakness of the flesh feeds,
there is also a heavenly food by which the devotion of
the mind is nourished. The earthly food belongs to one
kind of life; the heavenly food to another. On the
former the life of men depends; on the latter, the life
of angels.

......

Why, therefore, is it of benefit to us to abstain
somewhat from food and from carnal pleasure? The flesh
draws one to the earth. The mind tends upward. . . .
If, then, the flesh tending earthward is a burden for
the soul and a load weighing it down where it would fly
forward, in so far as each one is stimulated by his high-
er nature, to that same degree he casts off the ballast
of his earthly luggage. Behold what we do when we fast.

......

1

Ibid.
Because it is sometimes necessary to check the delight of the flesh in respect to licit pleasures in order to keep it from yielding to illicit joys. He who restrains himself in no way from permitted satisfaction, is dangerously near those which are not permitted. [italics mine] . . . Therefore, my brethren, let us act in the fashion, let us be self-restrained, and let us know why we are doing what we do. By withdrawing from the joys of the flesh, joy of the mind is gained.

. . . 'Whom do you seek to please by your fasting?' 'God' they answer. (Do you think that He accepts your gifts? See first what he says: "Leave your gift and go, first be reconciled to your brother" (Matt. 5:24). Wherefore, your fasting would be rejected if you were immoderately severe toward your servant; will your fast be approved when you do not recognize your brother? I do not ask from what food you abstain (worldly), but what food (spiritual) you choose. . . .

[On the performance of physical abstainance not accompanied by spiritual use] But, if your flesh obeys you, and you do not obey your God, are you not condemned which is submissive to you? Does it not, by obeying you, give testimony against you? "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another" (John 13:34). Hear, then, your Lord giving the commandment that we love one another. When, from all of us as members He makes a body for Himself, which body has one head, our Lord and Savior (Col. 1:18), you, on the other hand, tear yourself away from the members of Christ, you do not love unity . . . if we acknowledge our God, if we hold to Him in unity, if we preserve the faith, we are secure.1

Henry Mason

This English minister thought profoundly about this topic. His over-all analysis is excellent from the true Christian point of view.

Some fasts again, are voluntary, undertaken of a man's own accord, and by his owne free choyce. Fasting

1 Ibid., Volume "St. Augustine, Treatise on Various Subjects", p. 404 ff.
is an act of the will, but hunger (involuntary fasting) is of necessity. (The voluntary fast alone is efficacious.)

... The intentions of a man's minde cannot entirely and perfectly be imployed upon two contrary or divers objects at once. And therefore, so much of his intention as a man bestoweth upon himselfe, so much hee taketh away from God.

So fast, that by anothers eating thou mayest be glad that thou has dyned. ... That our Fasts may be full, let them be fatted with Almesdeedes. Let us give our dinner to them that be hungry. ... Especially be mindful of the poore, that what you subtract from yourselves, yee may lay it up in the Treasury of Heaven (St. Augustine).

Let the feeding of the poore give testimony to our fasting (Leo).

These uses are, to testify and helpe forward our humiliation and repentance, to sharpen and whet on our attention in holy dutiees, and to subdue and tame the unruly pride of the flesh ... by subtracting its food, we elevate the minde towards God, by estranging it from the sence of worldly things, and may both shew and beget our humiliation and sorrow by chastening the body for the sinnes of our soules. ...

... by this kind of Discipline--fastings, and watchings, and hard lodging, and rough (sackcloth) clothing--I make my flesh gentle and plyable, and ready to hearken and submit to the instructions of Gods Word, and the motions of the Spirit. "A full fed soule sprouts forth weedes of unlawful lusts."

[4 Uses of fasting]- I. They may serve as outward acts to declare our reverence toward God and his sacred ordinences. II. For mortification, and to take down the pride of the flesh. III. It will serve to elevation of the minde and to make a man more attentive to his holy duties. IV. It serveth for an act or helpe of Repentance.

(of III above) Because it cleareth the braine of vapors, and the body of humours, and setteth the spirits at liberty for voluntary imployments, and the use of contemplation. For reason telleth us that bodily food sendeth food into the head, and findeth worke for the spirits, and imployleth them about the work of nature, and that they are not so free for meditation and study.

... Fasting may helpe to elevate the minde, because by
afflicting the body, it bringeth a man to the sense and feeling of his wants: and the sense of his wants will spurre him forward to the means that may relieve them. And so it will make men more attentive to Gods Word, which teacheth and admonisheth them, and more attentive to their own words, when they pray unto him, and prayse him. . . .

Fasting may serve for elevation of mind, because it adridgeth us of worldly delights and comforts. For when we are most estranged from these, then are we most ready to seeke comfort in God. For worldly pleasures, especially if there be a continuall enjoying of them, they do estrange our mindes from heavenly meditations: and that partly because they take up the time that should be bestowed on such thoughts; but especially because there is such an opposition between worldly delights and spiritual comforts, that hee who is filled with one, cannot relish the other. And this it may seeme the Apostle meant; but sure something he saw, why worldly delights, though lawful in themselves, doe yet notwithstanding hinder holy meditations, when he giveth this counsell to religious couples, that they should forbeare the company of each other, "that they might give themselves to fasting and prayer," (1 Cor. 7:5) implying withall, that men and women are most devoted to heavenly thoughts, when they are most estranged from worldly delights.

Fasting may help to elevate the mind to heavenly meditations, . . . because it doth temper and qualify our natural joyes and worldly rejoicings, and teacheth us how to referre them to their right ends. For joyes and delights of nature, if a man still give himselfe to the enjoying of them, doe not only presse down the soule for the present, but they do besides possesses the mind. . . . Students who are given [only] to sports . . . will never prove learned men, partly because they mis­spend much time in these vanities, and partly because, the time which is remayning is not fit for studies.

First, it [fasting] is an act, that followeth and floweth from repentance. Secondly, it is an act that breedeth or increaseth our repentance.

1. That our sorrow may be answerable to our sinne. . . . Repentance should spread itselfe as farre as the offence hath done. . . . Our outward humiliation should prove the truth of our inward sorrow. . . . and the acts on behavior of the body, by which repentance and sorrow are shewed, are weeping and mourning, and fasting, and forbearing of the comforts of nature and the delights
of the world. This we find true in daily experience, that sorrow, whatsoever the cause be, if it be great, it will not let a man eat (1 Kings 21:4, 1 Sam. 1:7, 1 Sam. 28:23, Psalms 102:4, Joel 2:12, Ephesians 2:15, 1 Kings 3:5, 6, 7.).

"Repentance without fasting is idle" (Basil. de. Ieiun. Hom. I. page 323A.). Faith without works is dead.

2. Fasting is necessary to repentance as an Usher that goeth before it, and maketh way for it; I mean, because it is a means to beget and increase it. And surely, the less use we have made of it in the latter, that it may be a helper to forward our repentance.

(Actions of the body enhance spiritual doings.) When a man prayeth, and kneeleth him downe upon his knees, and spreadeth his hands toward heaven; he useth that gesture of body, which becommeth a suppliant to use in his prayers; and hereby the affections of the heart that caused them, is afterward increased by them. (Even so does fasting aid repentance).

They be poore fasters who glut themselves aforehand that so they may fast with full stomachs.

St. Basil.—Do not place the good of fasting in the abstinence of meat; for true fasting confideth in abstaining from sinne.

Samuel S. Smith

In the rare book collection of the University of Chicago is a small work which contains a lecture given by a professor at Princeton University January 6, 1795. It contains some thoughts on fasting which were spoken on the American Continent. The text for the speech was Joel 2:12, 13.

It is an impulse of nature . . . when we are struck with affliction, to have recourse by prayer to God.

(This) prayer is accompanied by an outward expression of humility and penitence, . . . of which fasting is the most frequent, and is, perhaps, the most natural.

In this discourse, I propose:

I. To point out the manner in which an acceptable fast to God ought to be celebrated.

The term implies an abstinence from our ordinary food. [Jonah 3:7,8 cited—food and drink, even to cattle—carried to an extreme].

The inward and holy dispositions of the soul, indeed, are of more price in the flight of God, than any rites that fatigue, or any austerities that only emaciate the body.

"To what purpose," says St. Jerom, "is that abstinence that subdues the flesh, if the soul is, at the same time inflated with pride? What is the merit of growing pale by the austerity of our fasts, if the countenance discovers, by its dark and lowring features, that we are inwardly gnawed by rancour or envy? What virtue is there in abstaining from wine, if we are intoxicated with malice and rage? Abstinence and mortification are then only to be esteemed virtues when by them the heart is purified from its vices and sins." (Source: Hieron Ad Celantium).

Our blessed Lord, when he introduced the spiritual dispensation of the gospel, abrogated, among other ceremonies of the law, the rigors with which the Jewish fasts were observed. (Matt. 6:16-18 cited). Evidently our Savior does not mean in this injunction to abrogate or to depreciate the duty, but only to require in it those graces of the heart from which it ought to flow, and which it is calculated to strengthen and increase.

If it is asked then what degree of abstinence is required in a Christian fast? It is sufficient to answer that the Lord will have mercy and not sacrifice. It ought to be measured, by a conscientious man according to his habits of health. That is the just degree that will best prepare us for the humble and penitent services of this day (a time of wars)—That is equally remote from the fulness and indulgence of our ordinary living, and from that inanition and faintness that, in some feeble constitutions, would impede the exercises of a sincere and fervent devotion. But it becomes a penitent Christian to be chiefly employed in the recollection and confession of his sins—to bow in profound humility before the offended justice of God, to recognize its righteous infictions and to examine their causes and their end. And, as the end of every chastisement is to bring us to repent-
ance and amendment of life, it becomes him, with a heart penetrated with a sense of his sins, to form, in the presence of God, the most sincere and steadfast purposes of duty, submission, and new obedience (quotes Isa. 58:8).

II. To illustrate the reasonableness of this act of worship on occasions of public calamity or danger.

It is an expressive symbol of the penitence and affliction that should fill our hearts upon the recollection of our sins that have drawn upon us the righteous judgments of God, or have gathered round us the dark and threatening appearances of his just displeasure. By forcibly affecting the senses, it is calculated to make us feel our wants, and our dependence upon God, and to convince us that there is no protection for creatures so weak and so offending but in his power and favor. The solemnity of such an extraordinary act of religion, tends to make the mind serious and collected, and disposes it to enter deeply into the examination of our own hearts, and of the causes for which it hath pleaded God to afflict us or to threaten us with his judgments. The passions, that have been inflamed by indulging appetite, are allayed by denying it. The strength of sin is weakened when its nourishment is taken away. Devotion is enlivened by freeing the body from a load that sometimes oppresses its exercises.

The liveliness of a sensual imagination often checks the fervour, and impairs the purity of the worship of the heart--abstinence restrains it. Continual gratification tends to create a pride and elation of mind that is prone to forget its dependent and accountable state--abstinence mortifies it. Abstinence serves, therefore, to cherish those sentiments of purity, of spirituality, of self-denial, of profound humility, and sincere repentance which becomes us on this day. St. Augustine expresses the excellence of this duty in the following language: "Fasting, saith he, purifies the soul, it elevates us above the grosser objects of sense, it subdues the flesh, and contributes to form a heart humble and contrite. It dissipates the darkness with which concupiscence covers the mind, it extinguishes the flame of impurity, and rekindles the fire of divine love. It modifies our desires, it mortifies our passions, and sets bounds to lust. By fasting, the people of Ninevah arrested, as it were, the just indignation of God--by the same duty, the children of Israel, humbling their souls before him, found deliverance from all the evils that afflicted them. It was by this holy exercise that Elias was rapt to heaven
in a chariot of fire—that Moses was qualified to receive the law from God—and that even the son of God prepared himself to preach the gospel. Not that he had any need of these abstemious duties, but that he might leave us so salutary and holy an example."

... The influence of this duty in humbling and sanctifying the heart, and in enlivening its devotion. . . .

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1 Samuel Stanhope Smith, *A Discourse on the Nature and Reasonableness of Fasting* (Phila.: Wm Youn) 1795, pp. 5-12.
PART II. PHYSICAL ASPECTS
Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. (3 John:2)

The word "fast" in this chapter refers only to the abstinence from food or to a restricted diet, unless otherwise stated. An examination of the health aspects of fasting must necessarily involve consideration of reputable scientific studies. The scientists and physicians who perform these studies are not concerned with the spiritual or religious aspects of fasting, but only the physiological effects. McCoy indicates, "the patient may have the enjoyment of every pleasure save eating."\(^1\) In order to determine the possible physical benefits from a religious fast, we must understand basically what man's physical nature is, and how fasting affects him.

A study of mankind therefore necessitates infinite research before there can be any degree of comprehension of the laws by which the creative force has taken the smallest electrons and made of them a fitting temple for the soul of man. ... From somewhere out of the eternal the heart has learned to beat, the digestive organs to

assimilate nourishment, and the cells to perform the necessary changes known as metabolism. It has always seemed to me that the greatest study should be devoted to mastering the knowledge of how to live so as not in interfere with the normal order of the natural processes. For the condition we call "disease" (lack of ease) originates in every case because of a blocking of some function of the body through habits of life which conflict with the laws of nature.

Scientific Studies of Fasting

Three well-known experiments on fasting people will be cited here. Details of the fast and conclusions will be given for two.

Agostino Levanzin

In the spring of 1912 Agostino Levanzin, a lawyer by profession came from Malta to undergo a prolonged fast at the Nutrition Laboratory of the Carnegie Institution of Washington in Boston. Levanzin has for a number of years been interested in the subject of fasting, believing that most human ills can be cured by abstinence from food for a long period of time. He had already made one fast of forty days. It was his claim that during that period all his mental faculties so increased in efficiency, that he could hear, see, smell and think better and that on the 26th day he was able to plead a case in the law court. His ostensible purpose in coming to America was to substantiate, if possible by strict scientific methods his own casual observations.

... Absolutely nothing but 750 cc of distilled water daily passed his lips during the thirty-one days.

W. B. Canon and A. L. Washburn in An Explanation of Hunger, American Journal of Physiology, 1911-12, p. 442, "There is abundant evidence, however, ... that during continued fasting hunger wholly disappears after the first few days."

Hibid., p. 11.

General Summary and Conclusions

The fact that a human being could live for a month or longer without food had already been satisfactorily proven. . . . There was at no time any symptom of hallucination or lack of clearness in the thought processes. . . .

If, as has been often assumed, the tactual space threshold test is a measure of mental fatigue, then it must be concluded that there is no indication of such fatigue during the fast.

The visual acuity showed an astonishing betterment.

The rote memory for digits showed very little change.

The cancellation test, which employs to a greater degree the higher functions of perception and attention shows the greatest improvement of any of the tests used.

[The free association]. This seems to indicate that the betterment in the general average of the twenty words is principally due to a betterment in the reaction to abstract words. . . . The general improvement is also seen in the decrease in the variations of the reaction times.

The present methods of testing mental capacity unfortunately do not permit one to make dogmatic statements as to the results of any such tests. For example in the cancellation test there is involved among other things attention and interest, apperception and discrimination, nervous impulse and motor discharge. When, however, as here, a set of tests are employed in which the same functions are more or less active and they all show a similar trend, then a conjecture along general lines seems legitimate. . . .

It will be remembered that the tests range from those involving principally the muscle groups to those depending in a higher degree upon central factors. The tests depending most on the muscular reactions i.e. the strength test, showed a falling off. The tapping test which also involved the muscles but in which the rapidity of reaction was a more important factor showed no improvement.
As soon as one turns, however, to the sensory discriminations one notices an increased efficiency, which is probably due either to a change in the peripheral organs, or central processes or both. Finally all the tests involving the higher processes of attention, perception and association show improvement. IN A WORD THERE WAS A LOSS IN MUSCULAR STRENGTH DUE PROBABLY TO LOSS OF TISSUE, A POSSIBLE GAIN IN SENSORY ACUITY AND A DECIDED INCREASE IN THE EFFICIENCY OF ALL THE CENTRAL PROCESSES. It would be premature to say that the improvement is the direct result of the prolonged abstinence from food, in as much as similar improvement has been observed in such tests under normal conditions due entirely to the effect of practice. It can be stated, however, with some degree of certainty that the complete abstinence from food for thirty-one days had little effect upon the higher mental functions which were able to develop through practice very much as they would have done under normal conditions. This agrees with the observations upon the physiological conditions. It has been found that during a fast the muscle tissues are the first to suffer and the nervous tissues the last. From these results it seems that up to the thirty-first day the nervous tissues have not suffered. . . . The claim that the senses are more acute has been verified as to the visual acuity.

. . . It remains, however, an undisputable fact that, according to the tests made there was no lasting evil effect of the fast, either upon muscular strength or mental activity and that from one cause or another Levanzin was, if not in better condition, certainly in as good health after as before the fast.

John Arthur Glaze and Others

Involved in this study were three people who fasted for varying durations. Many of the conclusions are the same

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as those of the previous example and will not be repeated here. However some additional conclusions may be of interest to those considering fasts for spiritual purposes.

PROBLEM: It was our purpose in the experiments here reported to study the psychological effects of relatively prolonged fasting. Three healthy adults, two men and one woman, went without food for from 10 to 33 days. Tests of several varieties were made at regular intervals before, during, and following the fasting periods.

(4) After-fast acceleration. With few exceptions, the after-fast performances were on a higher level of efficiency than either of the other conditions. This relationship is true of all tests except those in which a gain was made by the Ss (subjects) during the fasts. These facts lead us to believe that there is a marked after-fast acceleration due to the stimulating effects of food.

Carlson (A. J. Carlson, CONTROL OF HUNGER IN HEALTH AND DISEASE, 1916, p. 137) relates some of the after-effects of fasting for a few days at a time. Speaking of his physical and mental condition after a 5-day fast he says, "The writer felt as if he had had a month's vacation in the mountains. The mind was unusually clear and a larger amount of physical and work was accomplished without fatigue." All of our Ss spoke of the unusually heightened feelings they experienced during the after-fast period.

Increase in smell sensitivity. The most outstanding observation made by the Ss enduring these longer fasts, was the marked increase in the ability to detect odors during the fasts. Food, we believe, could be detected at a greater distance. C reported that perfumes and even body odors were keenly noticed by him when he met or passed people on the streets during his many walking trips while fasting. B refused to drink the city water after a few days of fasting because of the offensive odor of the chlorine in it, a fact rarely noticed at other times.

It is a well-known fact that hunters deny food to their dogs for several hours preceding a hunt. This is a common practice with fox hunters in a certain section of the South. The popular opinion is that the animals do better when the stomach is empty. Without denying
the value of hunger as a stimulus to action, it seems probable that the animal's olfactory sense is much keener too. Thus the opinion that a hungry animal can follow a 'cold' trail better than when he is well-fed may, after all, have some basis in fact.

Sexual feelings. About a week after C had concluded his fast, the writer asked him about the effects of fasting on the sexual impulses. He substantiated what the writer had already observed, that food after a fast of some length tended to accelerate the activities of the sexual organs. C had noticed this, also, at the conclusion of previous fasts.

Someone has suggested that this condition is due to eating considerably more meat than ordinarily. It is quite possible that an increased meat diet will serve thus as a stimulant after a fast. It is more reasonable to assume that an increased sexual tone would naturally accompany the greatly increased body-tone that normally follows a fast. That the entire body-tone was heightened after the fast was reported by all 3 Ss. This increase in sexual tone should also be thought of in relationship to the high mental efficiency shown by certain of the tests.

Every visit to the laboratory and the return home required the Ss to climb several flights of stairs. After about 10 days of fasting the climbing did not cause the limbs to ache as much as it did during the earlier part of the fasts.

Only one S was an occasional smoker. He smoked freely during the first two days of the fast, began to lose the taste for tobacco on the third, and gave it up completely on the fourth day.

Conclusions

The conclusions reached as a result of this experiment are as follows:

1. The so-called 'mental' out-put is generally decreased during a long fast.
2. A fast of more than a week's duration definitely increases steadiness of hand.
3. A subject fatigues more rapidly during a fast than normally, when the task is of considerable length and homogeneity.
4. Performance at some tasks after a long fast is much more efficient than normally, an effect which can hardly be attributed to practice alone.
(5) In casual observations it was noticed (a) that the smell sensitivity is greatly increased during a long fast; and (b) that sex feelings in males are considerably accentuated when eating is resumed after a long fast.

Wada (Tomi Wada, "An experimental study of hunger in its relation to activity, Arc. Psychol. 8, 1922, No. 57) has shown a close relation between hunger contractions of the stomach and best performances in mental tests. She tested almost continuously for 10 to 12 hrs., after the Ss had gone without food for the greater part of a day. Almost without exception, the best results accompanied hunger contractions of the stomach. . . .

Further Conclusions

We conclude from the results of this study:
(1) That there is a marked increase in the sensitivity to odors during a fast.
(2) That steadiness, measured by the pointing test, tends to increase as the fast progresses.
(3) That the higher mental processes are not improved while the fast is in progress.
(4) That the most pronounced success, both in mental and muscular activity, is attained during the post-fast period.1

Succi

This Italian, Succi, was one of the most famous of professional fasters. He abstained from food on numerous occasions for scientific experiments. The introduction to Benedict's work2 gives details of most of his fasts. However,

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Benedict's report is primarily the scientific analysis of the fast of Levanzin for 31 days, as noted in our first study cited. This is the most detail work of which this writer is aware on the medical aspects of fasting and body metabolism.

**Fasting as a Cure**

Peoples of all countries in all times have recognized the curative value of elimination of foods.

More than two thousand years ago the fasting cure was advocated by the school of the natural philosopher Asclepiades, who also applied the water cure, etc. And we know that Plutarch said: "Instead of using medicines, rather fast a day."¹

Said Luigi Cornaro ("The Art of Living Long," p. 147): "I do not know whether some desperate degrees of abstinence would not have the same effect upon other men, as they had upon Atticus, who, weary of his life as well as his physicians, by long and cruel pains of a dropsical gout, and despairing of any cure, resolved by degrees to starve himself to death, and went so far, that the physicians found he has ended his disease instead of his life."²

Many disciples of the fasting cure have written within the past 100 years, such men as Dewey, Haskell, Tanner, Carrington, Hayard, Eales, Sinclair, Macfadden, Tilden, Brook, Pearson, McCoy, etc. All of these men have taught generally the same things. Carrington and McCoy have been

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² Ibid., p. 92.
selected to represent their thoughts here.

Food May Cause and/or Stimulate Disease

Here, my object will be to show that even the best of food, eaten in excess, is the cause of the clogging of the system, and of consequent disease—the more unhealthful and grosser foods being naturally quicker and more certain causes of fouler and worse diseases.

Our bodily tissues are made from the blood; the blood from the chyle; the chyle from the chyme; the chyme from the food (roughly speaking). At any stage in the process of digestion, therefore, if one of these becomes morbid or foul all become morbid and foul likewise. Similarly, if one of them is in excess, all are in excess, and grave results follow. A morbid excess of tissue in any part of the body must, therefore, depend directly for its formation, its nutrition and existence, upon the food eaten; and if this is unhealthful, or in excess, morbid tissues, excessive growths, etc., form—which are directly dependent for their existence, it will be seen, upon the bodily nutrition. We also see that, if only pure food were supplied, and only in sufficient quantity—just enough to exactly and evenly balance the bodily waste and repair—this morbid tissue, these excessive growths would be impossible; they are fed and sustained directly and solely by the excess of food ingested; by the overplus of food material within the system. We may now very readily see how it is that food taken in excess has the effect of directly feeding the disease; and conversely, it becomes apparent how, by fasting, we may thereby cure the disease (remove the cause) by withdrawing the nutriment upon which it has been dependent—by literally "starving it out."

The whole trouble is that we are inclined to attribute to, and blame for our diseases, every conceivable external agency, rather than acknowledge that the cause of our diseased condition is violated natural law, which violations we ourselves have been guilty of.\(^1\)

\(^1\) Carrington, p. 90.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 148.
A man may be able to digest and dispose of three times as much food as he really requires. One ounce more than he requires is a waste of force, a waste of life. We waste life in eating more food than we need, in digesting it, and then getting rid of it. Here is a triple waste. We have other work to do in this world than eating unnecessary food, and spending our strength for naught. . . . The extent of this digestive tax is indirectly admitted by physicians where they prescribe 'easily digested foods' for their weak patients.  

