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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

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distinction between shouting *at the word of Joshua* and *at a special signal of the trumpets* seems quite trivial, if we reflect that his word could hardly be conveyed to the whole host except by some such signal. It is gravely asserted that in ver. 20 "the people shout both before and after the trumpets," as though the order of verbs were necessarily that of actions! The exuberance of the repetitions is what seems to give force to the argument, but we find many examples of this characteristic of Hebrew style. Take, *e.g.*, a non-narrative chapter like Ezek. xviii., or the repetitions in Exod. xxv.-xxxi., xxxv.-xl.

We must just allude here to the case of Chronicles and Samuel-Kings, which form a veritable doublet on the largest scale, though very summarily treated by Professor Smith. A point he insists on is that, "when the parallel narratives . . . are compared, it is found that the chronicler has increased the numbers of the troops engaged in the campaigns described, of the men slain, and of the slaves, the cattle and the objects of value taken captive or brought as tribute to the victors." It would hardly be imagined from this how comparatively few the cases are where direct comparison is possible, *still less that the excess in numbers is by no means all on one side*. But want of space precludes a sufficiently detailed analysis to be useful. Some general considerations with respect to the character of the divergencies will be given in the sequel.



## Fasting.<sup>1</sup>

BY THE REV. T. S. TREANOR, M.A.

"WHY do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not?" (Matt. ix. 14). This question was put to our Lord either at or in close connexion with the feast in "the house," probably that of Matthew the Publican.

<sup>1</sup> Suggested by an article on this subject by the Rev. C. Rumfitt, LL.D., CHURCHMAN, March, 1906.

The fasts of John's disciples were not the result of grief for the imprisonment of their Master, but were part and parcel of his ascetic conformity with the many fasts of the stricter traditional party among the Jews. "For John came neither eating nor drinking." Nor were the frequent fasts of the Pharisees of Divine appointment, for the only fast prescribed by the Law was the Day of Atonement; and the word used in the LXX is not "fast," but the more significant one, "to afflict the soul" (*ταπεινωὺν τὴν ψυχὴν*), which at once directs the mind to the inward and spiritual cause of the outward action of fasting. Our Lord's reply to the question was a justification of His disciples' non-fasting practice: "Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn?" and therefore, of course, equivalent to a direct statement that they did not fast. This was a distinct break with the existing religious usage of a merely traditional description. "They do not fast" (*οὐ νηστεύουσιν*) was true of the disciples and of their Master, and "Wisdom is justified of her children." "But," our Lord continues, "the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast"—a passage I reserve for consideration farther on; and He then immediately adds the parables of the new piece patched on the old garment and the danger of putting new wine into old bottles—parables which render it impossible to believe that there was any imposition of traditional Jewish rites, ordinances, and "elements of the world" in the following verse 15. For, as well expressed by Alford: "These words" (ver. 15) "are not a declaration of a duty or of an ordinance as binding on the Church in the days of the Lord's absence. The whole spirit of what follows is against such a supposition."

The parables of our Lord which follow are those already mentioned, "the new patch on the old garment," and "the new wine in old bottles"; and they undoubtedly teach that the old traditional system of prescribed fasts must not be patched with the Christian freedom of His own Evangel, and that the glorious liberty of the sons of God "must not be engrafted on the worn-out system of ceremonies," nor the new wine of

Christian principle that "there is nothing from without a man that entering into him can defile him," be poured into Judaic ceremonial observances of mere traditional authority.

Accordingly, in the Christian Church no such burden was laid on the Gentiles who were turned to God, as recorded in Acts xv. ; while the Jewish members of the early Church were, as we read, not compelled to abandon the vows—purifications and fastings—of the Jewish observance.

After Apostolic times the appointment of fasts was of human and ecclesiastical origin. The Lenten fast, whether of forty hours—the time that our Saviour lay in the grave—or of forty days, was probably the earliest, and varied greatly in point of time in many Churches.

But fasts and the habit of fasting increased immensely with the rise of monasticism. In Egypt, Syria, and elsewhere, anchorites, eremites, pillar saints, vied with each other in bodily mortifications, fastings, and austerities, which were supposed to be pleasing to God, and even meritorious in His sight, in direct proportion to their severity.

These were the days of Simon Stylites and Antony of Egypt and their innumerable followers, whose opinions on the meritorious efficacy of fastings and other austerities, and the deepening of spiritual life by these and similar "bodily exercises," may be summed up in the lines attributed to Andreas of Crete, about A.D. 635: "Smite them by the virtue of the Lenten fast"—a grievous error and popular delusion. For the best and holiest of our works, though they have "a dutiful necessity, have no meritorious dignity"; and the further question is whether fasting does belong to the category of such our best and holiest actions, and whether it does deepen the spiritual life at all in the light of the Saviour's words: "No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment."

Alas! the whole history of the Christian Church is a proof that man will put the new cloth to the old garment and patch Christian truths on to Judaic rites, making, indeed, the rent worse. The robe must be all new, for old things have in fulfil-

ment passed away ; and, to change the image, the robe we need is not the old one of burdens and prescriptions and austerities—hardly in themselves to be termed good works at all—but that robe the warp and weft of which are the blood and righteousness of Jesus—the wedding garment washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

The first of the passages of the New Testament which refer to fasting is Matt. vi. 16-18, "Moreover, when ye fast" (κ.τ.λ.), where Christ speaks of it in the same connexion as almsgiving and prayer. Our Lord was speaking of practices, some of the highest moral obligation, and others not at all on the same level ; and it is inconceivable that, because He speaks of these practices in the same passage, He thereby intended to place them all on the same platform as almsgiving and prayer, duties of natural and eternal obligation. What He did do was to warn against the ostentation of fasting, and to suggest the "when" of fasting. That fasting is legitimate is not disputed ; but when ? That kings and people fasted in Old Testament history is certain ; but "when" ? That the Apostles fasted is admitted, but they did not impose this on the Gentiles. That "fasting" took place among these same Apostles in the appointment of Saul and Barnabas as missionaries to the Gentiles is undoubted ; but it is not to be believed that it was practised on any of these occasions as a "godly exercise," or as "a means of deepening the religious life," but that it was in all these cases the result of either deep sorrow, or intense concentration in prayer, or the agony of heartfelt repentance towards God.

Only, therefore, as the result of these profound spiritual emotions is fasting legitimized in the Christian religion. It is not and cannot be the cause of these the holiest conditions of the human soul, and it ought not to be spoken of as "a great means of grace." As the natural and unforced outcome of sorrow and repentance, our Lord spoke of it when He said, "When ye fast." To regard it as "a great religious exercise," as "a means of grace," and tending to create repentance and a

“deepening of the spiritual life,” is simply to turn the truth upside-down, and to place the consequence first and the cause last. Our Lord never prescribed fasting. The passage in Matt. ix. 15, “The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast,” is simply prophetic, and is not a declaration of a duty or ordinance, but a statement in the future tense, “they will fast,” and have real occasion of sorrow enough (*νηστεύουσιν*); and the words are followed by the weighty and far-reaching parable against patching the old system of Jewish prescription and ceremonies with the freedom of the Gospel of His glory.

As to the Days of Fasting or Abstinence in the Book of Common Prayer, it must be remembered that there is reason to suppose that this table had reference to a political rather than a religious purpose. As the Homily on Fasting, part ii., says: “Such abstinences as are appointed by . . . laws made by princes