It is generally accepted that man, especially the American, eats far more than he needs for his physical welfare, and that it strains the body greatly to take care of his excesses.

**Enervation**

Enervation is a term popularized by McCoy which needs some explanation. His concept thereof is presented here only as a theory since this writer has not been able to determine whether it is generally accepted by the medical profession. However, those physicians with whom this writer has spoken agree that there is direct correlation between worry, stress, etc. and disease.

Science is beginning to establish a fact that the prophets have taught for centuries, i.e., that God can know all of man's thoughts and desires. Each functioning of the body produces energy which is emanated from the being. Law enforcement people claim to be able to measure the "truth"
by testing a man's blood pressure on a lie detector. Blood pressure is determined by this release of energy, and becomes greater in times of stress, worry, fear, anger, jealousy, etc. Physicians maintain that there is a constant release of "electrical energy" from the brain and that the intensity thereof can be measured. These emanations are spiritual, and even though physicians don't claim the ability to interpret them, theologians claim that they are known to God.

(For a greater scriptural description of this phenomenon, see the chapter on prayer).

Enervation is a condition found to be present in many diseases, and it is caused principally by a waste of nerve energy. (Enervate 1. To deprive of nerve, force, or strength; to render feeble. 2. To lessen the mental or moral vigor of). The human body might be described as a radiating transformer of universal energy, but through wrong habits of thought and action large volumes of this energy are diverted into channels where it is wasted, and normal functioning is impeded because of insufficient power being sent to those parts where it is most needed. The exercise of any of the destructive emotions is perhaps as powerful a cause as any of this waste of power, and if one gives way to fear, worry, jealousy, anger, etc., an enormous expenditure of energy is involved, which, if taken up in this way, is not available for use elsewhere. And this results sooner or later in impairment of some part of the system. . . .

Enervation can also be brought on through the irritation produced by disagreeable sounds, odors, sights, tastes and feelings, from which it will be apparent that there is great wisdom in quiet, well regulated ways of living.

When great amounts of energy are produced by increased

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activity in desires or passions, the body must assimilate this energy, too, as well as that which is produced by the natural body from food and drink. There seems to be a natural law which rules that the body must care for the naturally-produced energies before the spiritual. Then if man eats heavily during periods of great excitement or stress, the body must perform double duty, which it often cannot handle. As a result, much of this energy produced from worry, fear, etc. becomes blocked in various areas of the body and prohibits it from functioning properly. Efficiency is thereby decreased. Then because the body cannot properly cleanse itself, sickness results. Food often becomes repulsive until the body has had a chance to care for all of its stored energy.

In connection with this theory, to a large degree, various desires and passions regulate man's health differently. For example, when man's ungodly passions are stimulated, such as lust, anger, worry, jealousy, fear, hatred, etc., he is still inclined to eat, which, if extended, will eventually cause physical sickness. However, Godly passions are experienced to a great degree, such as pure love, joy, peace, repentance, mercy, faith, prayer, etc., a man's hunger subsides, and there is a fine regulation of the energies produced.
Fasting as a Cure or Regulator

Voluntary abstinence from food as a method for the cure of disease, is as old as animal life itself. We find unmistakable evidence that the lower forms of animal and bird life have instinctively chosen this means of restoring themselves to the normal whenever it was necessary. . . .

The way has been long down the pathway of time from our savage ancestors to the highly evolved man of this age, but who can imagine what advancement could have been obtained if the human race had learned the benefits that could be secured spiritually, mentally, and physically through the control of false appetites? . . .

I have made a most exhaustive study of every method of cure from mind cure to modern surgery and gland therapy, and I have never found a single method that could approach even closely, in its results, the benefits which come from some form of the fasting cure. . . .

Carrington adds the thoughts of a few others to his as he explains his "Principle of Elimination."

The principle on which the hunger cure acts is one on which all physiologists are agreed, and one which is readily explained and understood. We know that in animal bodies, the law of nature is for the effete, and worn out, and least vitalized matter first to be cast off. We see this upon the cuticle, nails, hair, and in the snake casting off his old skin. Now, in wasting or famishing from want of food, this process of elimination, and purification, goes on in a much more rapid manner than ordinarily, and the vital force which would otherwise be expended in digesting the food taken, acts now in expelling from the vital domain whatever morbific matters it may contain. This, then, is a beautiful idea in regard to the hunger-cure; that whenever a meal of food is omitted, the body purifies itself thus much from its disease,

1 McCoy, pp. 15, 16.
2 Ibid., p. 17.
and it becomes apparent in the subsequent amendment both as regards bodily feelings and strength. It is proved also in the fact that during the prevalence of epidemics those who have been obliged to live almost in a state of starvation, have been free from attacks while the well-fed have been cut off in numbers by the merciless disease.

We thus reach the point at which we are capable of appreciating two grand truths: first, that, during a fast, the energy which was previously utilized in the digestion of food material is now set at liberty, and may be used, to cure the body; and, second, that during a fast the useless, the dead, the excrementous matter is always first eliminated—leaving the healthy tissue in status quo—freed, moreover, from the presence of the effete, disease-producing material. "Take away food from a sick man's stomach," says Doctor Dewey, "and you have begun, not to starve the sick man, but the disease." Or, as Hippocrates put it: "the more you nourish a diseased body, the worse you make it."

... when a person fasts. When he does not have his regular meals, he soon begins to feed upon himself. After a day or two, he no longer feels hungry. The body says, metaphorically, it is of no use to call for food, for none is supplied, I will seize on something else, close at hand.

The body draws from its stored resources; every particle of fat will be utilized; then all the cinders—the half-burned fuel that has accumulated in the body. Food that has come into the body partially digested, imperfectly burned, and left as cinders is seized upon and utilized.

Fasting gives the body a chance to clear up all the unnecessary material, which it will do before it will begin to consume the vital tissues.

Symptoms of Fasting

Some healthy people say they find it difficult to fast even for twenty-four hours. This is because they do not understand the natural results of fasting and the benefits

1 Carrington, p. 155, 156.
thereof. One frequent companion of fasting may be a headache, and for those who would still decline to fast because they get a headache thereby, listen to President Brigham Young—"If it makes my head ache to keep the commandments of God, let it ache!"

Several bodily changes will be noted during the course of a fast which account for the remarkable results which follow this method of treatment.

These are:
First: Fasting gives the body a chance to cleanse itself of the accumulation of the products of imperfect metabolism due to the over-ingestion of food which the body could not use for building or repair material. As assimilation is retarded, elimination proceeds with increased activity, and the body is truly "house-cleaning" itself.

Second: The rest given the digestive organs is no doubt of great benefit to the person who has "lived not wisely but too well." Digestive and assimilative strength is increased to a marked degree if the stomach and intestines are allowed to pause in their work; that work which has been going on night and day for so many years, and formal functioning is thus re-established.

Third: Normal hunger soon returns for simple, nourishing food, and replaces the cravings of an appetite which has known no satisfaction. One never experiences the natural sensation of hunger until disease is overcome.

As assimilation is suspended, elimination is increased, and the accumulated toxins which are being ejected from the system will generally produce a condition similar to biliousness, with headache and often nausea for the first day or two. . . . A lonesomeness for food may be felt for some time by those who are not occupied in some work which distracts their attention from the usual hours for meals. . . . The tongue will become coated at first, and the breath foul and offensive, until the most virulent

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1 McCoy, pp. 17, 18.
of the waste products are eliminated.\(^1\)

**How to Conduct a Health Fast**

Anyone intending to abstain from food for more than two or three days should do so under a doctor's observation and after a physical examination.

Here cited are recommended procedures by McCoy on what to do to cleanse the body thoroughly.

**General conduct of a complete fast:** In the conduct of the complete fast, all food is denied the body and the patient is allowed only water as a beverage. As a rule the amount of water taken is governed by the thirst of the patient, which is usually a reliable guide, but in certain fevers it seems wise to force the water-drinking to the utmost. . . .

[Other functions commented on to aid the cleansing of the body—enemas, bathing].

**Exercise:** It is advisable to keep up all the ordinary activity of every-day life, but physical culture exercise should not be used during the fast as the muscles cannot be developed while material for their growth is withheld. Increased strength is often felt as the fast progresses, because of the body gradually becoming free from the encumbrances of impurities and excess poundage.\(^2\)

**Starvation vs. Fasting**

One reason why fasting is at such a low ebb in the Christian world today is because many are afraid that abstinence from food for even short periods of time may damage them permanently. This fear is unfounded for people in reasonably

good health. Recorded in history is this instance: "Irishman Mac Swiney starved to death in prison after more than fifty days without food."¹

Fasting and Starvation: Scientific fasting and starvation are very different, and one must never be confused with the other. If the patient voluntarily abstains from food when food is obtainable, he need not fear harm from such denial, as normal hunger will assert itself before the condition of starvation can exist. The habit of eating regular meals is so firmly established that people have died in a few days from the fear of starvation because they did not know that the body can live for a long time without food. In most cases of forced fasting there is also exposure to the elements, with a choking of the eliminative processes. This, however, is very different from a properly conducted fast where food may be had for the asking, and where the body is aided in many ways—by bathing, enemas, etc.²

We hear so much of people starving to death after only two or three days abstinence from food, that the impression is given the public that one is liable to starve to death during a prolonged fast. The latter is not possible while the former is, for starving and fasting are not the same, and the action of the mind in these two conditions is entirely different. . . .

So that I am surely justified in my contention that the cause of death, in such cases of fasting as those narrated, is mental; both for the above reasons, and because we have seen, and shall more abundantly prove, that actual starvation within so short a time is a physiological impossibility.

Proof that the brain does not become starved, or shrunken, one iota, during a fast of however long duration, is to be found in the following quotation from the "New Era For Women," pp. 37-87. Says Dr. Dewey:

(a) In all post-mortems, no matter how wasted the body, the brain is found to fill the cranial cavity when

² McCoy, p. 21.
not itself diseased.
(b) The mind is often clear to the last moment of
life, even when the body has become emaciated to the
skeleton degree. This could not be if the brain had
become emaciated.

Conclusion

Some of the results which may accrue to anyone who
fasts regularly, whether for health or spiritual purposes.
1. A well regulated body metabolism.
2. Greatly increased sensory perception—visual and
smell.
3. Decreased bodily strength and desire, including
sexual urges, taste for tobacco, hunger, etc.
4. Increased attentive, perceptive, and association
powers.
5. Increased steadiness of body.
6. Best performance in mental tests.

However, it should be kept in mind "that the most
pronounced success, both in mental and muscular activity,
is attained during the post-fast period." Spiritual communi-
cation with God would seem to be greatest during the fast,
before attention is turned again to temporal considerations.

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1 Carrington, p. 163.
CHAPTER XII

OVERINDULGENCE, OVERABSTINENCE, AND BREAKING A FAST

Temporal Excesses

Recently in a radio address to which the writer listened, All-American Rev. Bob Richards remarked, "There is a relationship between the care you take of your body, and the care you take of your mind and spirit." The spirit, intelligence, and body of man are linked very closely together. Over-emphasis of development or satisfaction of any of them will only be accomplished at the detriment of the others. In order to fulfill all of the purposes for which God has placed man here, a fine balance of progress in all areas must be maintained. The great danger today seems to be that man seeks to satisfy primarily the bodily and worldly interests. (1) Man eats much more than he needs to to maintain good health, and is, therefore, eating only for pleasure much of the time. (2) Much of his non-working, non-eating time is spent in pleasurable pursuits, recreation, and satisfaction of other physical desires. (3) Much of his thought and incentive in work is to provide means to carry out (1) and (2) above. Fasting is the willful abandonment of these
things in order to restore this fine balance of life—to increase also spiritually and to seek after truth.

Numerous instances are recorded in scriptural history which indicate that unfortunate things have resulted from overindulgence in foods and pleasure, or an uncontrollable desire for them.

In the case of Esau, a man with a great birthright who might have been the father of all Israel:

His downfall was nothing more or less than allowing his appetite of hunger to get out of control. He sold his birthright to Jacob just to eat food, and to satisfy his carnal nature for a few moments of pleasure. In so doing, he lost all. Esau had not learned self-control. The desire for food—the richest, the tastiest, and the best—is one of the strongest desires of self. It would seem that, as Esau was a hunter by profession, he indulged his appetites liberally with a rich meat diet—the result of his 'killings' of the animals he had slain. He therefore developed into a gross type of man, for it is a well-known fact that like produces like. The man who eats heavily of meat continuously, will gradually assimilate an 'animal' nature. Esau's animal passions were strong because he doubtless was a heavy meat-eater. The Scripture calls him a "profane person" (Hebrews 12:16). The word means "A man of earth," earthy, sensual, a man who lived for worldly things, especially for food. He was a man of appetite, fond of eating, to whom his dinner was the greatest event of the day. He was godless. "Profane" literally means, "outside the Temple," that is, excommunicated. He had excommunicated himself from divine things by gluttony. He was no doubt a splendid athlete, and at the same time a splendid savage! The bodily appetites were supreme....

If one desires earthly things always, God will cer-

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tainly allow them to him, but finally, in one way or another, they will destroy him. It has happened before. Note in the scripture below how people blame God for such destruction. This is a characteristic of the Old Testament—and of many people today—to blame God for everything that happens no matter how constantly they have transgressed His precepts.

So they did eat, and were filled: for He gave them their own desire. They were not estranged from their lust, but while the meat was yet in their mouths the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest (the most gluttonous) of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel. (Ps. 78:29-34)

After forty years of spiritual preparation in the wilderness, God introduced the children of Israel to a rich temporal inheritance—the promised land. But before they went across to claim it, He said to them, "When thou shalt have eaten and are full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord." (Deut. 6:11-12).

Out of proverbs the warning comes, "Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty"—both temporal and spiritual.

Paul, who fasted often, was a great champion of care of the body.

Paul issues another warning in Romans, chapter six—

\[1\] Ibid., p. 205.
In these words: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences . . . and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly . . ." (Romans 16: 17-18). Further, in 1 Cor. 10:31, we have Paul's noble statement with regard to partaking of food, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." It is said, most emphatically, according to this Scripture, that we are to glorify God. It is to be feared that there are many Christians to whom this eating to the glory of God, has not yet become a spiritual reality. For if, as shown by medical statistics, the great majority of sicknesses are caused by wrong eating, how can we glorify God when we eat food that our bodies do not require? This Scripture is preceded and also followed by two others, both giving their quota of warning on the same matter. The one preceding it is the famous statement of Paul in 1 Cor. 9:27: "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." The warning Scripture that follows the statement in 1 Cor. 10:31 is the awful happenings in the Corinthian Church in the eleventh chapter, where Paul reveals that some of the Christians in the Church at Corinth had become such gluttons that they were actually bringing hampers of food and wine to the Lord's supper, and turning it into a carnal feast or party (vs.'s 21-22). They were so indulging their carnal appetites that they could hardly wait for food until they got home, and so brought plenty of food and wine with them and began to eat it in the house of God, and Paul had to remind them that they had got homes to eat in, and that they were completely out of order. This shows to what extent food can domineer us, when such carnal practices as these crept in so early in Church history. These Corinthian Christians needed the Romans twelve message: "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your BODIES a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). Paul also had to warn the Church at Philippi of the same danger. "They are the enemies of the Cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:18-19). Food itself is not sinful, but if it is given undue importance, it becomes a god, and when
it becomes a god, it becomes a sin.¹

Overabstinence

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. (1 Cor. 3:16,17).

Before God created man, He organized all the things which would be necessary for man to care for himself. Man is expected to regard his body as a special gift from God and to sustain it wisely. As pointed out in connection with the fasting of Christ, Moses, and Elijah, God is able to sustain life more directly than by earthly foods. However, for a prolonged length of time, He will do this fully only when He commands the special fast. When man undertakes to seek God by fasting, he is expected to do so wisely and not to deny himself to the extent that permanent injury would result. Consideration of the following may assist the reader in determining the length and frequency of his fasts on special occasions.

(1) Paul knew the ill-wisdom of abstaining from food past a needful point. Chapter twenty-seven of the Book of Acts recounts the occasion when Paul and other Christians were taken captive and were transported to Italy by ship.

¹Ibid., p. 208.
The ship was caught up by a terrible storm, and the crew was terrified, but Paul and his comrades fasted in faith for their safety. Paul's words to the soldiers and his friends were as follows:

But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.

For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. . . .

Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and have continued fasting, having taken nothing.

Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.

And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.

Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat. (Acts 27:21-24, 31-36)

Had the Romans had the faith which fasting brought to the Christians, they also might have been saved. But the core of this incident lies in Paul's words on fasting. He explains that, for health's sake, one should never abstain too long from food. Then he does something which might well be adopted
as standard practice by Christians today. After they had completed their fast, had humbled themselves and been reconciled with their God sufficiently to obtain their desired blessing, they partook of the sacrament. Would it not be the finest tribute a Christian could pay to God to testify that he would obey His laws at this time when he felt deeply humble and was one with Him. After Paul and his companions had renewed their covenants, they then ate their meal.

(2) Men should not all fast as Paul and his friends, i.e. until they accomplish their purpose or obtain the blessing. Many of the benefits of fasting appear only after the fast has been completed and the body is again stimulated by natural food. Examples of this—as indicated in the previous chapter—are clarity of mind, increased body vigor, etc.

(3) The circumstances of Christ's fast may be helpful. Before His fast, He was "full of the Holy Ghost," but afterward, "He returned in the Power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14), and afterward He taught and performed miracles.

(4) Cove remarks:

It is far better, especially when commencing the experience of fasting, to fast for a short period with a good solid measure of prayer, than to make an endurance test of a long fast, with little or no prayer. Moreover, there should be a real reason for fasting. We should have a definite object in view. Therefore, the length of the fast will be partly conditioned by the gravity of the need for which you are fasting, and how soon the
answer comes through.\footnote{Ibid., p. 216.}

For example, if one were fasting to overcome the tobacco habit, he should fast until his physical desire for it is gone, which should take three or four days. During this time, he should have become strong enough spiritually to resist its use thereafter. Fasting to overcome such habits produce two results: (a) if a man has enough determination to abstain from food for one or two or more days, it adds to his confidence to control himself in other things; and (b) by denying the body the satisfaction of natural elements for a time, the body is given a chance to cleanse itself, and the desire for these things is removed.

(5) From a very thought-provoking pamphlet on scriptural fasting, the following is taken:

\ldots no amount of bodily chastisement beyond what is well defined in the Book can supersede God's appointed methods for the increase of faith. . . .

There is a human tendency to attempt to guile you of your reward in a voluntary humiliation of our physical bodies to extremes of chastisement and discomfort, as witness the countless religious rites that lean in this direction. I believe we need to guard against the misguidance of trying to buy with the works of our hands what the free grace of God has already purchased if we will only believe. Relative to this thought, the passage in Col. 2:18-23 seems to be pertinent. "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility . . . (touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using) . . . which things have indeed a SHOW OF WISDOM IN WILL WORSHIP, AND HUMILITY, AND NEG-
LECTING OF THE BODY; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh." A clearer rendering of this last part, which is verse 23, is presented in Weymouth's Translation as follows, "These rules have indeed an appearance of wisdom, where there is self-imposed worship and an affectation of humility and an ascetic severity. But not one of them is of any value in combating the indulgence of our lower natures." But Moffatt's translation of this verse, in view of our study, is almost startling: "These rules are determined by human precepts and tenets; they get the name of 'wisdom' with their self-imposed devotions, with their fasting, with their rigorous discipline of the body, but they are of no value, they simply pamper the flesh!"

... Right fasting can do its part, it is true, but faith cannot grow in any other soil than that which God has ordained for its true nourishment, which is the soil of "trial."

I believe the reason for any spiritual benefits which follow protracted periods of fasting is the time and earnestness that is put into prayer and communion with God, rather than the actual fast itself. Is it not too often true that Christians just will not bring themselves to protracted seasons of waiting on God, unless a particular occasion draws them to it, as is the case in fasting? Some have laid great emphasis on the thought that if a person on a long fast will spend SEVERAL HOURS A DAY in prayer, there are great possibilities of receiving revelations, visions, and other blessings. Could anyone doubt it? May I ask, who could doubt that any earnest seeker after God could have every physical spiritual need supplied for any particular time in his life who put forth such earnest effort before God over a considerable period of time even with regular eating, or mere occasional fasting?

Let us take heed not to be overbalanced in any direction. Fasting is a teaching of the Scriptures and has a proper place in the Christian life; but the Scripture also teaches that each of its doctrines and particular parts must be interpreted and taught in the light of the whole. ... (1 Cor. 2:13)

(6) Regarding temperance and moderation in all things,
And no one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity, being temperate in all things, whatsoever shall be entrusted to his care. (D. & C. 12:8).

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Gal. 5:22, 23).

(7) The mechanism of the body is normally self-adjusting and self-healing. And when the functions of the body are liberated from handling the food that is loaded upon it three or four times a day, seven times a week, they start a bon-fire in which the toxic waste is consumed. This is simply the initial preparation for real fasting, and must be endured. This is the purifying process and when the body is purified then the purification of the inner man begins. Instead of not fasting when headaches are encountered or some other painful symptoms, we must steel ourselves to endure this purging process even although we might have to go to bed until it is over. To those who are addicted to wrong eating habits, this part of fasting is the hardest of all. But it must be gone through with. The headache is simply Nature's way of telling you she is gathering up all the accumulated poisons in your system and dealing with it. When the blood has absorbed much waste it goes through your head causing it to ache and the body to feel weak. These impurities and toxins, left in the body, engender diseases of all kinds and lower the spiritual tone--so that fasting in its initial stages is remedial for the body as also it is quickening to the spirit.

... This goes on for days, and finally, the blood having cleansed the temple of the Holy Spirit from the rubbish, the circulation improves to such an extent that these conditions leave and the person generally feels better than he did whilst he lived a normal life of eating several meals a day. . . .

. . . After several days of the fast have passed (usually not more than three, or at the most four) the hunger appetite actually leaves you. Later on, even the weakness usually leaves as well, and the average person feels stronger even than he did before he began to fast. The more we fast, the easier it becomes. The more you fast, the more you are disposed to fast, because of the
wonderful benefits to the whole spirit, soul and body.  

**Breaking the Fast**

In fasting, the first day is always the worst. The second day is nearly as bad, then each day of fasting becomes easier until a certain period is reached. One shouldn't fast many days or too frequently unless under the supervision of a physician. Here is Gandhi's advice to all fasters:

... Let me at the outset note a disaster that be-fell me after the second long fast, that is, of fourteen days, in South Africa in 1914. Almost on the second day of the breaking of the fast I began strenuous walking, feeling that I should come to no harm. I walked nearly three miles, the second or the third day, and suffered excruciating pains in the muscle-less calves. Not knowing the cause I persisted in walking as soon as the pain subsided. It was in this condition that I left South Africa for England and came under the observation of Dr. Jivraj Mehta, who warned me that if I persisted I might be a cripple for life and that I must lie in bed for at least a fortnight. But the warning was too late to keep my general health, which used to be excellent such that I was capable of taking a forty mile march without being over-fatigued. Twenty miles in a day was nothing for me in those days. It was as a result of the strain I ignorantly put upon my body that I had to suffer from a violent attack of pleurisy which permanently in-jured a constitution that was fairly sound. It was the first serious attack of any disease in my life. From this very costly experiment I learned that perfect phys-ical rest during fast and for a time proportionate to the length of the fast, after the breaking of it, is a ne-cessity, and if this simple rule can be observed no evil effect of fasting need be feared. . . .

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Of course, Gandhi spoke here of one of his long fasts---man should use the same wisdom in connection with shorter ones. He broke his long fast on juices and fruits, and hadn't taken any solid food for twelve days.

In order to make one's fasts most effective spiritually and of greatest benefit physically, he should reduce the quantity of food he eats shortly before period of abstinence and resume eating very moderately. One author says:

The fast shall not be reckoned as a fast if a man was gluttonous before the time of the fast. ... ¹

The following suggestions given by Rev. James Miller on "How to Break a Fast" may be helpful:

Fresh orange juice, or other fruit juices are good to break a fast. If a short fast, they may be taken undiluted. If a longer fast, dilute with water, and take a glass every two hours the first day or so, depending upon the constitution. Thin soup may then be taken or soft boiled eggs with hot milk toast. Do not yield to temptation and indulge. The most difficult part of the fast is the breaking of it.

While fasting, the stomach and digestive tract go to sleep and rest from their labors. Too much food taken the first day after a short fast, or the first two or three days after a long fast, act as a shock and the discomfort is often quite great. All food should be well mixed with saliva before swallowing. In breaking a fast, frequent nourishment is to be advised and not gorging at one time. ²

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Breaking the fast correctly is very important, and the reader who intends, by God's help, to put this matter of fasting into practice, is especially advised to read this section carefully. It is essential, if you have been fasting for any length of time, not to eat a lot of heavy food immediately when you break the fast. Some have made serious mistakes here. After fasting for a period, they have broken the fast suddenly, and sat down to an enormous meal. This is, of course, just asking for trouble. The general rule is roughly as follows:—Take the length of time you have fasted, and make that the 'breaking-in period.' In this breaking-in period you should only take very light food, such as soups and fruit juices, gradually introducing salads and fruit, and continuing on that for some time before going back upon heavy solid food, such as meat and so forth. The longer the fast, the more care it takes in resuming the regular diet again. Oranges and grapefruit are some of the best fruits to use in breaking a fast, also tomato juice. Grape juice from fresh grapes is highly recommended. Fresh fruit juices and fresh fruit is absolutely necessary before regular eating is resumed. The longer you use vegetable meals after the fast, the more benefits you will derive from the fast. Never, in breaking a fast, take something such as greasy broth, or anything fatty or meaty. Be sure to keep to fruit juices and so forth. We are, of course, issuing this advice mainly to those who have been on a long fast. For a short fast of a day or so, the instructions may not be followed so seriously, but even then, care should be taken.

It is right here, at the breaking of the fast, that we have to use extreme will-power and wisdom. A lot of the benefit we have received can be undone if we do not break the fast wisely. Some have even acted so foolishly, that they have had to be taken to hospital. That does not glorify the Lord. No harm can be done from fasting, but tremendous nervous energy is called upon to break the fast, and it takes patience and much effort to adjust the stomach slowly, to taking normal food again. There is no appetite stronger than returning hunger after the cleansing of all parts of the body through a fast. This is one of the most difficult times of the fast. Self-restraint and willpower at this time must be strongly exercised. Satan chose this very time to attack Christ. His object was to tempt Christ to the extent that He would turn the stones into a heavy food, and eat it. . . .
The reason that to take a heavy meal of food after a long fast is dangerous, is because when we have fasted for length of time, the glandular secretions rest and go to sleep. When wrong food is suddenly placed into them, and in the wrong quantity, they rebel. They cannot awaken quickly and take up this intricate, delicate task immediately, and abruptly start performing their customary task. Consequently, only a very slow and gradual stimulation by fruit juices or a similar light diet at first should take place. To place any solid food into the stomach after a long fast would be an actual crime against it.

1 Cove, p. 219.
PART III. HISTORICAL ASPECTS
CHAPTER XIII

EARLY CHRISTIAN HISTORY

First Two Centuries

As pointed out in an earlier chapter on the teachings of Christ, the Savior intends and taught that men should fast. It is true that He laid down no pharisaic or legalistic rules for man to follow, but He did leave with man the privilege and obligation of this great spiritual exercise.

It is the intent in this and subsequent chapters to compare the practices of fasting with the theory presented in the two preceding sections of this thesis.

Very little is known about the first century after Christ's birth except those instances recorded in the New Testament, most of which have been cited in this work.

Regarding this period of time Mosheim writes:

No law was enacted by Christ and his apostles concerning fasts; but the custom obtained, that most Christians occasionally and privately joined abstinence from food with their prayers, and especially when engaged in undertakings of great importance. 1 Cor. vii. 5. How much time should be spent in this duty, was left to the private judgment of each individual; nor was a person despised who thought it sufficient to observe only the rules of strict temperance. Of any solemn public fasts, except only on the anniversary day of the crucifixion of Christ, there is no mention in the most ancient times.
Gradually, however, days of fasting were introduced; first by custom and afterwards by legal sanction. Whether any thing of this nature occurred in the first century, and what days were devoted to fasting, we have not the means of deciding. And yet I would not deny that weighty arguments are adduced by those who think, that while the apostles were still living or soon after their decease, the Christians in most places abstained from food, either wholly or partially, on the fourth and on the sixth days of the week.

Hastings also testifies to the lack of legalism in the early years.

No rules on the subject could claim to come directly from the Master Himself. It is hardly probable that the first disciples imitated the stricter Jews in voluntarily adding to the Day of Atonement the two weekly fasts Lk. 18:12) of Monday and Thursday (days which were chosen because Moses was believed to have gone up to the Mount on the latter and to have come down on the former), for there is no trace of these as Christian fasts in NT. But many Jews increased these fasts voluntarily, as did Anna (Lk 2:37), and even the heathen Cornelius, according to some MSS (Ac 10:30); and so we read of St. Paul fasting (2 Cor. 6:5, 11:27: 'fasting often' the mark of the Christian minister), and of the first Christians fasting before ordinations or solemn appointments (Ac. 14:23, 13:2f). The Jewish Christians, doubtless, continued to keep the Day of Atonement, and St. Luke mentions it as an epoch (Ac. 27:9 'the Fast') but the Gentiles were almost certainly not pressed to observe it.

In the second century it was a common custom to fast twice a week on Wednesdays and Fridays. Two reasons have been advanced for the selection of these two days—(l) a positive attitude:

The Christian fast was put on Friday, as the day of

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1 James Murdock (trans.), Mosheim's Institutes of Ecclesiastical History (London: Simms and M'Intyre, 1848), p.44.
Christ's death, and on Wednesday because Judas made his contract of betrayal on that day (Luke 14, 1, 2, 10, 11). Thus the historical events of the redemption relived by the faithful every week formed a spiritual drama that comprised not only the Passion itself but also the decisions and actions of Christ's enemies that immediately led up to it. . . .

Wednesday was also the day on which Christ was tried for His "crimes." (2) a negative attitude, which seems to have little significance because it misinterprets the teachings of Christ, for He referred to the manner of fasting, and not the day.

1. But do not let your fasts be with the hypocrites (Pharisees); for they fast on Monday and Thursday; but you shall fast on Wednesday and Friday.  

As early as the second century, schisms and pagan practices began to creep in and to influence this doctrine. Only two outstanding examples are cited in which some of the early church leaders became entangled.

[Of heresies in the 2nd century] An obscure man of weak judgment, named Montanus, who lived in a poor village of Phrygia called Pepuza, had the folly to suppose himself the Comforter promised by Christ to his disciples, and to pretend to utter prophecies under divine inspiration. He attempted no change in the doctrines of religion, but professed to be divinely commissioned to perfect and give efficiency to the moral discipline taught by Christ and

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his apostles; for he supposed Christ and his apostles had conceded too much to the weakness of the people of their age, and thus had given only an incomplete and imperfect rule of life. He therefore would have fasts multiplied and extended.

(e) The feeling of the non-Montanist Christians in the 2nd Cent. with regard to fasting is clearly exhibited by Tertullian's abusive treatise, de Jejuniis, written A.D. 210, after he had become a disciple of Montanus; and it is curious that the great development in fasting which took place later was largely due to the rivalry of this sect. The Montanists kept two weeks of 'xerophagy,' i.e. partial fasts, in the year; but of these weeks the Saturdays and Sundays were excepted (de Jejun. 15). It is not said at what time of the year they were kept. Both the name and the thing were opposed by the 'Psychics' (the ordinary Christians) as a novelty (pp. 2). Xerophagies consisted in not eating flesh or anything juicy, not even succulent fruit, or anything with the flavour of wine, and in abstaining from the bath (pp. 1). The 'Psychics' objected to the definite enjoining of 'stations,' as these should be voluntary (pp. 10); yet (Tertullian says) they were inconsistent, as they sometimes lived on bread and water (pp. 13) and had definite fast-days, especially 'when the Bridegroom was taken away' (the Paschal fast, see above 1.) and Wednesday and Friday up to the ninth hour, or 3 p.m. (pp. 2, 10); they often fasted even on Saturday, which Tertullian says should never be observed as a fast-day except at Pascha (pp. 14); their bishops ordained fasts for their own dioceses, and there were fasts before Councils were held (pp. 13). The Montanists kept on the bi-weekly fasts to a later hour (pp. 10). With this we may compare Hippolytus' accusation against the Montanist, of Novelties of fasts, and feasts, and meals of parched food and repasts of radishes'. Thus the difference between the Montanists and the Orthodox seems to have been that the latter were less strict in the custom of fasting, and left more to voluntary observance, while the former made a settled practice of compulsory xerophagies and half-fasts in addition to the complete fast of the Paraskeue (Good Friday), or of Paraskeye and the following Sabbath.

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Tertullian's treatise shows how bitter was the feeling excited by a mere difference of observance.

Secondly, Irenaeus, who refers to fasting as an ancient custom, wrote to one Victor regarding some inconsistencies in the church of the second century. Among other things he mentions the following:

For not only is the dispute respecting the day, but also respecting the manner of fasting. For some think, that they ought to fast only one day, some two, some more days; some compute their day as consisting of forty hours night and day; and this diversity existing among those that observe it, is not a matter that has just sprung up in our times, but long ago among those before us, who perhaps not having ruled with sufficient strictness, established the practice that arose from their simplicity and inexperience. And yet with all, these maintained peace, and we have maintained peace with one another; and the very difference in our fasting establishes the unanimity in our faith.

(Footnote) 2—Amongst the ancient Christians there were three kinds of fasts: the first was the fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, which ended at the 9th hour of the day, (i.e. 3'o'clock in the afternoon,) after the end of the station, or holy communion. The third sort was the strictest of all, and lasted till the cock-crowing; which was therefore by the Greeks called in Latin "Superpositio." 

Legalism

From the third century on, fasting was made subject to legislation. At first just a few days were required, but

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1 Hastings, Ibid.
more and more were added.

1. Development after Tertullian.--From the 3rd cent. onwards manuals of instruction and worship, now conveniently called 'Church Orders', became common, basing their injunctions in most cases on supposed Apostolic authority. What before was a matter of voluntary or customary observance now came under rule. Fasting accordingly was more exactly regulated, and the Orthodox became stricter than the Montanists, who retained the fasting customs mentioned by Tertullian till the 5th Cent. The growth of strictness in fasting is especially observable in the 4th cent., the age of councils and organization made possible by the cessation of persecution.

Teachings of asceticism and ceremonialism were added to fast days, which, as pointed out in Chapter Two, is contrary to God's teachings. He did not intend that fasting practices should be ascetic or austere, and condemned the Pharisees for such a philosophy. Mosheim tells how those of the third century reverted to such practices.

[Of rites in the 3rd century] Greater sanctity and necessity were now attributed to fasting than was done before; because it was the general belief that demons laid fewer snares for the temperate and abstemious than for the full fed or luxurious. The Latins were singular in keeping every seventh day of the week as a fast; and as the Greek and Oriental Christians would not imitate them in this, it afforded abundant matter for altercation between them. . . . On joyful and festive occasions while giving thanks to God, they thought it suitable to pray standing, thus expressing their joy and confidence by the posture of their bodies; but on sorrowful occasions and seasons of fasting and humiliation, they were accustomed to make their supplications on their bended knees or

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1 Hastings, Ibid.
prostrate, to indicate self-abasement.\(^1\)

[Of rites in 5th century] Public worship everywhere assumed a form more calculated for show and for the gratification of the eye. Various ornaments were added to the sacerdotal garments in order to increase the veneration of the people for the clerical order. The new forms of hymns, prayers, and public fasts, are easily enumerated.\(^2\)

With the spread of the early church into northern Africa went also the teachings of the church. Here they also mixed paganistic austerities with the solid core of the gospel doctrine. Of the church there it is written:

A great ceremony of purification to place preparatory to the priests’ fasts many of which lasted from seven to forty-two days, and sometimes even a longer period. During this time they abstained entirely from animal food, from herbs and vegetables, and, above all, from the indulgence of the passions. This was the usage in Roman times as reported by Porphyry (de Abstin., iv., 7). The fasts of the Coptic church are: three days before Lent; fifty-five days of Lent; twenty-eight days before the Nativity; a fast of the Apostles, and fifteen days before the assumption. In the great fast of Lent, they avoid all animal food, and use only bread, vegetables and oil. They also fast every Wednesday and Friday (except seven weeks after Lent), but fish is then allowed. Thus more than half the days needful to ask a Coptic priest if he is fasting, before giving him milk or butter at a meal.\(^3\)

**Days of Fasting**

Fasting practices developed along three lines: (1)

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weekly fasts, (2) fasts before solemn occasions, and (3) seasonal fasts.

**Weekly Fasts.** The weekly fasts of Wednesday and Friday and their origin have already been discussed. To these, Pope Innocent I in 417 "motivated the Saturday fasting by the thought that on that day Christ had rested, a victim of death, in the tomb and that the Apostles had spent the day in sadness and fasting."¹ Sunday was never held as a fast day. None of these weekly fasts were recognized as such during the great fast of Lent.

These weekly fasts were often referred to as stations, of which Weiser says:

The Station fast was accepted by newly converted nations and became so widespread in many countries that in Ireland, for instance, Thursday used to be called the "day between the Fasts". . . . "Station" (statio: Standing), probably because the fast was concluded with prayer (in the church) performed standing.²

**Fasts Before Solemn Occasions.** Fasting of some nature was usually indulged in before baptism, ordination, or partaking of the eucharist.

4. But, before the baptism, let the one who baptizes and the one to be baptized fast, and any others who are able to do so. And you shall require the person being

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baptized to fast for one or two days.¹

The reason for fasting before the eucharist is, according to Catholic doctrine, so that the holy food of the Lord's Supper may not come into contact with the natural food which one may have eaten; therefore, the stomach should be empty. Some even took rancid or bitter tonics to cause them to vomit, so that their stomachs would be empty.

The fast before communion was mentioned by Tertullian in the second century and continued to be observed even among Lutheran and Calvinist churches in the Reformation.

Seasonal Fasts. Among the Roman and eastern churches, these seasonal fasts are most important of all their fasts. Even though there are many occasions which have been celebrated by fasts in the past, we shall discuss only four.

(1) Ember days.

The days at the beginning of the seasons ordered by the Church as days of fast and abstinence. . . . The purpose of their introduction, besides the general one intended by all prayer and fasting, was to thank God for the gifts of nature, to teach men to make use of them in moderation, and to assist the needy.²

Originally Ember Days meant 'the four times.' These fast days were observed as early as the third century by the Christ-

¹ Fathers of the Church, Ibid., p. 177.
ians. Instead of the pagan feasting at the beginning of the four seasons, they fasted.

They offered the Eucharistic Sacrifice after having fasted the whole of Saturday and having performed a long vigil service of prayers and reading. (222 AD)

(2) Rogation Days. The three days before Ascension Day, originated in the West in the fifth century as days of supplication for the fertility of the earth.

(3) Advent. A period of four weeks before Christmas. Observed now only as a period of solemn prayer, but originally was a fast day.

(4) Lent. The most important of all Catholic fasts, is sometimes called 'a tithe of the year.' The period of the Lenten fast was slow in becoming fixed. Earlier it varied from fourteen to seventy days, but by about the seventh century it was established at forty days, beginning on Ash Wednesday and running six and one half weeks, not counting Sundays, which is never a fast day. Of this Mosheim and Hastings have the following to say:

[Of ceremonial rites in 4th century] It was believed that nothing was more effectual to repel the assaults of evil spirits and to propitiate the Deity than fasting. Hence it is easy to discover why the rulers of the church ordained fasts by express laws, and commanded as a necessary duty what was before left at discretion. The Quadragesimal or Lent fast, as it was called, was considered more sacred than all the rest, though it was not as yet

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1 Weiser, Ibid., p. 32.
fixed to a determinate number of days. But it should be remembered that the fasts of this age differed much from those observed by Christians in preceding ages. Anciendy those who undertook to observe a fast abstained altogether from food and drink; in this age many deemed it sufficient merely to omit the use of flesh and wine, and this sentiment afterwards became universal among the Latins.

1. Daille, De Jejuniis et Quadragesima, lib. iv.
The Quadragesimal fast was at first of only forty hours, afterwards it was extended to several days and even weeks, and at last settled at thirty-six. In the oriental churches Lent commenced with the seventh week before Easter, because two days in each week they suspended the fast; but in the Western churches it commenced with the sixth week, because they fasted on the Sundays. Finally, Gregory the Great in the sixth century, or as others say Gregory II. in the eighth century, added four days more to this fast, so as to make it full forty days. In the fourth century however the Lent fast was in a degree optional, and the people were exhorted with entreaties to its observance.¹

A forty-days' fast is not found till the 4th cent. and made its way only gradually; a supposed reference in Origen is due to Rufinus' 'translation'. In some countries the 'forty days' were observed as a solemn season for prayer, without being a fast, as Advent was observed in later times in the West. ... The forty-days' fast is also mentioned by Eusebius and in the Canons of Hippolytus as we now have them. The latter prescribe bread and salt and water in Holy Week; sick persons and those who neglect the fast by ignorance of the time should fast after Pentecost. The Edessene Canons are the first to give as the reason for the forty-days' fast that our Lord and Moses and Elijah fasted for that period; ... ²

As Hastings points out, the forty-days was finally

¹ Mosheim, Ibid., p. 156.
² Hastings, Ibid.
adopted in order to imitate Moses, Elijah and Christ in their fasts. The period of time is a lovely symbol, but as pointed out in the chapter "Long Fasts of the Scriptures," the nature, purpose and origin of these fasts were absolutely different. Christ's fast of forty days was not meant to be copied by man. It should be noted that during the forty-day fast of Lent, the abstinence is different, the origin is different, and even the purpose is not the same. The mere passage of time is not the criterion which adds validity to a fast.

Consider the present day Catholic teaching regarding what one may and may not do during Lent and other fasts.

**Catholic Dogma**

Thomas Acquinas is reputed to be the one man most responsible for systematizing Catholic dogma. In connection with penitence and absolution from sin by the priest, he has the following to say. He is reasoning in the area of thought regarding the function—that of reconciliation with God, others, and self—and emphasizes the negative, ascetic point of view in preference to the positive, worth-of-the-human soul concept as discussed in Chapter I. Introduction.

The absolution pronounced by the priest conveys grace, removes guilt, and remits the eternal punishment, but satisfaction still remains to be rendered either here or in purgatory. Until this has been completed the penitent cannot enter heaven. The satisfaction required was commonly summed up under the three heads of
prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. As Thomas expressed it, a man humbles his spirit before God in prayer (an interesting interpretation of the value of prayer); he trains his flesh by fasting; and he employs his worldly possessions to give alms to his neighbor. Satisfaction is thought of as intended for the benefit not of another person but of the penitent himself who in rendering it did something that involved humiliation or labor or sacrifice, and thus atoned for his wrong doing.¹

A further step in the evaluation of the present-day Catholic fast was, by definition, to create several kinds of fasts. Henry Mason of England, writing in Old English from England in 1626 enumerates these as follows:

This word fast is taken foure waies, out of which doe arise foure sorts of fasts. ¹. a spirituall fast is an abstinence from sinne. ². a morall fast is temperance and sobriety in diet. ³. a naturall fast is an abstinence from all meat and drink. And ⁴. an ecclesiasticall fast is such an abstinence as the Church doth prescribe, (which encludes the abstinence from meat).²

The natural fast, which Christ practiced, is not required today. With Catholics, complete abstinence for the whole day is never required. The moral or philosophical fast is defined by the Catholic Encyclopedia as "abstinence from food and drink as is dictated by the bodily or mental dispositions peculiar to each individual." There may be some

who practice this voluntarily. The combination of the spir­
itual and natural fasts would come closest to what God or­
dained originally. The fast which today is required of
Catholics is the ecclesiastical 'half-fast'. From the Balt­
imore Catechism--No. 3--the following distinction is taken.

Beginning with Lent, 1952, many of the Bishops of the
United States, using the provisions of Canon Law as mod­
ified through the special faculties granted by the Holy
See, published the following regulations on fast and
abstinence:

ABSTINENCE: All persons over seven years of age must
abstain. This means that they may not take meat or meat
gravy or meat soup at all on days of complete abstinence,
which are all Fridays, Ash Wednesday, and the vigils of
the Assumption and of Christmas. They may take meat,
but only at the principal meal, on days of partial ab­
stinance, which are Ember Wednesdays and Saturdays, and
the vigils of Pentecost and of All Saints' Day. On
Holy Saturday meat may not be taken until noon, when
both abstinence and fast cease.

FASTS: All persons over twenty-one and under fifty­
ine years of age must fast. This means that on a fast
day they may have only one principal, or full, meal and
two smaller meals. They may eat meat at this principal
meal, except on days of complete abstinence. At the
two smaller meals they may not have meat, but they may
take sufficient food to maintain their strength. However,
these two smaller meals together should be less than a
full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted, but
liquids, including milk and fruit juices, may be taken
at any time on a fast day. The days of fast are the
weekdays of Lent up to Holy Saturday noon, the Ember
Days, and the vigils of Pentecost, the Assumption, All
Saints and Christmas.

Those not bound to fast may eat meat as often as they
wish, except on days of complete abstinence (when it may
not be eaten at all), and on days of partial abstinence
(when it may be eaten only at the principal meal). When
a person's health or ability to work would be seriously
affected by fasting or abstaining, the law does not oblige.
Where doubt arises concerning fast or abstinence, a parish
priest or confessor should be consulted. In granting these concessions the bishops urged the faithful: to attend daily Mass during the period of fast and abstinence; to receive Holy Communion often; to take part more frequently in exercises of piety; to give generously to works of religion and charity; to perform acts of kindness toward the sick, the aged and the poor; to practice voluntary self-denial; to pray more fervently, particularly for the intentions of the Holy Father.

Regarding these and other rules the Catholic Encyclopedia gives the following:

Finally, in strict acceptation of the term, fasting denotes abstinence from food, and as such is an act of temperance finding its raison c'etre in the dictates of natural law and its full perfection in the requirements of positive ecclesiastical legislation. . . . The function of positive law is to intervene in designating days whereon this obligation must be observed, as well as the manner in which the same obligation is to be discharged on days authoritatively appointed.

The law of fasting, ecclesiastical in its genius, is unwritten in its origin, and consequently must be understood and applied with regard for the customs of various times and places.

Fasting essentially consists in eating but one full meal in twenty-four hours and that about midday. It also implies the obligation of abstaining from flesh meat during the same period, unless legitimate authority grants permission to eat meat. The quantity of food allowed at this meal has never been made subject to positive legislation. Whosoever therefore eats a hearty or sumptuous meal in order to bear the burden of fasting satisfies the obligation of fasting. Any excess during the meal militates against the virtue of temperance, without jeopardizing the obligation of fasting.

. . . noon is the proper time for this meal. . . . Grievous sin is not committed even though this meal is taken a full hour before noon without sufficient reason.

. . . Nothing like a noteworthy interruption should be admitted during the course of the midday meal, because such a break virtually forms two meals instead of one.

. . . Ordinarily an interruption of one half hour is
considered slight. ... Finally, unless allowable to give immoderate length to the time of this meal. Ordinarily, a duration of more than two hours is considered immoderate in this matter.

Besides a complete meal, the Church now permits a collation usually taken in the evening. In considering this point proper allowance must be made for what custom has introduced (italics mine). ... In the first place, about eight ounces of food are permitted at the collation even though this amount of food would fully satisfy the appetites of some people. ... In order to form judgments perfectly safe concerning this point, the Lenten regulations of each diocese should be carefully read.

Finally, a little tea, coffee, chocolate or such like beverage together with a morsel of bread or a cracker is now allowed in the morning. Strictly speaking, whatever may be classified under the head of liquids may be taken as drink or medicine at any time of the day or night on fasting days. Hence, water, lemonade, soda water, ginger ale, wine, beer, and similar drinks may be taken on fasting days outside meal time even though such beverages may, to some extent, prove nutritious. ... It is impossible to decide mathematically how much food is necessary to involve a serious violation of this law.

This doctrine is merely a practical application of a universally accepted principle of moralists and canonists whereby the character of obligation in human legislation is deemed serious or light in so far as the material element involved in the law bears or does not bear a close and intimate relation to the attainment of a prescribed end. Inasmuch as fasting considered as a function of the virtue of temperance bears such a relation to the promotion of man's spiritual well-being, it certainly embodies an obligation generally serious. The sixty-ninth of the Apostolic Canons decrees the degradation of bishops, priests, deacons, lectors, or chanters, failing to fast during Lent, and the excommunication of laymen, who fail in this way. ...

Inability to keep the law of fasting and incompatibility of fasting with the duties of one's state in life suffice by their very nature, to extinguish the obligation because as often as the obligation of positive laws prove extremely burdensome or irksome the obligation is forthwith lifted.

Those who do mental work are excused from fasting just
as those who do physical work.

Priests charged with the care of souls may disperse individuals (from fasting) for good reason.

No student of ecclesiastical discipline can fail to perceive that the obligation of fasting is rarely observed in its integrity nowadays. (italics mine) Conscious of the conditions of our age, the Church is ever shaping the requirements of this obligation to meet the best interests of her children. At the same time, no measure of leniency in this respect can eliminate the natural and divine positive law imposing mortification and penance on man on account of sin and its consequences.

Monasticism

Many of the practices and philosophies of monasticism stem from the strict, austerical fasting practices imposed upon the church membership. Monasticism means literally the act of 'dwelling alone.' From the encyclopedia its basic philosophy is obtained.

The basic idea of monasticism in all its varieties is seclusion or withdrawal from the world or society. The object of this is to achieve a life whose ideal is different from and largely at variance with that pursued by the majority of mankind.

... Asceticism is the struggle against worldly principles, even with such as are merely worldly without being sinful. (1 John 2:15-17).

Monastic ascetism then means the removal of obstacles to loving God, and what these obstacles are is clear from the nature of love itself. Love is the union of wills.

1 Herbermann, Ibid., p. 789 ff.

The following is in regard to the example of fasting in one of the largest monastic orders.

The spirit of fasting in the Franciscan Order extends far beyond the positive legislation found in the Rule. It finds its concretization in the life of Saint Francis, who was the living examplar of the Franciscan ideal. The Rule demands comparatively little by way of fasting. Francis' life, on the other hand, was almost a continuous fast. It was an uninterrupted manifestation of his love for Christ.

The length and the frequency of Saint Francis' fasts were most rigorous. The manner in which he fasted was no less rigorous. He took hardly enough nourishment to meet the requirements of nature, saying that it was a difficult thing to satisfy the needs of the body without making concessions to sensuality. When in good health, he hardly ever ate cooked food. If he did, he would first render it insipid by mixing it with ashes or by diluting it with water.

Francis fasted in order to drive from his members anything that could be an obstacle to his perfect conformity to Christ. Francis also fasted because Christ had given him the example of his own fast. Fasting made Francis like Christ.

Love was at the root of Saint Francis' intense desire to imitate Christ. Love is the key to the spirit of fasting in the Franciscan Order. A Franciscan's love for Christ should make his fasting a thing of joy. Love for Christ should urge Franciscans not merely to observe the obligatory fasts of the Church and of the Rule. It should move them to do something more, because true love knows no limits in its way of expression.  

Great Perversions of Pre-Lenten Days

During the early centuries after Christ, long periods of partial abstinence were adopted in order to prepare for a

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thankful and righteous observance of the great days of Christ's ministry. Concerning these periods, Hastings writes:

He (Hooker) says that fasts were "set as ushers of festival days," and have as their object "to temper the mind, lest contrary affections coming in place should make it too profuse and dissolute."¹

As these fasts became more rigidly enforced, it became man's practice to 'live a little' on the eve of these periods of abstinence and practice. Today the periods of fasting have almost been forgotten, but the "farewell to the flesh" nights, such as Carnival (Italian), Shrove Tuesday (English), Mardi Gras (American), and Fastnacht (German), etc., still continue strong. An examination of these will show how well the night of preparation for the great spiritual fast has been preserved as Christ would have wished.

**Carneval**

The days of Lent became very strict.

During Lent, entertainments, horse-racing, and similar shows were forbidden (see DCA ii. 975). . . . Maximus wrote on the Quadragesimal Fast, and also on fasting in general, and 'that there should be no jesting on a fast day'. . . .²

At first the people took the obligation to prepare for Lent

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1 James Hastings (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), Vol. V.
very seriously, but as more severe restrictions were placed upon them, they deviated from the seriousness of the occasion in order to enjoy themselves before the rigorous 40 days to follow.

At the time of Pope Saint Gregory I (604) the Masses of the pre-Lent Sundays were already celebrated in Rome. The Spirit of this season is one of penance, devotion, and atonement, the liturgical texts and rules reflecting this character.

... This Sunday (before Lent) was called Dominica Carnevala from the Latin Curnem Levore (carnelevarium), which means "withdrawal" or "removal" of meat.

The primary reason for carnival celebrations is the feasting, rejoicing, and reveling before the imminent season of fast and abstinence. It is a trait of human nature to anticipate approaching privations by greater or lesser excesses. The intensity of this urge, however, should not be judged from the mild Lenten laws of today, but from the strict and harsh observations of ancient times, which makes modern man shiver at the mere knowledge of its details. No wonder the good people of past centuries felt entitled to "have a good time" before they started on their awesome fast.

Since carnival is a time of feasting and reveling, it is only natural that many elements of the pre-Christian spring lore should have become part of the celebration. Lent excluded the boisterous practices of mumming and masquerading, so what better time could be found for it than the gay days of the carnival? All the familiar features of our modern carnival celebrations are firmly rooted in a tradition that actually dates from about the fourteenth century.

The pre-Christian element of the carnival frolics in the Latin countries seems to be a growth of the Roman Saturnalia, a pagan feast in honor of the field god Saturnus held annually in December. Northern countries have adopted customs and rites from the much older Indo-European spring lore.

The popes, as temporal rulers of their state, acknowledged the carnival practice in Rome by regulating its
observance, correcting its abuses, and providing enter­tainment for the masses. Paul II (1471) started the famous horse races. . . . He also introduced the carnival pageants for which the Holy City was famous. Within the past few centuries other cities, too, have developed their own special features of carnival celebrations, like the famed carnival of Cologne, the parade of Gondolas in Venice, the carnival balls of Vienna, the floats and parades in the cities of South America, and the mummers' parade in Philadelphia. The best-known celeb­ration of carnival in America is the famous Mardi Gras in New Orleans, which takes its name from the day on which it is annually held.  

Shrove Tuesday

In preparation for Lent the faithful in medieval times used to go to confession on Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. From this practice, that day became known as "Shrove Tuesday" (The day on which people are striven from sins.)

In the north of England Shrove Tuesday is called vulgarly Fasten's E'en; the succeeding day being Ash­Wednesday, the first day of the Lenten Fast.

Shrove-tide plainly signifies the time of confessing sins, as the Saxon word shrieve, or shift, means confession. This season has been anciently set apart by the church of Rome for a time of shriving or confessing sins. This seemingly no bad preparative for the austerities that were to follow in Lent, was, for whatever reason, laid aside at the Reformation.

But as at Carneval, this day of preparation soon turned to one of feasting and pleasure. Weiser gives one reason for the feasts as:

1. Weiser, Ibid., p. 156, 165.
2. Ibid., p. 157.
Another reason for the feasting, and a very practical one, was the necessity for finishing those foods which could not be eaten during Lent, and which, in fact, could not even be kept in homes during the fast—meat, butter, cheese, milk, eggs, fats, and bacon. This meant an increased consumption of rich foods and pastries the week before Ash Wednesday.

Pancakes became the favorite food during this time, and were apparently very well and specially made. Recall in Shakespeare's All's Well That Ends Well, he makes his clown speak of something being "as fit as a pancake for Shrove Tuesday." Of course much mal-practice came therefrom.

From books of antiquity we obtain the following—some vulgar, but interesting.

It was customary to present the first pancake to the greatest slut or lie-a-bed of the party, 'which commonly falls to the dog's share at last, for no one will own it their due.' Some allusion is probably made to the latter custom in a couplet placed opposite Shrove Tuesday in Poor Robin's Almanack for 1677:

'Pancakes are eat by greedy gut
And Hob and Madge run for the slut.'

Joannes Boemus Aubanus has described it (Shrove-Tuesday) thus: 'Men eat and drink and abandon themselves to every kind of sportive foolery, as if resolved to have their fill of pleasure before they were to die, and as it were to forego every sort of delight.'

Bishop Hall, in his Triumph of Rome, thus describes the Jovial Carneval: 'Every man cries Sciolta letting himself loose to the maddest of merriments, marching wildly up and down in all forms of disguises; each man

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1. Weiser, Ibid., p. 165.
2. Chambers, Ibid., p. 237. (Book of Days)
striving to outgo other in strange pranks of humourous debauchedness, in which even those of the holy order are wont to be allowed their share; for howsoever it was by some sullen authority forbidden to clerks and votaries of any kind to go masked and disguised in those seemingly abusive solemnities, yet more favourable construction hath offered to make them believe it was chiefly for their sakes, for the refreshment of their sadder and more restrained spirits, that this free and lawless festivity was taken up.'

In a curious tract, entitled, "Vox Graculi," quarto, 1623, p. 55, is the following quaint description of Shrove-Tuesday: 'Here must enter that wading, strading, bursten-gutted Carnifex of all Christendome, vulgarly enstiled Shrove-Tuesday, but more pertinently, sole Monarch of the Mouth, high Steward to the Stomach, chiefe Ganime to the Guts, prime Peere of the Pullets, first Favourite to the Frying pans, greatest Bashaw to the Batter-bowles, Protector of the Pan-cakes, first Founder of the Fritters, Baron of the Bacon-flitch, Earle of Egge-baskets, etc. This corpulent Commander of those chollerick things called Cookes, will show himselfe to be but of ignoble education; for by his manners you may find him better fed than taught wherever he comes.'

The following extract from Barnaby Googe's Translation of Naogeorgus will show the extent of these festivities:

Now when at length the pleasant time of Shrove tide comes in place,
And cruell fasting dayes at hand approach with solmne grace:
Then olde and yong are both as mad as ghastes of Bacchus feast,
And foure dayes long they tipple square, and feede and never reast.
Downe goes the hogges in every place, and puddings every wheare do swarme:
The dice are shakte and tost, and cardes apace they teare: . . .
The tongue is set at libertie, and hath no kinde to stay.
And things are lawfull then and done, no pleasure passed by,
That in their mindes they can devise, as if they then should die: . . .
Some naked runne about the strethes, their
faces hid alone. . . .
And to their neighbours houses go, or where it
likes them best. . .
I shew not here their daunces yet, with
filthie jestures mad.
Nor other wanton sportes that on these holy dayes
are had. . . .

From this last we see the true transition from holy
days to holidays.

Mardi Gras

This famous celebration in New Orleans also had its
origin in religious significance. However, today husbands
and wives mask and costume themselves so that they will
not be known to each other and 'go out on the town' for several
days of frivilrous party life. Of this time Tallant says:

Aside from the fact that the day after Mardi Gras is
Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent there is almost
nothing religious about Carnival. New Orleans was once
an entirely Latin and Roman Catholic city, but for a long
time now this has not been true in a literal sense.
It is true that the city is still Creole in moods and
manners and morals, but it may be doubted that very many
Orleanians any longer attach much religious significance
to Carnival. People of every religion—and people with
no religion—enjoy it together, without a memory or a
thought of its meaning. Carnival in New Orleans is a
social season and the atmosphere of a carnival ball is
highly conducive to amour. . . .

1
Brand, Ibid., p. 64, 65.
2
Robert Tallant, Mardi Gras (Garden City: Doubleday
Fastnacht

The writer has personally had the privilege of witnessing this three-day "celebration" in Basel, Switzerland. It begins about 3 a.m. with parades and bands in the main market place of the town. Huge throngs are there, mostly costumed. Husbands and wives leave each other agreeing to return home three days later. So riotous is the conduct of this "sacred religious fast" that it is said the baby carriage manufacturers gear their peak production for nine months after the event.

Another characteristic which is also typical of Carneval, Shrove Tuesday, and especially Mardi Gras, is the gossip which is published during this time. During the entire year, people collect information which is humorous, embarrassing, derogatory, and very personal about other people. Big posters and sign-boards are displayed; newspapers are filled with it.

Truly, fasting is much different today than when God gave the Day of Atonement to the children of Israel.
The Apostacy in Fasting—A Major Cause of the Reformation

The great Swiss reformer, Zwingli, a former Catholic priest, was so incensed at the malpractices in fasting that his first work was written on this subject, and was preached publicly at Zurick on April 16, 1522. In this treatise, he attempts to show (1) that the scriptures do not forbid food to man, (2) nor is he judged by the abstinence therefrom. Because of the scarcity of copies of this work in English, it is summarized here.

Citation of nine scriptures which speak against Catholic practices.
1. Matt. 15:16-20—What goes in at the mouth defileth not the man. (Also Mark 7:15)
3. Paul writes—1 Cor. 6:12,13. No one can take from me my freedom and bring me under his authority. Food is taken into the belly to sustain life.
4. 1 Cor. 8:8—But meat commendeth us not to God, etc.—This word Paul speaks of the food which was offered to the idols, not now of daily food. Unbelievers used to eat the food after it was offered to the idols, but Christians didn't think it was proper. "No kind of food commends us to God." Some thought they would be better if they ate the food of idols.
5. 1 Cor. 10:25—(more about food for idols).
6. Col. 2:16—No man shall judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a holy day. As far as kind and character of food are concerned, we may eat all foods to satisfy the needs of life, but not with immoderation or greediness.
7. 1 Tim. 4:1—doctrines of devils, commanding to abstain from meats. They (priests) shall not enter into marriage or wed. Know too that purity so disgracefully preserved had its original prohibition from the devil, which prohibition has brought more sin into the world.
than the abstinence from any food. ... Choice of food and abstinence, all of which regulations Christ desired to do away with in the New Testament. ... Whatever man eats cannot make him a devil, if it is eaten in thankfulness.

8. Titus 1:15—Unto the pure all things are pure. To the unbeliever, nothing is pure.

9. Hebrews 13:9—... the heart be established with grace; not with meats. ...

The remainder of the treatise is commentary on the above generally. The following excerpts are given in order to show (1) the burdens these early Christians bore, and (2) the attempts they made to return to the truth.

It is proper for a Christian to eat all foods.

1. (food) can never become bad, except as it is used immoderately.

Let each one fast as often as the spirit of true belief urges him. Mark 2:23, The Sabbath is made for man; not man for the Sabbath. (also regarding prayer, fasting, etc: God didn't make man merely to have an object to utilize his principles, but he gave them to man to improve and glorify him.) 1 Cor. 3:21 "All things are yours, etc." Where our use or need requires something else, the Sabbath itself, not only other times, shall be subject to us.

2. ... The kingdom of God will never be made ready by the prohibition of food.

3. Gal. 4:9. After they had learned and known God, they still returned to the elements, which he more closely describes in Col. 2:20. ... But whosoever does not know and will not know this narrow way to the mercy of God through Christ, undertakes with his own powers to fulfill the law, sees only the letter of the law and desires with his might to fulfill that, prescribing for himself this and that chastisement and abstinence at certain times, ... and after all that he still does not fulfill the law, but the more prides himself on having fulfilled the

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law, the less he has fulfilled it, for in his industry he becomes puffed up in himself. . . . That having been mercifully enlightened of God they turned again to their own devices. (Zwingli defines fasting here as a device of man to come to God.)

This abstaining I do not wish to condemn, if it occurs freely, to put the flesh under control, and if no self-confidence or vain glory, but rather humility, results.

If any one desires to fast, has he not as much the power to do so, when labourers eat meat, as when they are forced to fast with the idle, and are thus less able to do, and to endure their labours? . . . leave Christians have a free choice in the matter. . . . If the spirit of your belief teaches you thus, then fast.

Indeed, I say that it is a good thing for a man to fast, if he fasts as fasts are taught by Christ: Matt. 6:16 and Isa. 58:6. But show me on the authority of the scriptures that one cannot fast with meat.

Our dear fellow Swiss purchased the privilege of using milk food from the Bishop of Rome in the last century: Proof, the documents about it at Lucern.

Abstinence from meat and drink is an old custom, which however later by the wickedness of some of the clergy came to be viewed as a command.

(On duties of priests) Acts 20:28. Here you see briefly what their duty is: overseeing the sheep, feeding, not flaying and shearing too closely and loading them with unbearable burdens, which is nothing else than giving offence, pointing out sins that are not present, so that weak consciences are troubled and made to despair; . . . (The priests) have learned the acceptance of virtue rather from Aristotle than from Christ.

Notice herein, the spiritual growth and increase (is) a different method than in the bodily. In the body, all members grow from the sustenance of the belly; but in the spirit, from the head of Christ. (By forgetting the physical, we grow spiritually, i.e., have a better chance adding to or taking from the stomach can not, in itself, increase our faith).

Some of the most thought-provoking writing ever done on the subject of fasting theory and practice was accomplished

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1 Ibid., pp. 80-84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 100, 104, 108.
by Henry Mason in the seventeenth century in England. Two
of his ancient books are in the rare book collection at the
University of Chicago. A micro-film copy of them has been
placed in the library of the Brigham Young University. One
of these contains an evaluation of the practices of the
church at Rome. Reproduced here are only the preface and
conclusions to the work.

My purpose in this small Treatise is, to lay open
the severall abuses, which in these later yeeres have
correupte this holy exercise of fasting, and made it both
 odious to God, and lesse passeable among men. And this
I did for two causes. First, to admonish good Christians,
that they beware of formalitie and empty shews in religious
duties: and more especially, that when they fast,
they be not like the Hypocrites of our time, who in so
 foule a manner have defiled so good a worke. Secondly,
I undertooke this Discourse, thereby to detect the super­
stition and the pride of the Roman Church; in hope that
some, even amongst them, may be moved to lay these things
to heart.

And first, for superstition, that is heereby detected,
that neglecting the power and vertue of a religious
Fast, and whatsoever hath any goodnesse or efficacie in
it, yet they doe place religion and merit in the empty
name, and the bare outside, which they onely have retained.
And againe for their pride, that appeareth in this, that
finding many corruptions crept into their practise of
fasting, contrarie to the custome both of Scriptures and
the ancient Church, as themselves cannot but confesse;
yet they had rather defend their grosse practises, then
acknowledge that the Church of Rome can doe anything
amisse. Which two foule faults, as they are usuall with
that Church in other things; so they are palpable in this
exercise of fasting, as will clearely appeare by the
particulars in this ensuing Treatise.  

1

Mason, Ibid.
In which sayings and descriptions of theirs, I desire the Reader to take notice of two things by the way, which being well remembered, may serve for further use hereafter.

1. That these descriptions are in part so fitted to their owne Fasts, as that they disagree with the Fasts both mentioned in Scriptures, and practised in the Primitive Church.

2. The next point to be considered is, What indulgence or liberty they take and grant, contrary to the practice of Scriptures, customes of the ancient Church, and these rules of their own. And this may be considered or observed in five particulars: 1. In their choise of meates. 2. In the number of their Refections. 3. In the time of their eating, or breaking up of their Fast. 4. In the quantitie of their meate and drinke. and 5. in their dispensations with the rules or Lawes of Fasting. ¹

¹ Ibid.
CHAPTER XIV

SURVEY RESULTS OF MAJOR CHRISTIAN GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES

In order to determine the current teachings and practices of the major Christian groups in the United States, a letter of inquiry was sent in late March, 1959, to each group listed in the *Yearbook of American Churches, 1959* edition. A copy of this letter is shown as Appendix A. In an attempt to encourage the addressees to reply in essay answers, the "Yes" or "No" type question was avoided in the request for information. It was believed that a more complete and better organized answer would be forthcoming if the various church leaders were to reply in the free-style form of writing. This type of questionnaire presents distinct disadvantages when an attempt is made to categorize and analyze the answers statistically. However, it is the writer's conclusion that the greatest possible benefit was derived under the type of questionnaire used.

A total of 254 letters were sent to church groups within the United States. Of this number, two are non-Christian. Seventy-three replies were received in which a definite answer to the questionnaire was given. Several other letters
were received which merely made reference to other correspondents. Three of the referrals failed to reply. The seventy-three definite replies represents 28.9% of the total sent.

After these 73 replies had been studied and categorized, it was noted that a very representative return had been received of all churches, i.e. at least one reply from most of the major church groups. It was decided, therefore, that second requests should not be sent.

Each letter was read in order to determine whether the church had any official teaching regarding fasting doctrine or practice. Of the 73 replies, 47 indicated that they had no official teaching, but 14 of this number mentioned that some of their members and/or congregations practiced fasting. In these instances, however, the length, abstinence, purpose, etc. is left strictly to the discretion of those participating therein. Of the remaining 26 replies which contained some positive statement of doctrine and/or practice, three indicated that their only teaching was that which is contained in the scriptures, and that they had no further commentary.

The fact that only three churches in 254 gave the above-mentioned answer was somewhat surprising. The writer’s pre-survey anticipation was that a large percentage of the churches would give this reply.
The following table summarizes the results of the replies—both in number of replies and church membership which the replies represent. For more detailed analysis, see Appendix B and Appendix C (an integral part of this chapter), which present the survey results by church group classification and by individual church.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of Questionnaires</th>
<th>Church Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total questionnaires sent</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>104,518,584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total replies received</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>59,663,733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replies indicating no official doctrine</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>5,033,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage to total replies</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replies containing a positive statement</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>54,610,544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage to total replies</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation of Results—in Appendix C each reply was classified as to whether the church from which it came did or did not teach and/or practice fasting officially. It was not always easy to determine from the context of the letters in which category each should fall, and in many cases, the writer’s own evaluation of the reply had to enter in. To the extent that his judgment was imperfect, the survey statistics are also less than exact.

The membership totals and hence the percentages derived therefrom are of doubtful value because: (1) the Yearbook of American Churches publishes only the most recent statistics available. Some of the membership figures date
back to the 1936 census, others are as recent as 1957. In order to aid the reader in his individual evaluation of the results, the statistical year for each church is given (if available). (2) Many of the churches do not keep accurate membership records. It is noted that many have estimated their population in even thousands. Some churches give no membership data at all.

The only valid defense for using the statistical basis is that these data are the best available, and yield the best possible results in the circumstances.

The real value of the survey, however, is not in the statistical analysis, but in the nature of the replies received. As noted above, 92% (based on church population) of those replying indicated that they did teach and practice fasting in some form, and an additional 4% indicated that even though they had no official doctrine, some of their members did fast. Comparing these percentages with the fact that 64% of all replies indicated no official doctrine, we conclude that the larger churches still have fasting as part of their official dogma, while the small groups have given very little attention to it.

Further comment is necessary regarding the statistical information included in this chapter in order that it be not misleading. One of the two non-Christian religions--Jewish--
included in statistical analysis did not reply. However, a study was made of their fasting practices and teachings and summarized in Chapter II, "Fasting in Old Testament Times and Jewish Theology". If their 5 1/2 million members were added the total of those 54,610,544 who are included under the churches giving a positive response, the resulting percentage of peoples in the United States believing in fasting would be increased by about 1% to 92.2% of those replying.

Population figures in the composite categories of Appendix B are, of course, influenced greatly by the presence or absence of the membership of the Roman Catholic church. These 36 million members represent approximately one-third of the total Christian people in the United States, and about 60% of those replying to the questionnaire. In view of this fact, the figures given on number of churches must also be carefully studied in order to come to any representative conclusions.

To assume that 92% of the Christian and Jewish people in the United States actually practice the Christian fast as it has been explained in this thesis would be unfounded. As will be noted in the individual statements hereafter, some have fasting as an official dogma but do not exercise the principal in their practical lives. Many others, as pointed out in the chapter entitled "Early Christian History", have
changed the duration, purposes, and spirit of their fasting practices and teachings so much that it is a misnomer to designate them as Christian fasts.

Probably the most beneficial and interesting product of the survey are the statements of position of those replying. The best thereof are included hereafter.

ADVENTISTS

... Paul's great exposition in Romans and Galatians of freedom under Grace as contrasted with the legalistic approach to righteousness makes it clear to us that such practices are not to be imposed legalistically. Such use as our people make of fasting is only with a view to experiencing deeper communion with God and a relative detachment from physical appetites for a season. We would strongly disavow any thought of fasting as a means of earning merit or exerting peculiar claims upon God. (Luke 18:12)

We would disavow, further, any merit or special virtue as deriving from a particular diet or the elimination of particular meats from diet: (Romans 14:1-4; 1 Timothy 4:1-5). Whatever supposed physical or health benefits may be derived from such abstentions or from fasting in general are not to become a test of spirituality or of fellowship within the community of Christians.

J. Howard Shaw
Executive Secretary
Advent Christian General Conference of America

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... it is not common among us. Indeed, I have not heard it discussed in a sermon or privately for many years.

Mildred A. Hooper, President
The Life and Advent Union
BAPTISTS

... There may be some individuals among us who fast, but if so this is a personal matter and there is no body of doctrine or teaching in regard to it among us. Perhaps we are neglecting a discipline which has long been practiced by people in their religious observances.

Rev. Earl Cruzan, Commission Chairman
Seventh Day Baptist General Conference

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I believe that our Baptist people, as a whole, have given very little thought to the subject. It seems to me that the values which might be derived from fasting are not to be found in legalistic or formalistic stipulations regarding length and frequency of fasting, but only in forms which are incidental to some spiritual question. I can see values in fasting if it results from the fact that one becomes so deeply absorbed in prayer that the desires of the flesh are temporarily set aside.

Willis Hubert Porter
Associate General Secretary
American Baptist Convention

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BRETHREN

We recognize that voluntary fasting in connection with burdened prayer may be logical and that a very heavy burden in prayer may result in fasting because one's attention has been drawn from material things to those that are spiritual.

Delbert B. Flora
Ashland Theological Seminary
The Brethren Church
We have no general practice of fasting. We do not believe that there is merit before God in the practice of fasting. We believe that if a person is deeply concerned about any matter which he takes to God in prayer, that he will naturally fast or deny himself of the usual pleasures and comforts of life while waiting for God's answer to his prayer. In such cases the fasting carries no meritoriousness in itself, but it proves the sincerity and earnestness of the one who makes the petition; and God answers such a state of soul.

A. S. Lôizeaux
Plymouth Brethren

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THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST

Our own understanding of the teachings of the Master on this subject is that fasting refers rather to the daily abstention from all material-mindedness, self-indulgence, and wrong thinking. Such a fast certainly includes refraining from intemperance of any sort; but it is our view that the pleasures or pains of sense to a closer communion with God, at whose right hand "there are pleasures for evermore."

Will B. Davis, Manager
Committees on Publication
The First Church of Christ, Scientist

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CHURCHES OF GOD

it is practiced by a large number of our people and with very few exceptions it is practiced for its spiritual value only.

A fast means that we go without food. A few abstain from water but that is the exception. None that I know of go without a few, or a specific food but when we fast it means going without food. . . .

The purpose of the fast is that we might pray. The benefits derived from the fast come from the act of self
denial and more time available for prayer. The fast is never an end in itself. We do not believe God will answer our prayers or lift our burdens merely because we go without food.

It is my personal conviction that fasting is neglected in our fellowship.

Harold W. Boyer, Minister
First Church of God

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... I have felt called to fast on a very great many occasions, say of three days, for the most part, nine days on one occasion, and twenty-one days on another. The twenty-one day fast was in remembrance of Daniel's vision, and fast, and of the day when the kingdoms of the world would be given to the saints of the Most High God. My dedication, and fast, in August 1952, 21 days, received world-wide notice, because I entered the fast and prayer to enquire of the Lord if the time had come for Daniel's vision to be fulfilled, and as a result, was so confident the time had come, I announced I would seek to be chosen President of the United States, campaigned for the office from Coast to Coast, visited 69 foreign countries in one year. . . .

Homer A. Tomlinson, Bishop
The Church of God

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EASTERN CHURCHES

The Eucharistic fast as we observe it is a complete abstinence from all food from rising until communion. Seasonal fasts have, for all intents and purposes been reduced to that of Lent, during which we eat but one full meal a day and take no flesh food on Fridays or Wednesdays. . . .

We practice fasting as a sacrifice of self-will and moral discipline to the intent that the animal desires may be weakened. And the Eucharistic fast is additionally, the appropriate preparation for the heavenly food of the sacrament.

Rev. Alexander Turner
The Orthodox Church
Lent is a time of penance or repentance, and bodily and spiritual fasting. We fast during the Great Lent in commemoration of Christ's forty days fasting in the wilderness of Jordan before He began His ministry to mankind. 

He fasted forty days and forty nights in the wilderness. (Matt. 4:21; Luke 4:2). Christ's disciples fasted too and prayed also (Acts 14:2,3; Mark 2:18; Matt. 9:14; Acts 10:30; 2 Kings 12:22; Isa. 58:3; Matt. 6:17,21; Mark 9:29; Psalms 34:13).

The word fast means abstinence from food; it is not only a religious but also a medical duty toward our bodies and souls as well. The word 'lent' means "plain, spare, meager".

The main purpose of fasting is that we may become more refined in purpose, more sensitive to God, more chaste in our life attitudes toward our Christian duties. This is why proper fasting, according to the rules of our beloved mother church, should be not only an abstinence from flesh and other food, but also spiritual abstinence from all sinful desires, thoughts and deeds.

Lent was instituted by J. Christ, our Redeemer and Saviour, therefore it should be observed by every Christian. In the Gospel of St. Luke (9:2,3) we are told that if we would follow Christ, we must deny ourselves. Self-denial means to keep away from everything which stands in the way of our salvation. Our prayer, our faith, without which it is impossible to please God, are greatly enhanced by self-denial. In fact, without personal sacrifice our profession of Christianity would soon become empty.

They [young church members] think that church Lent and fasting has only one purpose—forced self-denial from flesh-meat food, butter and milk. This is not so in reality. The Apostle plainly teaches us that meat and other food commendeth us not to God; for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse." (1 Cor. 8:8).

The Church, therefore, teaches us: "Brethren, fasting bodily, we must fast spiritually also; clean Lent is refraining and keeping away from sin. Our body should be subordinated to our soul. The material and spiritual and each has its proper place in one's life. God has ordained that the material should be subordinated to the spiritual, that the Kingdom of Heaven should come first. But in most cases the order is reversed, time is
taken from everything else in our lives except to be holy.

Rev. Orestes Iwaniuk, Sec. of Archbishop Ukrainian Orthodox Autocephalic Church

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FRIENDS

The only fasting that I have observed was the use of frugal meals or one meal complete fasts by college students and conscientious objector camps at the close of the war in order to contribute to relief abroad.

Sumner A. Mills, Presiding Clerk
The Five Years Meeting of Friends

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The Religious Society of Friends does not have any testimony or witness regarding fasting. We believe in moderation and simplicity at all times and in all ceremonies rather than having any particular time or calendar period to share witness to our faith.

Richmond P. Miller, Assoc. Sec.
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

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JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Proper religious fasting is not an ascetic afflicting of the body with hunger, as though bodily pain or discomfort were in itself meritorious. Actually, it is a natural consequence of strong emotion... If emotional stress is great enough it destroys the body's natural appetites.

It is on this natural basis that fasting is founded as a religious procedure. It indicates to Jehovah the intense feeling of the fasting individual. It shows that the individual's mind or emotions are so burdened with a sense of sin or so loaded with grief that the body refuses food. The person's mental and emotional faculties may be so humiliated by past transgressions, so occupied
by longing for forgiveness, so concerned with resolves to avoid a repetition of sins, that no room is left for thinking of such things as food. . . .

For the Christian organization as such to fast now would be a self-imposed fast, one not commanded by God. It would be out of order now that the Bridegroom has returned and true worship has been restored. (Zech. 8:19; Matt. 9:15) However, an individual might choose to fast on occasion for spiritual reasons. . . . Also, Christians might abstain from time to time from activities that are proper in themselves, but in which an overindulgence would be spiritually weakening.

The Watchtower
May 1, 1953, p. 286

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THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

As the Church views it, fasting consists in the complete abstinence from food and drink. Fasting, with prayer as its companion, is designed to increase spirituality; to foster a spirit of devotion and love of God; to increase faith in the hearts of men, thus assuring divine favor; to encourage humility and contrition of soul; to aid in the acquirement of righteousness; to teach man his nothingness and dependence upon God; and to hasten those who properly comply with the law of fasting along the path to salvation.

Bruce R. McConkie
Mormon Doctrine
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

REORGANIZED CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

. . . I was made conscious, too, as I review my studies that most of the great spiritual experiences of the Book of Mormon are related to fasting, as well as to prayer.

. . . As a church we practice abstaining from the morning meal each first Sunday of the month or at other times when we may observe the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Occasionally the President will call for a
special day of fasting, usually in preparation for a General Conference or some comparable gathering or event of importance.

We have no dogma spelling out the definition of a fast. Generally it refers to abstaining from eating. Fasting, however, may involve everything from complete abstinence from food for the duration of a fast to abstinence from certain foods, participation in certain activities, or denial or of abstaining from whatever may place barriers between us and God. . . .

I see no fasting disassociated from prayer and meditation.

Carl Mesle, Asst. to First Presidency
Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of L.D.S.

**********

LUTHEREN

... if not done in the right spirit, it may result in infinite harm.

The spiritual, temporal and health purposes of fasting? Do not indulge in anything which will lessen your power as a true believer. If your hand offends you, cut it off and cast it away; if your eye, tear it out and cast that away. This does not mean the actual cutting off the limb and tearing out of the physical organ. But it means that you deny yourself that which is most precious when it in any way hinders your right relationship with your savior. . . .

The length or duration of your fast? It will have to be practiced just as long as it remains a temptation. That may be to the very end of your life.

... fasting is not in any way a meriting of anything which has already been merited by Him who is and must ever remain our one and only Mediator. It is simply meant as a means of your keeping close to Him.

Norman A. Madson, Dean
Bethany Lutheran Seminary

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... the Day of Atonement, the only fast ordained by the Law. (Lev. 16:29). Later, the Pharisees con-
sidered fasting a meritorious work (Luke 18:12), their "Twice-a-week" being Mondays and Thursdays. Jesus speaks of fasting as a familiar practice, which in itself He does not condemn (Matt. 6:16-18); yet His disciples did not fast (Matt. 9:14), and He nowhere commanded it. The Apostles fasted at times. (Acts 13:2, 14:23)

The Lutheran Confessions teach that fasting is useful for keeping the flesh in check; that right fasting is a fruit of repentance commanded by God in the same way as right praying and right alms-giving; and that it is a fine external training in preparation for receiving Holy Communion.

Rev. Paul Rafaj
Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church

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... In Part IV of Luther's explanation of the Sacrament of the Altar, fasting is mentioned as one of the means of preparation for a beneficial reception of the Sacrament. You will note that the emphasis is on inward preparation rather than outward.

Roald E. Braulick, Adm. Asst. to the Pres.
American Lutheran Church

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... Personally, I do believe in fasting and prayer. I believe a deeper spiritual life, a life of greater power and effectiveness for God is developed by a consistent practice of this holy exercise.

Rev. D. A. Erickson, President
Church of the Lutheran Brethren

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... There is certainly no idea of merit that is achieved before almighty God because of fasting. The idea of fasting for merit would be contrary to the things an individual would abstain from during his fast would be a matter of his own individual choice since he would evaluate them in so far as they interfere with his achieving a spiritual frame of mind. The same thing would apply to the length and duration of fasting.
Obviously, fasting has some relationship to creating a right frame of mind for prayer.

Prayer is a heart's conversation with Almighty God. Where there is a sense of surfeiting, drowsiness or interference by reason of the things of this world, the act of fasting or abstention certainly is evangelically right in order that the individual worshipper may have the least interference in approaching God in prayer. God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must do so in spirit and in truth. Worldly things have a way of warring against the spirit. In the degree that fasting and abstentiousness free the spirit for such communion in prayer, in that degree fasting has value.

Rev. Raymond Wargelin, President
The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

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... doctrines of the Augsburg Confession (1530)...

"Every Christian ought to exercise and subdue himself with bodily restraints and labors, that neither plenty nor slothfulness tempt him to sin, but not that we may merit grace or make satisfaction for sins by such exercises. And such external discipline ought to be urged at all times, not only on a few and set days. So Christ commanded (Luke 21:34; Matt. 17:21) .... Therefore we do not condemn fasting, but the traditions which prescribe certain days and certain meats, with peril of conscience, as though works of such kinds were a necessary service." (art. 26)

"But it is manifest that, by such belief, traditions have almost infinitely multiplied in the church, the doctrine concerning faith and the righteousness of faith being meanwhile suppressed. For gradually more holy days were made, fasts appointed, new ceremonies and services in honor of saints instituted; because the authors of such things thought that, by these works, they were meriting grace." (Art. 28)

In practice, the Lutheran Church, at least as I know it, has not made a point of fasting. But this is not because it objects to it on doctrinal grounds. It is opposed to fasting when defined in terms of set times and foods, tending to make it a good work meriting grace. On the other hand, it has probably neglected to present fasting as an aid in evangelical devotional life.
Also from Luther's Table Talk; "The fasting of the friars is more easy to them than our eating for us. For one day of fasting there are three of feasting. Every friar for his supper has two quarts of beer, a quart of wine, and spice-cakes, or bread prepared with spice and salt, the better to relish their drink. Thus go on these poor fasting brethren, getting so pale and wan, they are like the fiery angels."

"The popish fasting is right murder, whereby many people have been destroyed, observing the fasts strictly, and, chiefly, by eating one sort of food, so that nature's strength thereby is wholly weakened. For this cause Gerson was constrained at Paris to write a book of "Comfort for troubled and perplexed consciences," to the end they might neither be discouraged nor despair. For those that fast, spoil themselves and weaken their strength. Such darkness has been in popedom, where they neither taught, nor intended to teach, the ten commandments, the creed, and the Lord's prayer."

"Luther received tidings from Denmark that the king had ordered a fast, to be observed three days, as an admonition to the people to prayer and peace; whereupon Luther said: It is a very upright and good course, the most external humiliation, when we add thereto the inward humility of heart it is exceeding good."

W. F. Beitz, Treasurer
Protestant Conference

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In practice, fasting I believe is at a minimum but some do exercise spiritual discipline in its use.

William Larsen, President
United Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Some of our people do limit their meals to simple menus one day a week during Lent. Many discipline their lives by other types of self denials during the same season. A few fast before receiving the Sacrament of the Altar. There is no suggested pattern, however, and all such practices are by local or personal choice.

We have attempted to place an emphasis on the positive meaning of Lent asking that the people intensify their spiritual services rather than subtracting from their physical necessities or luxuries. Lent for us is an emphasis on the conflict between God and sin, death and the devil. We have tried to make it clear that this battle is not won by an act so insignificant as the occasional disappointment of the appetite.

Raymond Tiemeyer, Adm. Asst. to the Pres.
The United Lutheran Church in America

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MENNONITE

We firmly believe in fasting but do not practice it too often. About the only time we employ it as a church is at the time when we have an election for a pastor or special deacon elections. At such a time we encourage the church to abstain from food and give themselves to prayer for this special purpose. However, we never associate it with health, believing that God grants this according to His will. We have private brethren among our ministers who practice the art of fasting and speak of special answers to prayer.

Dan Friesen, Pastor
Mennonite Brethren Church

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METHODIST

[from Wesley's statements] "The Friday preceding each quarterly meeting, each annual conference, and each General Conference shall be observed by our people as a day of fasting and prayer."

"The first Wednesday in January shall be observed
as a day of fasting and prayer for general evangelism."

Fasting among us usually means omitting one meal. It is assumed that fasting will be also the occasion of special devotion and prayer. I fear that the matter of fasting has been neglected among Protestants generally, including my own denomination.

Leslie R. Marston, Bishop
The Free Methodist Church

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REFORMED

Fasting is observed before every Holy Communion by many of our constituency as a private way of meditation upon the sufferings of Christ, and preparing for a clearer spiritual union not troubled by any carnal activity such as meals and drinks. Usually it is observed the evening before and omitting breakfast or any food before communion. . . .

Partially our fasting is due to Roman Catholic influence in its external observation but in real spiritual and devotional practice it is rooted in Hungarian Puritanism of the XVIIth century as represented by George Szikszai, his famous "Christian Teachings". . . .

Bishop Zoltan Beky
Hungarian Reformed Church in America

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Whereas there is no concise statement concerning this matter in the official liturgy of the Protestant Reformed Churches, I am taking the liberty to forward your request to the Synod, the broadest official gathering of the churches . . . [subsequent letter of June 6, 1959]

The Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, to which you have directed a letter and request with regard to the doctrine of Fasting, said Synod took this matter under advisement and consideration.

It was decided to inform you that "our churches (the Protestant Reformed Churches) have never taken a position officially on the questions with which you (Mr. Johnson) are concerned."
G. Banden Berg, Stated Clerk
Protestant Reformed Churches of America

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THE SALVATION ARMY

... This matter is left to the personal convictions of the individual Salvationist, and many of our people set aside special days each year when they refrain from the partaking of any food and spend the time in prayer, meditation and Christian service for others.

All officers are admonished to follow Paul's injunction, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

It is suggested that as an outcome of moderation and occasional abstinence from food will aid the physical health of the individual, improve his general fitness, brighten his spirits and so increase his usefulness as a Salvation Army Officer.

Harry L. Larsen Lt. Colonel Training Principal
The Salvation Army

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SPIRITUALIST

... Our fast begins at 12:00 o'clock mid-night and ends at 4:00 o'clock p.m. the same afternoon, which is 16 hours of consecration giving the mind over completely to what ever purpose the individual might be fasting for--for strength (spiritual), more patience, better understanding, etc. ... During a fast we abstain from evil thoughts, to much conversation, getting upset, worrying, or any other situation that will cross up or interrupt perfect correspondence with the Spirit of God.

Rt. Rev. D. H. Harris, Archbishop
Triumph the Church and Kingdom of God in Christ
INDEPENDENT

Any spiritual benefit which follows periods of fasting is the time and earnestness that is put into prayer and communion with God, rather than the actual fast itself.

General Council of the Assemblies of God

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The Baha'i teachings require a nineteen-day fast from March 2 to March 21 annually, during which period members of the Faith do not take any liquid or food from sunrise to sunset.

The purpose of the Fast is to show willingness to sacrifice to the Founder of the World Faith. The Fast is accompanied by prayer and members of the Faith have the assurance that faithful observance of the Fast purifies their spiritual vision and confirms them in spiritual understanding.

Grace Holley, Secretary
National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States (non-Christian)

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... our foremost theologian, the Rev. William F. Wunsch ... indicates that Swedenborg says very little about fasting, except to interpret its spiritual significance in the Word. We do not have a doctrine of fasting, although it is possible that some of our members may fast as a practice that they personally desire to follow. ...

I would like to say that we do not think in terms of fasting as an integral part of the Christian faith and life, though we would by no means frown upon it.

David P. Johnson, President
General Convention of the New Jerusalem
We fast not merely for health purposes but for spiritual purposes, although doctors do say that proper fasts do sometimes help also. We stress not the physical but the spiritual angle.

We abstain from all foods but usually not from water. It is a matter of individual preference.

The length of fast may be all the way from one day to several weeks, usually between three and ten days. Seldom over ten days, although we feel that God himself sets the limit and the time with the burden of the individual.

Fasting and prayer go together. It seems that they are both indicated in the Word of God. The one enhances the other. Each becomes more effective when used with the other.

Rev. R. Bryant Mitchell, Chairman
Open Bible Standard Churches Inc.

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In Bible times, even up to modern times, if one did not wish to wait for the body to put forth this effort (to rid itself of infecting poisons), which sometimes is fatal, to eliminate its poisons, an abstinence from food for a period of time would permit the body to clean its own house, when no effort had to be put forth for it to digest food which three times or more a day was being eaten. For many people this abstinence from food or this fasting has been too great an ordeal to be followed, so for the most part it has not been practiced, except by a very few; and people wait for the winter "cold" to do this much needed work for them. . . . While the "cold" is not a pleasant thing to undergo, it is nevertheless, more easily endured than is a fast. But a fast, will, if continued for a time, allow the body to cleanse and rebuild itself, and will create a greatly improved physical state. . . . When the body is clogged with poisons, all of its activities slow down; one feels sluggish and with no ambition; one's mental faculties are retarded, and one cannot think lucidly, or study that which needs a clear brain. . . . So instead of being compelled to endure the arduous experience of a fast, the same cleansing can be accomplished in a much more pleasant manner by the use of Vitamins.

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CHAPTER XV

OTHER WORLD RELIGIONS

Fasting—as a doctrine or practice—is not peculiar to the Christian faith. In all great world religions, fasting is either encouraged or denounced. Christian teaching on the subject seems to provide a middleground as compared with other religious systems. The purpose of this chapter is to state briefly the doctrines and practices of a few other world religions.

Assyrians and Babylonians

Fast days and feasts were held alternatingly as they were in Israel. Fast days, however, were instituted only in periods of distress, and, like the special festivals, did not become permanent institutions. Sayce indicates that the fasts were for mournful or penitent purposes only, and held no particular religious or spiritual significance.

The Sabbath, it will be noticed, was not a fast day. Fasts, however, were not infrequent in Babylonia and Assyria, and in times of danger and distress might be specially ordained. When Esar-haddon was hard pressed by his northern enemies, he ordered prayers to be made and ceremonies to be performed to the sun-god, lasting for one hundred days and nights. It was a long period of public humiliation, and the god was asked to grant favourable visions to the "seers" who implored his help.

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In the penitential psalms, fasting is alluded to more than once. 'Instead of food' say the penitent, 'I eat bitter tears; instead of palm-wine, I drink the waters of misery.' Or again; "Food I have not eaten, weeping is my nourishment; water I have not drunk, tears are my drink."¹

However, Smith attaches a deeper ancient significance to these practices among the Eastern races.

... There is no doubt that some of the forms which we are apt to take as expressions of intense grief or self-abasement before the god, had originally quite another meaning. For example, when the worshippers gash their own flesh in rites of supplication, this is not an appeal to the divine compassion, but a purely physical means of establishing a blood-bond with the god.

Again, the usage of religious fasting is commonly taken as a sign of sorrow, the worshippers being so distressed at the alienation of their god that they cannot eat; but there are very strong reasons for believing that, in the strict Oriental form in which total abstinence from meat and drink is prescribed, fasting is primarily nothing more than a preparation for the sacramental eating of holy flesh. Some savage nations not only fast, but use strong purges before venturing to eat holy meat; similarly the Harranians fasted on the eighth of Hesan, and then broke their fast on mutton, at the same time offering sheep as holocausts; the modern Jews fast from ten in the morning before eating the Passover; and even a modern Catholic must come to the communion with an empty stomach.²

Brahmanism and Hinduism

Inasmuch as the two great religions of India--Brah-

manism and Hinduism—have much in common, they will be con-
sidered together. Of all world religions, Hinduism is
probably the most rigorous in its fasting practices. However,
the descriptions and explanations thereof in this chapter
will be brief. An entire chapter is devoted to the teachings
of Gandhi, who, when he was questioned on one occasion con-
cerning the nature of his personal religion, exclaimed,
"Every fibre of my being is Hindu." \(^1\)

Hinduism has no ecclesiastical organization. The
Hindu society and religion is taught and lived by all pro-
ponents thereof. For, as Sir Monier Williams says in his
Religious Life and Thought in India:

> Religion is ever present to a Hindu's mind. It
colours all his ideas. It runs through every fibre of
his being. It is the very Alpha and Omega of his whole
earthly career. He is born religious, and dies religious.
He is religious in his eating and drinking, in his
sleeping and waking, in his dressing and undressing, in
his rising up and sitting down, in his work and amuse-
ment. Nay, religion attends him in ante-natal cere-
monies long before his birth, and follows him in endless
offering for the good of his soul long after death. \(^2\)

Accepting this, then, as the nature of the Hindu, the follow-
ing description of fasting severity is not surprising.

> ... with regard to the custom of fasting, it may

\(^1\) Gandhi, p. 16.

\(^2\) A. C. Mukerji, Ancient Indian Fasts and Feasts
be worth while to point out that no Christian man—be he Roman Catholic or Anglican—not even the most austere stickler for the most strict observance of every appointed period of humiliation and abstinence, can for a moment hope to compete with any religious native of India—Hindu or Mohammedan—who may have entered on a course of fasting abstinence, and bodily maceration.

It must of course be borne in mind that fasting is practiced by Indian devotees, not as a penitential exercise, but as a means of accumulating religious merit. Moreover, severe self-mortification is always connected with the fancied attainment of extra ordinary sanctity or superhuman powers. Amongst other objects aimed at is the acquirement of a kind of preternatural or ethereal lightness of body. By long fasting a man is believed to achieve what is called Laghima, 'lightness'; that is to say, his frame becomes so buoyant and sublimated by abstinence, that the force of gravitation loses its power of binding him to the earth, and he is able to sit or float in the air. It may seem the very height of credulity to give credence to an emaciated Hindu claiming to triumph in this way over the laws of matter; yet cool-headed and sceptical Englishmen of unimpeachable sincerity have been invited to witness the achievements of these so-called Yogis, and have come away convinced of their genuineness and ready to testify to the absence of all fraud.

Fasting for a long period is not encouraged, but fasting for a day is encouraged on the eleventh day of the month and required for certain months; sometimes it involves the regulation of the food eaten for longer periods of time. Fasting is also undertaken at times in the fulfillment of vows, and the preparation for special ceremonies.

Of interest are some of the special events to which Morgan has just referred. As in many other religions, fasting

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1 Sir Monier Williams, Brahmanism and Hinduism (London: John Murphy, 1891), p. 426-7.
is entered into as a preparation for marriage. Also fasts are undertaken before sacrificial ordinances and religious study in some areas of India.

A usual condition in such cases of possession is that the medium must fast for some time before the rite. In Bengal those castes whose widows abstain from meat and fish and take only one meal a day enjoy a higher status than those who live like ordinary married women. The Bauri priest in Bengal must fast from meat and fish on the day preceding the sacrifice, and the Santal bridegroom is obliged to fast on the day of his wedding. The most important religious fast is the Ekadashi Vrata performed by Vaishnavas on the eleventh day of each month, when they sit up all night reading religious books and singing the praises of Vishnu.

There are two heroes in the Brahmanese popular worship—Bhimsen and Bhishma. The former is the burly hero of the epic, renowned for his gigantic strength, irascible temper, and great courage, jovial and jocular when in good humor, but brutal when his passions were aroused. . . .

. . . Brahmins keep a fast on his day, the 11th of Jeth (May-June), but they say that this is done only as a joke because with his great appetite Bhimsen could not fast on the holy eleventh days of the year, and induced Krishna to prescribe only one of them as his fast day. In Benares it is said that he determined to fast on this day, but after midday he fainted through hunger and thirst, so his friends heaved him into the Ganges to bring him to his senses, and Hindus observe the day as Nirjala Ekadashi, 11th of the light half of Jeth, 'abstaining from water', bathe in the evening, and smear their bodies with powdered sandalwood.

2 Ibid., p. 176.
The foregoing is typical of most fast days throughout the history of the world—what once was sacred is now merely curious history and not meant to be practiced seriously.

Prescribed abstinence during their long fasts consists of eating only a single mouthful every day for nine days, and then abstaining from all food for the three following days (Manu. XI. 213). Although these long special fasts are not frequent, every religious Hindu fasts twice in every lunar month, during which fasts fruit and milk are allowed.

The pious Hindoo, following the tenents of Brahmanism, holds the lives of animals sacred. The usual belief is that flesh-eating came into the world with the blood sacrifice.

Buddhism

Fasting is not emphasized among the Buddhists. Anciendy it was stressed more than in these days. Buddha is said to have de-emphasized the practice, for one day as he was seated beneath a jambu tree, he considered the state of his mind and the fruits of his mortifications. His body had become weaker, nor had his fasts advanced him in his search for salvation, and therefore when he saw that it was not the right path, he proposed to abandon it.\(^2\)


There is no such thing as long fasting in Buddhism. The following references should suffice to indicate the nature and purposes of their fasting observance. The first quotation refers to Buddhism in Korea, the second to China:

By Buddha's Law there should be but one or, at most, two meals a day for priests particularly, and nothing eaten after noonday, the whole afternoon being given to meditation and study and prayer. As a matter of fact, few Koreans observe this. On the first and fifteenth days of the first, fifth, and ninth lunar months, all who have any pretensions to faithfulness, do observe a fast, but there is little of asceticism in Korea at any time. . . . There is no such thing as long fastings, as wearing of chains or thorns as penance.

"The kingdom of heaven is within you" said our Lord; and in somewhat similar fashion the Buddha taught that salvation lay within the man himself, independent of forms and ceremonies, independent even of fasting or abstinence from any class of food, though he advocated temperance in food and insisted upon abstinence from wine.

As implied above, Buddhism calls its devotees to escape hell and attain heaven by frequent invocations of Buddha, together with moderate fasting, pilgrimages, and a moral and altruistic life.

Reichelt adds a little color to Chinese Buddhism by indicating that all butcher shops are ordered to stop all slaughter on fast day, and that the abstaining from all

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animal food is a part of making an atonement vicariously for a deceased loved one. He also says that on pilgrimages, they eat only vegetable food.  

Confucianism

As in Buddhism, the Confucians have little to say regarding fasting, since asceticism plays little part in their lives. Theirs is more a practical, everyday way of life. However, there are some who have and do practice fasting. For example, the Chinese emperors of the past have had a Palace of Fasting where they prepared themselves by lonely meditation for their duty. Mencius, Chinese religious leader, makes it clear that, "Even though a man be evil, if he fast and bathe, he, too, may serve God (Shan Ti)." It seems evident that by fasting and bathing, Mencius means something more than the mere physical act:

Many devotees give themselves up to fasting from flesh for given periods, or even for life. . . .

Besides their clothes and bodily ornaments, the children, while in mourning, devote to the departed the food which they themselves would otherwise take; that is to say, they fast. This fasting, too, is an ancient

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3 Ibid., p. 270.
canonical institution, and it is clear from several passages in the classical writings that the fasting for the dead was carried out with the severest rigor in olden days. The present state ritual prescribes the penalty of thirty blows with a bamboo for any participation in festive meals during the period of mourning.¹

Islam

Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam, believed strongly in fasting, and even established an entire lunar month for their fast to be held:

Though he instituted neither an organized priesthood, nor sacraments, Mohammed prescribed a number of ritualistic observances, known as the Five Pillars of Islam. They are: (1) Proclamation of the unity of God, and belief therein, as expressed in the creed, "There is no God but Allah; Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah"; (2) Prayer, performed five times daily, facing Mecca, wherever one might be; and on Fridays in the Mosque; (3) Almsgiving, as an offering to Allah and an act of piety; (4) The fast of Ramadan; (5) Pilgrimage to Mecca.²

According to the Koran, Mohammed received the first of his revelations during Ramadan, the ninth month of the Moslem year. The Hadith or "Tradition" (of the Prophet) adds that this occurred on the Night of Power, which is considered to be the 27th of Ramadan, and that it is a time when "the gates of Paradise are open, the gates of Hell shut and the devils in chains." Subsequently Mohammed proclaimed all of Ramadan—which comes at a different time each year by the Western calendar—a time for fasting. The idea of fasting was familiar to Mohammed; it had long been an ascetic discipline practiced by Jews and Christians. As against the sunset-to-sunset fasts of the Jews, Mohammed ordained an entire

month of fast days, but limited fasting to the daylight hours. "Eat and drink until so much of dawn appears that a white thread may be distinguished from a black, then keep the fast completely until night."  

This (month of fasting) was probably borrowed by Mohammed from the Christian Lent. There are many traditions that tell how important fasting is. Let one suffice: 'Every good act that a man does shall receive from ten to seven hundred rewards, but the rewards of fasting are beyond bounds, for fasting is for God alone and He will give its rewards.' ... Because they have a lunar calendar it (the month of Ramadan) can occur at any season. At present Ramadan corresponds to December, and the days are short. On the other hand, the fast is extremely hard upon the laboring classes when, by the changes of the lunar calendar, it falls in the heat of summer, when the days are long. Even then it is forbidden to drink a drop of water or take a morsel of food. Yet it is a fact that Mohammedans, rich and poor, spend more on food in that month than in any other month of the year; and it is also true that physicians have a run of patients with troubles from indigestion at the close of this religious fast! The explanation is simple. Although the fast extends over one lunar month, it only begins at dawn and ends at sunset each day. During the whole night it is usual to indulge in pleasure, feasting and dinner parties. This makes clear what Mohammed meant when he said that 'God would make the fast an ease and not a difficulty.'

Other African Medical Journals report a greater incidence of perforated peptic ulcers in the Ramadan period, probably encouraged by irregular and immoderate eating. 

The hours during which fasting is prescribed are to

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1. Ibid., p. 114.
be sacredly observed. Not only is there total abstinence from food and drink, but bathing, smoking, taking snuff, smelling a flower and the use of medicine are prohibited. I have even heard Moslem jurists discuss whether hypodermic medication was allowed during the fast period. In Eastern Arabis the use of an eye-lotion even is considered as equivalent to breaking the fast. The law provides, however, that infants, pregnant women, idiots, the sick, and the aged are exempted from observing this fast.

Voluntary fasting on certain other days is also very common in imitation of the Prophet's example. It is customary for the pious to spend the hours of Ramadan in reading the Koran or the Traditions. Mohammed said: "He who forsakes the fast of Ramadan becomes an infidel, whom to deprive of his wealth and his life is lawful." As a practical matter, most of the Moslems sleep during the day during Ramadan in order to recover from the strenuous nights.1

Morgan explains the purpose and some of the benefits of the Muslim fast, and, in this writer's opinion, they are among the most beautiful ever written:

... The act of fasting during Ramadan is the means by which the Muslim recognizes the favor God did to his subjects in the month of Ramadan when he began the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Mohammad.

Fasting is the means by which the Muslim voluntarily abandons certain legitimate frivolous enjoyments as a means of putting his soul to a test and promoting its capacity for perseverance, thus strengthening his will to keep away from sins, both obvious and obscure. The Muslim thereby samples enough of starvation to make him a warm-hearted, hospitable person, sympathetic with the poor who are in constant want. This is precisely the spirit Islam endeavors to create in the Muslim's heart and mind by requiring fasting as a mode of worship. Therefore, Islam attaches no significance to the kind of fasting that does not inspire this great humanitarian spirit, and a person fasting for any other purpose has nothing to gain except hunger and thirst. ...

1 Ibid., p. 108.
Fasting offers both bodily and spiritual advantages—advantages for the individual and for society in this world to come. For example, the man who fasts develops strength of will because he decides not to eat or drink; he becomes more considerate of his fellowmen; he becomes pious and virtuous; his spirit is enlightened and his body becomes clean of sin. If he is rich he will find a common tie with the poor which is beneficial to society because some of his property will be distributed to the poor; and the poor will be gratified because they will see that pleasure is sometimes denied to the rich.

But while the theory is beautiful, the practice is far behind. Even though the observance is not all that it should be, the sentiment is very strong, as shown by the following:

... Although many Muslims do not practice fasting, public opinion is generally sensitive to the sanctity of the month. Eating, drinking, or smoking in public during the month of Ramadan is sure to bring heavy censure and in some regions ... it may even lead to physical violence.

Fasting during the month of Ramadan changes the daily schedule of the people throughout the whole Muslim world, and so it used to be in China. There are several kinds of fasting observed by Muslims in China—some keep the whole month, some fast on the first ten days or the last ten days, some observe only the Gadar fast which begins on the twenty-seventh night (being the night on which the Prophet received his first revelation). ... This is not the right way, since the Holy Command is for a full month of fasting. Of course, even two or three days of fasting shows that the person has an interest in religion.2

In addition to fasting as a symbol of worship, it

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2 Ibid., pp. 339, 366.
is used also as an act of penance for major transgressions.

But while free sexual relationships between Muslims and Christians were quite frequent in the erotically minded Orient, the rabbis seemed to have kept them out of Jewish life with much greater efficacy. Although lynching on the spot, still encouraged in the talmudic age, could hardly be carried out under the more orderly conditions of Muslim rule, heavy religious penances were imposed upon every transgressor. The record of an ordinance, presumably enacted by Babylonian geonim (preserved by a later medieval author), states that a sinner should fast forty-nine days . . . regard himself as excommunicated and be flogged every evening forty times. After finishing the forty-nine full fast days of twenty-four hours each, 'he should leave his residence for a whole year and during the days of his exile he should fast every Monday and Thursday.'

Yoga

This movement stems from India and is largely ascetical. There are many different varieties and/or purposes under what is commonly known as Yoga. It is not the purpose of this work to classify or explain all of them, but merely to indicate that fasting is included in some of the areas as part of their basic teaching.

Ernest Wood attempts an introduction to Yoga generally in his book, Practical Yoga—Ancient and Modern. Therein he states, "In the beginning a yogi should avoid bad company, fires, sexual activity, early bathing, fasting, and hard

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work.\textsuperscript{1} From this strange grouping of things to be avoided, we draw the point that abstinence from food is not recommended for the beginning practioneer.

Hatha Yoga has to do with the physical culture area. In connection therewith, Ramacharaka has said:

If you feel "out of sorts," do not be afraid to "cut out" a meal, and give the stomach a chance to get rid of what it has on hand. One can go without eating for a number of days without danger, although we do not advise prolonged fasts. We feel, however, that in sickness it is wise to give the stomach a rest, in order that the recuperative energy may be directed toward the casting out of the waste matter which has been causing the trouble. You will notice that the animals stop eating while they are sick, and lie around until health is restored, then they return to their meals. We may take this lesson from them with considerable profit.\textsuperscript{2}

However, as one moves into other areas of Yoga study, fasting seems to become an integral and necessary part of perfecting and strengthening self. It is recommended that the student abstain from certain foods for the following reason:

The passionate or Rajasic nature craves animal flesh, and foods that are pungent, bitter, saline, overhot, sour, stale, ice-cold, and spicy, with an overpowering desire for foods that tend to excite the animal passions and greater emotions, all of which eventually bring about reactions of bondage, pain, distress, inharmony and


disease.¹

Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism pulls a complete about-face on its neighbors in the East—Hinduism, Islam, and Manichaeism. It considers abstinence from food a sin! There is an abstaining, however, which it endorses, which all people ought to consider carefully, for it is also the hard core of the Christian fast. The Zoroastrian abstains from "evil thought, evil words, evil deeds, unholy aspirations, evil intellect, evil belief, and evil religion."

Mani advocated the abstinence from food as a means of expiation for sin. Nearly a quarter of the year was set apart by him as the period of fast. If there is one thing more than another which Zoroaster teaches, it is that man shall never serve Ormazd (the supreme godhead of Zoroasterianism) by fasting and austerities, but only by prayers and work. Far from recommending these ascetic practices as virtues, he prohibits them as sins. Fasting formed no part of the religion of ancient Iran at any period of her history. It is strongly reprobated in the works of all periods. Fasting is a sin, and the only fast that the faithful are exhorted to keep is the fast from sin. The wilful abstinence from food is a deliberate disregard of the bounty of Ormazd. In his exaggerated idea of the need of fasting, the ascetic weakens his body, and practically starves himself to death by a rigorous system of fasts. Zoroastrianism enjoins that man should take sufficient food to keep his body strong and active, and not make it languid by withholding the due share of food from it. With a feeble body man could not work strenuously for the furtherance of the world of

¹Sri Deva Ram Sukul, Yoga and Self—Culture (New York: Yoga Institute of America, 1947), p. 36.
wickedness; and this, according to the Zoroastrian belief, is the chief object of man's life on earth.

Preservation of one's health is one of the religious duties of a Zoroastrian. In his daily Communion with God, the devout Zorastrian prays for "one thousandfold health, ten thousandfold health."

It was believed that fasting militated against the maintenance of health and against the performance of good and great deeds. Fasting is, therefore, depri cated. "This maxim should be borne in mind", says the Vendidad, "none of those who abstain from food is able to do great deeds of holiness, to do great works of husbandry, and to give birth to powerful children. The whole material world lives by eating; by fasting it dies."

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CHAPTER XVI

LONG FASTS OF HISTORICAL RECORD

Many are the examples contained in historical, political, and medical records which testify to the fact that it is within the power of man physically to abstain from food completely for a month or two. Also on a very restricted diet, it is possible to sustain oneself for several years. The writer has selected just a few in order to establish the nature and causes of these long fasts. Many, it will be noted, were forced either by physical impossibility of obtaining food, or by health curiosities. Other examples of prolonged fasting are cited in the chapters on the physiology of fasting. It is not intent of this thesis to present these examples as established facts, but merely to bring forth what history has indicated.

Cecilia de Rygeway

In Rymer's Foedera (Vol. VI, p. 13,) there is a rescript to King Edward III, having reference to a woman named Cecilia, the wife of John de Rygeway, who had been put up in Nottingham Gaol for the murder of her husband, and there had remained mute and abstinent from meat and drink for forty days. . . .

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John Scott

About the year 1531, one John Scott, a Teviotdale man, attracted attention in Scotland by his apparent possession of his ability to fast for many days at a time. He abstained from all meat and drink the space of thirty or forty days together, and coming by London, went up into the pulpit in Paul's churchyard, where he cast forth many speeches against the divorce of King Henry from Katherine his queen, inveighing bitterly against him for his defection from the Roman See, and thereupon was thrust into prison, in which he continued fifty days fasting.

Mary Waughton

Mary Waughton, of Wigginton, in Staffordshire, had been accustomed from her cradle to live upon an amount of food and liquor so much below what is customary, that she had become a local wonder. She does not eat in a day a piece above the size of half-a-crown in bread and butter; or, if meat, not above the quantity of a pigeon's egg at most. She drinks neither wine, ale, or beer, but only water or milk, or both mixed, and of either of these scarce a spoonful in a day.

Christina Michelot

In 1751, a young French girl, Christina Michelot, was attacked with a fever, which was followed by many distressing consequences, one of which was an inability or disinclination to take food. Water was her constant beverage, unaccompanied by any solid food whatever. From November in the year named above, until July 1755, this state of things continued. She was about eleven years old when the attack commenced; and M. Lardillon, a physician who attended her three years afterwards,

1 Ibid., p. 553.
2 Ibid.
expressed a belief that she would yet surmount her strange malady, and eat again. This opinion was borne out by the result.\textsuperscript{1}

**Ann Walsh**

In 1762, Ann Walsh, of Harrowgate, a girl of twelve years old, suddenly lost her appetite. For eighteen months her daily sustenance consisted solely of one-third of a pint of wine and water. Her good looks and general state of health suffered little; and she gradually recovered her normal condition.\textsuperscript{2}

**Boy from Chateauroux**

About the same time (1762) a boy was living at Chateauroux, in France, who was not known to have taken any kind of food for a whole year; he had strength enough to assist his father's labourers in field work, but became very thin and cadaverous. The accounts recorded lead to the conclusion that his inclination for food returned when the malady was removed which brought on the abstinence.\textsuperscript{3}

**Man from Stamford**

In 1771, a man at Stamford, for a wager of ten pounds, kept himself for fifty-one days without any kind of solid food or milk; he won the wager but probably inflicted more than ten pounds worth of damage upon his constitution.\textsuperscript{4}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1] Ibid.
\item[2] Ibid.
\item[3] Ibid., p. 554.
\item[4] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
Liduine of Schiedam

Thus Liduine of Schiedam fell ill in 1395, and remained in that state till her death, thirty-three years subsequently. During the first nineteen years she ate every day nothing but a little piece of apple the size of a holy wafer, and drank a little water and a swallow of beer, or sometimes a little sweet milk. Subsequently, being unable to digest beer and milk, she restricted herself to a little wine and water, and still later she was obliged to confine herself to water alone, which served her both as food and drink. But after nineteen years she took nothing whatever, according to her own statement made to some friars in 1422, she averring that for eight years nothing in the way of nourishment had passed her lips, and that for twenty years she had seen neither the sun nor the moon, nor had touched the earth with her feet.  

A Nun from Leicester

In 1225, Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, having heard that there was at Leicester a nun who had taken no nourishment for seven years, and who lived only on the eucharist, which she took every Sunday, gave at first no faith to the story. He sent to her, however, fifteen clerks, with directions to watch her assiduously for fifteen days, never for an instant losing sight of her. The clerks reported to him that they had strictly obeyed his commands; that she had taken no nourishment, and that yet she nevertheless preserved her full strength and health.

Strange to say, the ability to live on the eucharist, and to resist starvation by diabolical power, died out with the middle ages, and was replaced by the "fasting girls," who still continue to amuse us with their vagaries.  

["Fasting girls" is a name which Hammond gave to all women who gained attention by reason of their abstinence from food during a 700 year period beginning about 1200 A.D.]


2 Ibid., p. 4.
Margaret Weiss

Margaret Weiss, a young girl ten years of age, who lived at Rode, a small village near Spires, and whose history has come down to us through various channels, but principally from Geraldus Bucoldianus, who had the medical charge of her, and who wrote a little book describing his patient. Margaret is said to have abstained from all food and drink for three years, in the meantime growing, walking about, laughing, and talking like other children of her age. During the first year, however, she suffered greatly from pains in her head and abdomen, and, a common condition in hysteria—all four of her limbs were contracted. She passed neither urine nor foeces.¹

Appolonia Schreira

Schenckius quotes from Paulus Lentulus the "Wonderful History of the Fasting of Appolonia Schreira, a virgin in Berne." Lentutus states that he was with this maid on three occasions, and that, by order of the magistrate of Berne, was taken to that city and a strict guard kept upon her. All kinds of means were set in operation to detect imposture if any existed, but none was discovered, and she was set at liberty as a genuine case of ability to live without food. In the first year of her fasting she scarcely slept, and in the second year never closed her eyes in sleep; and so she continued for a long while after.²

Eve Fliegen

"But," says Dr. Hakewel, "The strangest that I have met with of this kind, is the history of Eve Fliegen, out of Dutch translated into English, and printed at London, Anno 1611, who, being born at Meurs, is said to have taken no kind of sustenance for the space of fourteen years together; that is, from the year of her age, twenty-two

¹ Ibid., p. 6.
² Ibid., p. 7.
to thirty-six, and from the year of our Lord 1597 to 1611; and this we have confirmed by the testimony of the magistrates of the town of Meurs, as also by the minister who made trial of her in his house thirteen days together by all the means he could devise, but could detect no imposture.\(^1\)

**Theresa Neumann**

This is one of the most publicized instances of protracted abstinence. Complete books have been written on the case, but only the essential facts are cited here.

Theresa's fasting actually began, in a lesser degree, before 1926. When Theresa was nineteen she met with an accident in which she injured her spine. That was in 1918. For several years Theresa suffered from a great number of ailments and complications, chief among them a severe paralysis which extended at times to her physical senses, especially the eyes, and affected her limbs to such an extent as to keep her totally inactive and continually confined to bed. At Christmas time in 1922 Theresa's throat was so swollen and paralyzed that she was unable for two weeks to swallow even a drop of water. From that time on she took no solid food whatsoever—with the exception of receiving the Holy Eucharist. Until 1926 she generally could, and did, take small amounts of liquid nourishment, such as fruit juice and coffee. But after August 6, 1926, Theresa took nothing but six or eight drops of water daily to help her swallow the Sacred Host. And since September, 1927, she has not taken even this small amount of water.\(^2\)

**Louise Lateau**

Louise Lateau lived in Bois-d'Haine, Belgium, from

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1. Ibid., p. 8.
1850 to 1883. Her life in many ways resembled that of Theresa Neumann. She too was a stigmatic. With the first appearance of the stigmata, in 1868, Louise ceased to take any food on Fridays because it was then impossible for her to swallow or retain anything. Her meals had always been very frugal, but now she gradually took less and less nourishment until finally her appetite disappeared altogether. During the last twelve years of her life, it is asserted, she took no food or drink at all, excepting the Holy Eucharist. And she depended on the Eucharist for her physical strength just as Theresa Neumann does, so that she became weak and languid when Holy Communion was deferred beyond the usual time.\footnote{Ibid., p. 19.}

**Maria Dominica Lazzari**

Maria Dominica Lazzari was a stigmatic who lived in the Tyrol from 1815 to 1848. All the information about her goes to show that she neither ate nor drank during the last twelve years of her life. The evidence is, in general, of the same nature and strength as in the two previous cases, and rather than go into detail about it, we believe it will be preferable in this instance simply to vouch for the fact that there is such evidence, and content ourselves with one or two remarks on that score.\footnote{Ibid., p. 23.}

**Nicholas of Flue**

Blessed Nicholas of Flue, in Switzerland, had been a soldier, a civil magistrate, and the father of ten children. From the age of fifty until his death, in 1487, at the age of seventy, he lived the life of a hermit. According to his biographers, he passed this period of over nineteen years without taking any food or drink other than the Eucharist, and yet was always normally, if not more than normally, capable and active. We are told that one evening, very shortly after he had taken up the life of a solitary "he was seized with such violent gastric spasms that he thought his last hour had come. The pain passed off, but from that time he lost all desire
for ordinary food and drink, and became in fact incapable of taking either.¹

There are many other such cases cited in Pater's book.

¹ Ibid., p. 30.
CHAPTER XVII

PRACTICES AMONG NATIVE RACES OF AMERICA

During the Nephite era (as pointed out in other sections of this work) Christ and the prophets taught the people to fast. But with the decline to unrighteousness and the killing of all prophets of God, these doctrines along with many others became corrupted. All examples cited hereafter are from the post-Nephite period. Even though much superstition crept into the fasting practices, one is still able to recognize that they fasted for the same basic purposes which God has recommended.

Throughout many of the examples which are cited here, two points of interest frequently appear. (1) The abstinence from sexual intercourse was a definite part of fasting and was adhered to as strictly—in some cases more so—as the abstinence from food. This has been part of the fast of all people at all times who truly fast. (2) These people were well acquainted with the doctrine of blood atonement. Often these people would shed their blood in crude ways in connection with fasting because they believed it would atone

for their transgressions.

Now to the histories, and because historical examples are being dealt with, much of the material must be quoted. The writer has hereafter attempted merely to classify the instances as to nature and purpose.

**Nature of Fasting**

Bancroft, the great historian of the West, gives some interesting information on the general nature and duration of fasting:

Fasting was observed as an atonement for sin, as well as a preparation for solemn festivals. An ordinary fast consisted in abstaining from meat for a period of from one to ten days, and taking but one meal a day, at noon; at no other hour might so much as a drop of water be touched. In the 'divine year' a fast of eighty days was observed. Some of the fasts held by the priests lasted one hundred and sixty days, and owing to the insufficient food allowed and terrible mutilations practiced these long fasts not unfrequently resulted fatally to the devotees.1

The Isthmians of Central America fasted in times of dire physical need:

When the needs of the people (the Isthmians) were very urgent, the chiefs and priests remained in the temple fasting and praying with uplifted hands; the people meanwhile observed a four-days fast, lacerating their bodies and washing their faces, which were at other times covered with paint. So strict was this fast that no meat or drink

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was to be touched until the fourth day.¹

The festival of this god Macuilxochitl fell among the movable feasts, and was called Xochillhuitl, or 'the festival of flowers.' There were in it the usual preliminary fasting (that is to say, eating but once a day, at noon, and then only of a restricted diet, blood-letting and offering of food in the temple).²

Religious Events

It is taught by several tribes that fasting was instituted by the "Great White Father".

He (Quetzalcoatl) introduced many new religious rites, including the practice of fasting and drawing of blood from their own body by penitents, to human sacrifices he was ever opposed.³

The Mexican Adam, called Iztacmixcoatl by some writers, married a second time. This second wife, Chimamatl by name, bore him, it is said, an only son who was called Quetzalcoatl. This son grew up a chaste and temperate man. He originated by his preaching and practice the custom of fasting and self-punishment.⁴

The Central American natives believed that fasting could reconcile them with God, and that they could come nearer to Him through this practice. Fasting for this purpose could only be done by the priest, however:

The efforts of the people alone were not considered sufficient at such times to propitiate the gods; it required the sanctified presence and powerful influence

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¹ Ibid., p. 499.
² Ibid., p. 407.
³ Ibid., V, p. 258.
⁴ Ibid., III, p. 249.
of the high priest to secure remission of sins. This
personage, whether king or pontiff, subjected himself
to a very severe fast and penance during the twenty, or
even hundred days determined upon. He removed to an
arboretum near the hidden sanctuary of the idols, and lived
in entire solitude, subsisting on grains and fruit,
touching no food prepared by fire sacrificing the offer­
ings brought him during the day, and drawing blood.¹

Mexican natives held that by fasting they could atone
for minor transgressions:

If the sin seemed too light for such a punishment as
the preceding, the priest would say to the penitent;
My son, thou shalt fast, thou shall fatigue thy stomach
with hunger and thy mouth with thirst, and that for four
days, eating only once on each day and that at noon.²

... Of all the modes of purification adopted on
these occasions none perhaps brings out the sacramental
virtue of the rite so clearly as the Creek and Seminole
practice of taking a purgative before swallowing the new
corn. The intention is thereby to prevent the sacred
food from being polluted by contact with common food in
the stomach of the eater. For the same reason Catholics
partake of the Eucharist fasting; and among the pastoral
Masai of Eastern Africa the young warriors, who live on
meat and milk exclusively, are obliged to eat nothing but
milk for so many days and then nothing but meat for so
many more, and before they pass from the one food to the
other they must make sure that none of the old food re­
 mains in their stomachs; this they do by swallowing a
very powerful purgative and emetic.³

[Regarding Mexican priestesses assigned to temple
duty] Females were consecrated to the service of the gods
in several ways... They spent part of the morning in
preparing bread and confectionery, which they placed,

¹    Ibid., p. 487.
²    Ibid., p. 383.
³    J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough (Twelve volumes;
while warm, in the temple, where the priests partook of it after sacrifice. The young women, for their part, fasted strictly; they first broke their fast at noon, and with the exception of a scanty meal in the evening, this was all they ate during the twenty-four hours. . . . If one of these young women unhappily violated her vows of chastity she redoubled her fasting and severity, in the fear that her flesh would rot, and in order to appease the gods and induce them to conceal her crime.

The ordinance of baptism was well known among these peoples, and it was the practice of not only the participants, but also the relatives to fast before the performance of the rite.

Previous to the wedding-day the parents fasted during three days . . . . Young children underwent a kind of baptismal ceremony. The Mayas believed that ablution washed away all evil; and previous to the ceremony the parents fasted three days. . . .

It is related by all the old Spanish historians, that when the Spaniards first visited the kingdom of Yucatan they found there traces of a baptismal rite; and, strangely enough, the name given to this rite in the language of the inhabitants, was zihil, signifying 'to be born again'. . . . During the three days preceding the ceremony the fathers and assistants fasted and abstained from women.

At funerals, fasting accompanied mourning, as in Old Testament times.

During this period the mourning was general, no corn was ground, no fires lighted, no business transacted; the streets were deserted, and all remained at home, mourning and fasting.

1 Bancroft, II, p. 204, 206.
2 Ibid., I, p. 664.
3 Ibid., II, p. 682.
4 Ibid., I, p. 520.
Straying into superstition now, the practices of fasting were used to (1) appease evil spirits, (2) aid in sorcery and witchcraft, (3) aid in the selection of one's special spirit or animal.

The Comanches stand in great dread of evil spirits, which they attempt to conciliate by fasting and abstinence. ¹

In sorcery, witchcraft, prophecy, dreams, evil spirits, and the transmigration of souls, the Nootkas are firm believers, and these beliefs enable the numerous sorcerers of different grades to acquire great power in the tribes by their strange ridiculous ceremonies. . . . The sorcerer, before giving a special demonstration, retires apart to meditate. After spending some time alone in the forests and mountains, fasting [italics mine] and lacerating the flesh, he appears suddenly before the tribe, emaciated, wild with excitement, clad in a strange costume, grotesquely painted, and wearing a hideous mask. The scenes that ensue are indescribable, but the aim seems to be to commit all the wild freaks that a maniac's imagination may devise, accompanied by the most unearthly yells which can terrorize the heart. Live dogs and dead human bodies are seized and torn by their teeth; but, at least in later times, they seem not to attack the living, and their performances are somewhat less horrible and bloody than the wild orgies of the northern tribes. ²

Chinooks have a fire-spirit, an evil spirit, and a body of familiar spirits, tamanowas. Each person has his special spirit, selected by him at an early age, sometimes by fasting and other mortification of the flesh, sometimes by the adoption of the first object the child or young man sees, or thinks he sees, on visiting the woods. These spirits have a great effect on the imagination of the Chinooks, and their supposed directions are followed under pain of mysterious and awful punishments; . . . The whole matter is darkened with much mystery and secrecy; the name of one's familiar spirit or guardian

¹ Ibid., I, p. 520.
never being mentioned even to the nearest friend.\footnote{1}

At an early age they were placed under the protection of a tutelar divinity, which was supposed to take the form of some animal. To discover the particular beast which was to guide his future destinies, the child was intoxicated, and for three or four days kept without food of any kind. During this period he was continually harassed and questioned, until, weak from want of food, crazed with drink and importunity, and knowing that the persecution would not cease until he yielded, he confessed to seeing his divinity, and described what kind of brute it was.\footnote{2}

**Family Life**

Marriage is one of the finest and most sacred events in family life and one would naturally expect to find fasting practiced in conjunction therewith. In Central America, "the parents fasted during three days previous to the wedding-day."\footnote{3} But among the Hyperboreans, Mayas, and Mazatecs, it was the married couple who were required to do the fasting.

A marriage ceremony consists in the assembling of friends and distribution of presents. A newly married pair must fast\footnote{4} for two days thereafter, in order to insure domestic felicity [italics mine]. After the expiration of that time they are permitted to partake of a little food, when a second two-day fast [italics mine] is added, after which they are allowed to come together for the first time. . . .

\footnote{1}{Ibid., III, p. 156.}
\footnote{2}{Ibid., I, p. 414.}
\footnote{3}{Ibid., I, p. 663.}
\footnote{4}{Ibid., p. 111.}
The marriage ceremonies being finished, the relatives and friends partook of a banquet, and amidst much rejoicing congratulated each other on the new relations they had acquired. In the feasting, drinking, and dancing the bridal pair took no part; they had now to enter upon a season of fasting and penance, which lasted four days, in the strict retirement of their room, where they were closely guarded by old women; on no account were they permitted to leave their room; . . . the time was to be passed in prayer, and on no account were they to allow their passions to get the better of them or indulge in carnal intercourse.\(^1\)

The Mazatec bridegroom abstained for the first fifteen days of his wedded life from carnal knowledge of his wife, and both spent the time in fasting and penance.\(^2\)

Childless couples were urged to undertake a partial fast so that their desires might be granted them.

The desire to possess children seems to have been very general, and many were the prayers and offerings made by disappointed parents to propitiate the god whose anger was supposed to have deferred their hopes. To further promote the efficacy of their prayers, the priest enjoined upon man and wife to separate for a month or two, to adhere to a simple diet, and abstain from salt.\(^3\)

At childbirth, fasting was part of the purification process required of the mother.

Purification at child-birth lasted for three days, during which time the mother was allowed no food, and no drink but warm water.\(^4\)

\(^1\) Ibid., II, p. 258.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 261.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 678.
\(^4\) Ibid., I, p. 413.
The Chinooks recognized health and curative values in fasting.

For slight ills and pains, especially for external injuries, the Chinooks employ simple remedies obtained from various plants and trees. Many of these remedies have been found to be of actual value. . . . Fasting [italics mine] and bathing serve to relieve many slight internal complaints. Strangely enough, they never suffer from diseases of the digestive organs, notwithstanding the greasy compounds used as food.

Some of the most seemingly purposeless fasting practices were forced upon girls of the various tribes at puberty. Many examples could be given, but just a few are cited.

When symptoms of puberty appeared on a girl for the first time, the Guaranis of Southern Brazil, on the borders of Paraguay, used to sew her up in her hammock, leaving only a small opening in it to allow her to breathe. In this condition, wrapt up and shrouded like a corpse, she was kept for two or three days or so long as the symptoms lasted, and during this time she had to observe a most rigorous fast. . . . The Lengua Indians of the Paraguayan Chaco under similar circumstances hang the girl in her hammock from the roof of the house, but they leave her there only three days and nights, during which they give her nothing to eat but a little paraguay tea or boiled maize. . . . On the third day they let her down from the hammock, cut her hair, and make her sit in a corner of the room with her face turned to the wall. She may speak to nobody, and must abstain from flesh and fish. These rigorous observances she must practice for nearly a year. Many girls die or are injured for life in consequence of the hardships they endure at this time.

Among the passes, Mauhes, and other tribes of Brazil the young woman in similar circumstances is hung in her hammock from the roof and has to fast there for a month or as long as she can hold out. One of the early settlers in Brazil, about the middle of the sixteenth century, has

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1 Ibid., I, p. 246.
described the severe ordeal which damsels at puberty had to undergo among the Indians on the south-east coast of that country, near what is now Rio de Janeiro. When a girl had reached this critical period of life, her hair was burned or shaved off close to the head. Then she was placed on a flat stone and cut with the tooth of an animal from the shoulders all down the back, till she ran with blood. Next the ashes of a wild gourd were rubbed into the wounds; the girl was bound hand and foot, and hung in a hammock, being enveloped in it so closely that no one could see her. Here she had to stay for three days without eating or drinking. When the three days were over, she stepped out of the hammock upon the flat stone, for her feet might not touch the ground. If she had a call of nature, a female relation took the girl on her back and carried her out, taking with her a live coal to prevent evil influences from entering the girl's body. Being replaced in her hammock, she was now allowed to get some flour, boiled roots, and water, but might not taste salt or flesh. Thus she continued to the end of the first monthly period, at the expiry of which she was gashed on the breast and belly as well as all down the back. During the second month she still stayed in her hammock, but her rule of abstinence was less rigid, and she was allowed to spin. The third month she was blackened with a certain pigment and began to go about as usual.1

Wars and Political Events

In preparation for and during wars, fasting was a must. Not only the warriors but the villagers also had to fast.

During the campaign fasting is strictly observed. The Acaxees, before taking the war-path, select a maiden of the tribe, who secludes herself during the whole period of the campaign, speaking to no one, and eating nothing but a little parched corn without salt.2

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1 Frazer, X, pp. 56-61.
2 Bancroft, I, p. 520.
One of the customs mentioned by the writer was that all the people left in the camp had to fast strictly while the warriors were out in the field. This rule is obviously based on the sympathetic connexion supposed to exist between friends at a distance, especially at critical times.

For three or four weeks before they went on a warlike expedition, the Nootka Indians made it an invariable rule to go into the water five or six times a day, when they washed and scrubbed themselves from head to foot with bushes intermixed with briars, so that their bodies and faces were often entirely covered with blood. During this severe exercise they continually exclaimed, "Good or great God, let me live, not be sick, find the enemy, not fear him, find him asleep, and kill a great many of them." All this time they had no intercourse with their women, and for a week before setting out abstained from feasting and every kind of merriment. ... Before they went out on the war-path the Arikaras and the Big Belly Indians (Gros Ventres) "observe a rigorous fast, or rather abstain from every kind of food for four days. ... So long as the preparatory fast continues, the warriors make incisions in their bodies, insert pieces of wood in the flesh, and having fastened leather thongs to them cause themselves to be hung from a beam which is fixed horizontally above an abyss a hundred and fifty feet deep.

One writer evaluates the seemingly foolish fasting of these natives as follows:

When we observe that pains these misguided savages took to unfit themselves for the business of war by abstaining from food, denying themselves rest, and lacerating their bodies, we shall probably not be disposed to attribute their practice of continence in war to a rational fear of dissipating their bodily energies by indulgence in the lusts of the flesh. On the contrary, we can scarcely doubt that the motive which impelled them to

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1 Frazer, III, p. 157.
2 Ibid., p. 161-62.
observe chastity on a campaign was just as frivolous as the motive which led them simultaneously to fritter away their strength by severe fasts, gratuitous fatigue, and voluntary wounds at the very moment when prudence called most loudly for a precisely opposite regimen. Why exactly so many savages have made it a rule to refrain from women in time of war, we cannot say for certain, but we may conjecture that their motive was a superstitious fear lest, on the principles of sympathetic magic, close contact with women should infect them with feminine weakness and cowardice.¹

Any prisoners which are captured during battle were brought home for sacrifices. At least two separate peoples considered fasting necessary in connection with these executions.

The executioner, . . . performed his office by striking the victim on the head from behind and dashing out his brains. No sooner had he dispatched the prisoner than he retired to his house, where he had to stay all that day without eating or drinking, while the rest of the people feasted on the body of the victim or victims. And for three days he was obliged to fast and remain in seclusion. . . . Afterwards he made incisions in his breast, arms, and legs, and other parts of his body with a saw made of the teeth of an animal. . . . It was believed that he would die if he did not thus draw blood from his own body after slaughtering the captive.²

Among the Mexicans, . . . when the king or a feudatory lord captured a prisoner for the first time, his success was made the occasion of much rejoicing. . . . Upon the day appointed for the sacrifice a grand festival was held, previous to and after which the lord fasted and performed certain prescribed ceremonies. The victim was usually dressed for the occasion in the robes of the

¹ Ibid., p. 163.
god of the sun, and sacrificed in the usual manner.¹

If a brave had killed an enemy during battle, especially if it were his first such deed, a fast was undertaken as a partial atonement for this act.

Among the same nation [Pima], when a man has killed an Apache, he must needs undergo purification. Sixteen days he must fast, and only after the fourth day is he allowed to drink a little pinole. . . . They ascribe the origin of this custom to a mythical personage, called Szeukha, who, after killing a monster, is said to have fasted for sixteen days.²

Among the Natchez of North America young braves who had taken their first scalps were obliged to observe certain rules of abstinence for six months. They might not sleep with their wives nor eat flesh; their only food was fish and hasty-pudding.³

The loved ones of those slain in battle also entered into a fast, consisting of a reduced diet.

[Of honoring those slain in battle who were subsequently cremated] Some of the ashes were scattered upon the relatives, who fasted for eighty days, the remaining ashes being in the meantime buried.⁴

Leaders often fasted in preparation for the office and responsibilities which they were about to assume.

. . . So, too, the heir to the kingdom of Sogamoso, before succeeding to the crown, had to fast for seven years in the temple, being shut up in the dark and not

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¹ Bancroft, II, p. 428.
² Ibid., I, p. 553.
³ Frazer, III, p. 183.
⁴ Bancroft, II, p. 617.
allowed to see the sun or light. The prince who was to become Inca of Peru had to fast for a month without seeing light.

Festivals

Most of the fasts referred to in the three preceding sections were individual and/or private occurrences. However, there were many public fast days which were held annually. They are too numerous to cite here--just a few will suffice.

Peoples of all nations have fasted during harvest time as a means of giving thanks for what they had. Both the agricultural tribes and Columbian fishermen had their ceremonies.

Amongst the Creek Indians of North America, the BUSK or festival of first-fruits was the chief ceremony of the year. It was held in July or August, when the corn was ripe, and marked the end of the old year and the beginning of the new one. ... A strict fast was then observed for two nights and a day, the devotees drinking a bitter decoction of button-snake root "in order to vomit and purge their sinful bodies." That the people outside the square might also be purified, one of the old men laid down a quantity of green tobacco at a corner of the square; this was carried off by an old woman and distributed to the people without, who chewed and swallowed it "in order to afflict their souls." During this general fast, the women, children, and men of weak constitution were allowed to eat after mid-day, but not before.

After the salmon season, feasting and conjuring are in order. The chief, whose greatest authority is in his

1 Frazer, X, p. 19.
2 Frazer, V, p. 73.
character of conjurer, or tzeetzaiak as he is termed in
the Hailtzuk tongue, pretends at this time to live alone
in the forest, fasting [italics mine] or eating grass,
and while there is known as taamish. When he returns,
clad in bear-robe, chaplet, and red-bark collar, the crowd
flies at his approach, except a few brave spirits, who
boldly present their naked arms, from which he bites and
swallows large mouthfuls. This, skillfully done, adds
to the reputation of both biter and bitten, and is per­
haps all the foundation that exists for the report that
these people are cannibals. 1

Some of the Canadian tribes fasted before their hunt­
ing expeditions, believing that it would bring them good
fortune.

. . . Accordingly the hunting and killing of these
valuable or dangerous beasts are subject to more elaborate
rules and ceremonies than the slaughter of comparatively
useless and insignificant creatures. Thus the Indians
of Nootka Sound prepared themselves for catching whales
by observing a fast for a week, during which they are very
little, bathed in the water several times a day, sang,
and rubbed their bodies, limbs, and faces with shells
and bushes till they looked as if they had been severely
torn with briars. They were likewise required to abstain
from any commerce with their women for the like period,
this last condition being considered indispensable to
their success. A chief who failed to catch a whale has
been known to attribute his failure to a breach of cha­s­
tity on the part of his men.

. . . Among the Tsetsaut Indians of British Columbia
hunters who desire to secure good luck fast and wash their
bodies with gingerroot for three or four days, and do
not touch a woman for two or three months. . . . It
is obvious that the severe fasting coupled with the short
sleep, or even the total sleeplessness, of these eagle­
hunters can only impair their physical vigour and so far
tend to incapacitate them for capturing the eagles.
The motive of their behavior in these respects is purely
superstitious, not rational, and so, we may safely con­
clude, is the custom which simultaneously cuts them off

1
Bancroft I, p. 170.
from all intercourse with their wives and families.¹

Other special event celebrations were carried on amid partial fasts.

... The Maya New Year's Day... To prepare for this feast, princes, priests, and nobles, and all who wished to show their devotion, fasted and abstained from their wives for a longer or shorter period, some for three months preceding it, some for two, according to their ideas of propriety, but none for less than thirteen days. During this season of abstinence, they ate their meat unseasoned, which was considered severe discipline... Great care was taken not to break the fast after it had been once commenced; for if this were done it was thought that misfortune must inevitably ensue.²

The priests observed fasts among themselves, attended with penance, sacrifices, and mutilations sometimes so severe as to result fatally. Thus, at the festival in honor of Camaxtli, the priests fasted one hundred and sixty days, and passed several hundred sticks, varying in thickness from half an inch to an inch and half through a hole freshly made in the tongue.³

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¹ Frazer, III, pp. 191, 199.
² Bancroft, II, 695.
³ Ibid., p. 303.
A MISCELLANY OF HISTORICAL PRACTICES

Gathered together in this chapter are a group of customs of various countries which center around fasting. Some of them describe the sincerity of the people in adhering to this religious practice, some point out the weird interpretations which people have attached to the doctrine, and others are quite humorous.

France

Midsummer Eve is still the time for culling certain magic plants, whose evanescent virtue can be secured at this mystic season alone. Indeed all over Europe antique fancies of the same sort have lingered about Midsummer Eve, imparting to it a fragrance of the past, like withered rose leaves that, found by chance in the pages of an old volume, still smell of departed summers. Thus in Saintonge and Aunis, two of the ancient provinces of Western France, we read that "of all the festivals for which the merry bells ring out there is not one which has given rise to a greater number of superstitious practices than the festival of St. John the Baptist. The Eve of St. John was the day of all days for gathering the wonderful herbs by means of which you could combat fever, cure a host of diseases, and guard yourself against sorcerers and their spells. But in order to attain these results two conditions had to be observed; first, you must be fasting when you gathered the herbs, and second, you must cull them before the sun rose. If these conditions were not fulfilled, the plants had no special virtue."¹

¹J. L. M. Nogues, Les Moeurs d'Autrefois en Saintonge

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Eating Habits in Europe

From a text on food, its history and uses, it is interesting to note the special foods which were prepared for "fast" days, and also the unusually large quantities of fish and other rich foods which were eaten while "fasting" in the European Countries.

Being a bishop's household, we find evidence in the Roll that all the days of abstinence were observed. Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday were days of abstinence. On these and the seasonal fasts (as in Lent and on certain vigils) vast quantities of fish were consumed.¹

It is worthy of note that the famous "Mrs. Glasse" gives a recipe for "plumb-porridge for Christmas. [A long Chapter in the same work, on the subject of lenten diet, gives various onion and fish soups as suitable dishes to "fast" upon.]² (italics mine)

Fish eaten on fast days, when flesh was not allowed, entered sparingly into the meals served on other days, and often was not served at all. Does not Falstaff deplore the "many fish meals" which destroy the manly vigour?³ (italics mine)

The weekly courier between Valladolid and Lisbon was ordered to change his route every Thursday that he might bring a provision of eels and other rich fish for the royal fast on Friday.⁴ (italics mine)

¹ Frederick W. Hackwood, Good Cheer—The Romance of Food and Feasting (Leipsic: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911), p. 113.
² Ibid., p. 196.
³ Ibid., p. 242.
⁴ Ibid., p. 270.
During the long and severe fasts of the Greek Church large quantities of dried fish were consumed.¹

**St. Agnes Day in England**

By way of introduction—Agnes was a Roman by birth and a Christian by conviction. Because she refused to obey an order of a certain Prefect to marry his son, she was executed at an early age (303 a.d.) after insulting and cruel treatment. This occurred in the tenth persecution under the Emperor Dioclesian. Subsequently she was "sainted" by the Catholic Church and January 21 was proclaimed to be her day. Tradition has it that young ladies may on that eve induce favorable dreams by fasting in which they will see their future husbands. The following notice of it occurs in *Poor Robin's Almanack* for 1734:

```
Saint Agnes Day comes by and by,
When pretty maids do fast to try
Their sweethearts in their dreams to see,
Or know who shall their husbands be.
But some when married all is ore,
And they desire to dream no more,
Or, if they must have these extrearns,
Wish all their sufferings were but dreams.²
```

And in the same periodical for the previous year, 1733, we have a similar account:

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Tho' Christmas pleasure now is gone,
St. Agnes' Fast is coming on;
When maids who fain would married be,
Do fast their sweethearts for to see.
This year it has come so about,
That Sunday shoves St. Agnes out:
But find her here, and that's as well.

Two other old historical records refer to this quaint practice. It will be noted in the second that the "true fast" is described as complete abstinence from food and drink for twenty-four hours.

In Cupid's Whirligig, 1616, iii. 1, Pag says, 'I could find in my heart to pray nine times to the moone, and fast three St. Agnes's Eves, so that I might be sure to have him to my husband.' The maids, if they do undergo the mortification of fasting, expect nothing but a dream for their labour; only if they dream of the man that afterwards they are married to, it makes amends.

A curious old chap-book, called Mother Bunch's Closet Newly Broke Open, has several notices of the St. Agnes divination:-- . . . 'There is, in January, a day called Saint Agnes' Day. It is always the one and twentieth of that month. This Saint Agnes had a great favour for young men and maids, and will bring unto their bedside, at night, their sweethearts, if they follow this rule as I shall declare unto thee. Upon this day thou must be sure to keep a true fast, for thou must not eat or drink all that day, nor at night; [italics mine] neither let any man, woman, or child kiss thee that day; and thou must be sure, at night when thou goest to bed, to put on a clean shift, and the best thou hast the better thou mayst speed; and thou must have clean cloaths when she comes; and when thou liest down on thy back as straight as thou canst, and both thy hands are laid underneath thy head, then say,--

Now, good St. Agnes, play thy part,
And send to me my own sweetheart,
And shew me such a happy bliss,
This night of him to have a kiss.
And then be sure to fall asleep as soon as thou canst, and before thou awakest out of thy first sleep thou shalt see him come and stand before thee, and thou shalt per-
ceive by his habit what tradesman he is; but be sure thou declarest not thy dream to anyone in ten days, and by that time thou mayest come to see thy dream come to pass.¹

Beliefs Regarding Fasting Spittle

Many teachings and superstitions existed both anciently and during the dark ages—both Christian and non-Christian—regarding the curative powers of spittle. Among the ancients, spittle was esteemed a charm against all kinds of fascination. Many Christian oddities developed during the dark ages, probably based on John 9:6, ⁷, "When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay... He went his way... washed, and came seeing."

Levinus Lemnius tells us: 'Divers experiments show what power and quality there is in man's fasting spittle, when he hath neither eat nor drunk before the use of it: for it cures all terrors, itch, scabs, pushes, and creeping sores; and if venemous little beasts have fastened on any part of the body, as hornets, beetles, toads, spiders, and such like, that by their venom cause tumours and great pains and inflammations, do but rub the places with fasting spittle, and all those effects will be gone and discussed. Since the qualities and effects of spittle comes from the humours, (for out of them is it drawn by the faculty of nature, as fire draws distilled water from herbs), the reason may be easily understood why spittle should do such strange things, and destroy some creatures.'²

¹ Ibíd., p. 35, 37.
² Ibíd., III, 260.
Early Practices in the United States

History indicates that the early settlers in America came here in order to have religious freedom, but that they were much more severe in practice and punishment, and more intolerant of others not of their faith than were the people from whose midst they came. Puritan theologians thought it sinful to celebrate even the major feasts on the Christian calendar, as Christmas and Easter, and condemned the traditional Christian fasts because of the idolatry connected with them.

It is first of all necessary to obtain some conception of the extent and evils of the system which the puritans opposed, as that was the reason why they rejected it and substituted their fast and thanksgiving days.\(^1\)

The Puritans generally held a fast day in the spring before planting crops and a day of thanksgiving after the harvest. The present U. S. Thanksgiving Day was originally a fast day, and dates back to about 1650 in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Of course the Church of England, being of Catholic origin, introduced her definite customs into early life in the U.S.

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Concerning the customs which have regulated the observance of fast days, there is little to be said. There was for many years no reason to change its sabbatical character. Until the present century two services were maintained in most communities, and these occupied the major portion of the day. In early times, indeed down to the general breaking up of old customs by the Revolutionary War, the people usually abstained from food until after the second service,—a very ancient interpretation of this duty. Then, as the day declined, they sat down to some simple repast of cold meats, bread or "hasty pudding," and milk. Many are now living who remember when fasting was commonly practiced.

Surely these Saxon Blu-Laws were equal to anything ever enacted in New England.

It was the treaty above mentioned which stipulated that "if a freeman shall break a fast by taking food he shall be subject both to a fine and the penalty of the violation of the law," and this applied to the Lenten fast, Ember days, and all other appointed fasts.

On more than one quarter of the secular days of the year it (the church) forbade all persons over twelve years of age to taste food until three o'clock in the afternoon, besides prohibiting all to eat on the eves of most festival days.

However, as England and the Church of England ceased to have effective control over the people in America, the number of fast days increased. In 1775, they were abundant. "In colonial New England fast days were dedicated by governors and magistrates to seeking for forgiveness of God for man's

1. Ibid., p. 416.
3. Ibid., p. 12.
Authority to designate such days was vested in churches, but had to be sanctioned by legislature. A prime example of these public fast days is one proclaimed by John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress, to be observed by the United Colonies on July 20, 1775. Because of the length of this document, it is shown separately in Appendix D. Its historical and theological value is sufficiently great to have it included in this work. President John Adams also proclaimed a day of "Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer" for May 9, 1798, to be observed by all people in the United States. The full text of this pronouncement is also shown in Appendix D.

Gradually the sacred spiritual purpose of fasting was disregarded and these fast days no longer involved abstention from food, but rather the avoidance of secular activity.

New Hampshire is the only state in which there is still a legal holiday known as Fast Day. This date is fixed by proclamation of the governor and it is customary for him to set apart the fourth Thursday in April for its observance. Maine and Massachusetts once had laws which directed their governors to proclaim a day

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of fasting and prayer in the spring, but these laws have been repealed. Good Friday, which is a day of fasting for those who observe it, is a holiday in the following states: Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas; also in five counties in Arizona.

The Governor of New Hampshire issues his proclamation annually, but there is little fasting on the day. Governor H. Styles Bridges, in the course of an explanation of the custom in his state, said in 1935:

'The fact that the season of outdoor sport is then opening in this latitude tends to secure a general observance of the day so far as ceasing from labor is concerned. I do not know personally of any instance of its observance by fasting. Some church services are held and the official proclamation usually recalls the original reason for establishing Fast Day, and the existing need for a continuance of the thought that inspired the first observance.' . . .

There is a tradition in that state (Maine) that one year the Governor, in the absence of his secretary, asked his messenger to draw up the usual Fast Day proclamation, expecting him to copy one that had been issued in a previous year. The messenger, however, who had little reverence in his constitution, wrote the following proclamation:

'Having consulted my Council and learned that none of them has an engagement to dine on that day, and feeling fully assured that I shall receive no invitation to dine until the high school graduating exercises begin and field strawberries get down to eight cents a quart, I do hereby appoint Thursday, the seventeenth day of April, as a day of public humiliation, fasting and prayer. While the scoffers in our sister state (Massachusetts) are holding horse races, playing baseball and gorging themselves with forbidden food, let us thank our stars that we know when we have enough, and feel grateful for the empty stomach and clean heads we shall have the morning after. Though I am unable to say what the Council will do on that day, for myself I shall attend church if I can find a minister who will stay long enough to preach to me.'

1

Concerning the present status of the last remaining fast day in the United States, the following letter was received from the governor of New Hampshire in answer to the writer's inquiry. It is assumed that this Fast Day holiday still continues because there is no statement to the contrary. Within this chapter, then, reference is made to the first public fast day, proclaimed by John Hancock, and to the last.

The earliest observance of Fast Day came on March 1, 1681 when an act was passed by the General Assembly designating the 17th of March, 1681 as a day of fasting and prayer "both in the present dangerous sickness of the Honorable President of the Assembly of New Hampshire in the continuance of whose life is wrapped up many blessings and whose death may occasion much trouble." The act refers to the dangerous illness of the Honorable John Cutts of Portsmouth, President of the Royal Province of New Hampshire by the Grace of Charles II. The day of fasting and prayer was proclaimed for his quick recovery. These efforts were in vain, however, for John Cutts died at Portsmouth on April 1, 1681, less than a month after the day.

Throughout the early days of the colonies Fast days were proclaimed by the Governors at various times during the year. On many occasions, the day was observed in repentance for some great calamity which the Almighty visited upon His people, such as fire, flood, famine, etc. Each year Fast Day was proclaimed separately by act of the Legislature and did not occur at any one time. In fact, it was quite possible that two or even three fast days might occur within one year.

In 1899, the Legislature passed an act to designate days to be observed as legal holidays. It provided that "Thanksgiving Day and Fast Day, whenever appointed, Labor Day, the day on which the Biennial Election is held, the 22nd day of February, the 30th of May, the 4th of July, Christmas Day shall be legal holidays in New Hamp-
This act approved February 15, 1899.

Although not specified by statute, it became the custom for the Governor of the state to designate the last Thursday in April as a day of Public Fast and Prayer. This continued until the 1949 legislative session when an act to establish Fast Day as the 4th Monday in April was approved on June 29, 1949.

For those interested in further details on the historical aspects of fast days in the United States, the writer recommends DeLoss Low's work, which has been cited in this chapter. It is very complete and informative.
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As stated on page two, the problems involved in this work were to determine what the pronouncements of God regarding fasting are, and to describe the practices of the peoples of the world in relation thereto.

A true fast as taught by Christ does not consist only of the passage of time, whether twenty-four hours or forty days, nor of the mere abstinence from food. Abstinence from all temporal work, pleasure and bodily gratification plus the spiritual exercises which reconcile man with God and his fellowmen constitute a true fast.

Fasting may be both a cause and an effect or result. It is proper to fast for the purpose of humbling oneself and attempting to draw nearer to God. A fasting situation results from most great spiritual experiences of man's life, e.g. times of great joy, anxiety or mourning, and is an accompaniment thereto.

The true fast as given to the world by Christ will always be rewarded by revelation, which may take many forms. One cannot help but have something revealed to him each time he comes closer to God.

Christ both taught and commanded a fast many times through the history of the world. However, these teachings have often been misunderstood and fasting has been practiced in a variety of perverted forms. Such is the situation in the religious world today. For example, the survey made of U.S. churches indicates that the majority of the churches do not teach fasting at all. History and analysis indicate that those churches which do claim to teach and/or practice a fast do so according to instructions other than those taught by Christ as recorded in the scriptures.
It is claimed that great health benefits arise from wise periodic fasting. Some advantages which have been claimed by those conducting scientific fasts are (1) a well-regulated body metabolism, (2) greatly increased sensory perception—both visual and olfactory, (3) decreased bodily strength and desire, including sexual urges, taste for tobacco, hunger, etc., (4) increased attentive, perceptive and association powers, (5) increased steadiness of body, and (6) best performance in mental tests. Strong caution must be given regarding overabstinence, however, for such can be very detrimental. Wisdom must also be used in breaking the fast.

It is recommended that those who would be followers of Christ learn and practice His true fast, for the faith necessary to exaltation in the Kingdom of Heaven can only be acquired through prayer and fasting.
Gentlemen:

Because you are interested in contributing to the faith of the American people, you have received this letter. Your response to it may have a great effect for good upon the lives of many.

As partial fulfillment of a graduate degree in theology, I am engaged in writing a dissertation on the doctrine of fasting. In connection therewith, I desire to include a chapter on the practices and beliefs of the Christian churches in the United States. It is my thought that fasting is one of the most powerful principles of the Gospel, but that there are many people today who do not understand the significance thereof. A brief statement of the teachings and practices of your church concerning the doctrine of fasting would be greatly appreciated, and would undoubtedly be of significant value in this summary of beliefs.

Please include in your reply remarks on the following matters, if they relate to your official teachings:

1. The spiritual, temporal and health purposes of fasting,
2. The things from which you abstain during your fast,
3. The length or duration of your fast,
4. The relationship of fasting to prayer,
5. Any other thoughts of special worth.

I shall also be interested in any commentaries or histories, ancient or modern, which relate specifically to this subject.

I should like to thank you in advance for your consideration of my request and for the time you will give to it. An early reply will be appreciated due to the time limitations which are placed on all academic work. May you be rewarded for your willing response.

Respectfully,
## APPENDIX B

### SUMMARY OF STATISTICS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

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<th>Classification of Church</th>
<th>Church Membership</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
<th>Number of Confirmations</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
<th>Representative Membership Replying</th>
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<td>%</td>
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Per Cent Reply

| Per Cent Reply | 28.9% |

-296-
## APPENDIX C

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(Forward for summary of replies)
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**SUMMARY OF REPLIES:**

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APPENDIX D

By the President of the United States of America, A Proclamation.

As the safety and prosperity of nations ultimately and essentially depend on the protection and the blessing of Almighty God; and the national acknowledgment of this truth is not only an indispensable duty which the people owe to Him, but a duty whose natural influence is favorable to the promotion of that Morality and Piety without which social Happiness cannot exist nor the Blessings of a Free Government be enjoyed; and as this duty, at all times incumbent, is so especially in seasons of Difficulty or of Danger, when existing or threatening Calamities, the just Judgments of God against prevalent Iniquity, are a loud call to Repentance and Reformation: And as the United States of America are, at present, placed in a hazardous and afflicting taxation, by the unfriendly Disposition, Conduct, and Demands of a foreign power, disgraced by repeated refusals to receive our Messengers of Reconciliation and Peace, by Depredations on our Commerce, and the Infliction of Injuries on very many of our Fellow-Citizens while engaged in their lawful Business on the Seas:—Under these considerations it has appeared to me that the Duty of imploring the Mercy and Benediction of Heaven on our Country demands, at this time, a special attention from its Inhabitants.

I have therefore thought fit to recommend, and I do hereby recommend, that Wednesday, the Ninth Day of May next be observed throughout the United States, as a day of Solemn Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer: That the Citizens of these States, abstaining on that Day from their customary Worldly Occupations, offer their devout Addresses to the Father of Mercies agreeably to those forms or methods which they have severally adopted as the most suitable and becoming: That all Religious Congregations do, with the deepest Humility, acknowledge before God the manifold Sins and Transgressions with which they are justly chargeable as individuals and as a Nation; beseeching him, at the same time, of his infinite Grace, through the Redeemer of the World, freely to remit all our offences and to incline us, by his Holy Spirit, to that sincere Repentance and Reformation which may afford us reason to hope for his inestimable Favour and Heavenly Benediction: That it be made the subject of particular and earnest supplication, that our Country may be protected from all the dangers which threaten
it; that our Civil and Religious privileges may be preferred inviolate and perpetuated to the latest Generations; that our public Councils and Magistrates may be especially enlightened and directed at this critical period; that the American people may be united in those Bonds of Amity and mutual Confidence, and inspired with that Vigour and Fortitude by which they in times past have been so highly distinguished, and by which they have obtained such invaluable Advantages; That the Health of the Inhabitants may be preserved and their Agriculture, Commerce, Fisheries, Arts, and Manufacture be blessed and prospered; that the principles of Genuine Piety and Sound Morality may influence the Minds and govern the Lives of every description of our Citizens; and that the Blessings of Peace, Freedom, and Pure Religion, may be speedily extended to all Nations of the Earth.

And finally I recommend, that on said day, the Duties of Humiliation and Prayer be accompanied by fervent Thanksgiving to the Bestower of every Good Gift, not only for having hither-to protected and preserved the People of these United States in the independent Enjoyment of their Religious Civil Freedom, but also for having prospered them in a wonderful progress of Population, and for conferring on them many and great Favours conducive to the Happiness and Prosperity of a Nation.

Given under my Hand and Seal of the United States of America, at Philadelphia, this twenty-third day of March, in the Year of Our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of said States the twenty-second.

John Adams

By the President
Timothy Pickering
Secretary of State

...Such national fast days were an occasional continuation of the older Colonial practice of annual fast days in New England. The religious fasts at the end of the eighteenth century, when the clergy were more prominent in civic affairs, become increasingly political after the organization of the Federal Government. There was deep concern over the influence of French infidelity, especially during the last decade of the century. Most were statewide fasts. A few, such as this, were nationwide.¹

The spirit which had united the colonies for resistance in the Continental Congress was now to inaugurate a system of national appointments to bind them together in their prayers as in arms. This body, upon the 12th of June, issued a proclamation for a fast day in all the United Colonies July 20, 1775. Of a considerable number of national fast days, this is historically the first, and we can now see how naturally it came about. All the colonies north and south observed it, and thus the custom was furthered by their unanimous approval of the occasion. The Proclamation is as follows:

"As the great Governour of the world, by his supreme and universal providence, not only conducts the course of nature with unerring wisdom and rectitude, but frequently influences the minds of men to serve the wise and gracious purposes of his providential government; and it being, at all times, our indispensable duty devoutly to acknowledge his superintending providence, especially in times of impending danger and publick calamity, to reverence and adore his immutable Justice as well as to implore his merciful interposition for our deliverance:

"This Congress, therefore, considering the present critical, alarming, and calamitous state of these Colonies, do earnestly recommend that, Thursday, the twentieth day of July next be observed by the inhabitants of all the English Colonies on this Continent, as a day of publick humiliation, fasting and prayer; that we may, with united hearts and voices, unfeignedly confess and deplore our many sins, and offer up our joint supplications to the alwise, omnipotent, and merciful Disposer of all events; humbly beseeching him to forgive our iniquities, to remove our present calamities, to avert those desolating judgments with which we are threatened, and to bless our rightful Sovereign, King George the Third, and inspire him with wisdom to discern and pursue the true interest of all his subjects, that a speedy end may be put to the civil discord between Great Britain and the American Colonies, without further effusion of blood; and that the British Nation may be influenced to regard the things that belong to her peace, before they are hid from her eyes; that these Colonies may be ever under the care and protection of a kind Providence, and be prospered in all their interests; that the divine blessing may descend and rest upon all our civil rulers, and upon the Representatives of the people in the several Assemblies and Conventions, that they may be directed to wise and effectual measures for preserving the union, and securing the just rights and privileges of the Colonies; that virtue and true religion may revive and flourish throughout our land; and that America may soon behold a gracious interposition of Heaven, for the redress of her many grievances, the restoration of her
invaded rights, a reconciliation with the Parent state on terms constitutional and honourable to both; and that her civil and religious privileges may be secured to the latest posterity.

"And it is recommended to Christians of all denominations, to assemble for publick worship, and to abstain from servile labour and recreation on said day."

This proclamation was signed, "By order of Congress, John Hancock, President;"¹

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**PERIODICALS**


ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Fasting is the process by which a great joy is produced in men's lives. It is the broad principle by which one reconciles himself with God, his fellowmen and his own inconsistencies. Fasting is closely related to the other basic Gospel principles of prayer, faith, repentance, salvation and exaltation.

The true Christian fast is composed of positive and negative aspects—neither one can be construed as a full fast without the functioning of the other aspect. The negative side involves abstinence from food, work, pleasure, marital intercourse and every other bodily gratification. The positive functions are summarized by Isaiah (58:6).

Fasting is a principle of preparation. It has been practiced in some form, often grossly perverted, by all peoples at all times. Gandhi says that fasting is an institution as old as Adam. In the hereafter, when the earth is perfected, fasting will be taken away as a commandment along with the rest of the preparatory gospel. Its purposes will have been fulfilled, and its functions replaced by the law of consecration and virtues which arise spontaneously from the perfected Christian.

As fasting was introduced to the children of Israel, it was primarily a spiritual exercise and was called a day of atonement. Through the years, the real meaning and spirit of this day became lost to the Israelites and it was reduced to temporal legalism. For this Christ condemned them, and by example, teaching and commandment, reestablished the greatness of the teaching.

All fasts recorded in the scriptures were not given to man as examples to follow. Those which fall in this category are the four forty-
day periods which involved Moses (2), Elijah and Christ. These fasts are almost universally misunderstood. New significance is attached to these fasts as they are grouped in analysis with other happenings of forty periods of time, such as the flood, the children of Israel in the desert, Christ's space of time in the tomb, the Savior's visit to the earth after His resurrection, the erection of the Salt Lake Temple, etc. Since Christ, some men who have misunderstood these forty-day fasts have established something not too similar as their great annual fast. By so doing, they have instituted an apostasy from the true Christian fast which has caused most of the Christian world to fail in its knowledge and practice of the principle.

A survey questionnaire was sent to $2^54$ churches in the United States. An analysis of the answers of those giving a positive reply indicates that a great apostasy has taken place regarding the true Christian fast. Only a few small, independent churches seem to even approach Christ's ordained fast.

It is claimed that great health benefits arise from wise periodic fasting. A physiological section analyzes the effects of fasting.

A historical section presents the most important teachings and happenings of Gandhi, early reformers and practioneers, native races of America, U.S. presidents and state governments, early Christian history, and all large world religions.

CONCLUSION

By comparison with the teachings of Christ it appears that a knowledge and practice of fasting is essential to the gaining of the faith which is necessary to overcome Satan and then to achieve exaltation in
the Kingdom of God. Since Christ there has been a distinct apostasy from
the correct teaching and practice of the true Christian fast, to such a
great extent, in fact, that it is practically non-existent in Christian
doctrine and practice today. Corrupted forms thereof are practiced. It
is earnestly hoped that this thesis might in some way assist in a restora-
tion of the truth concerning fasting for the benefit and exaltation of
mankind.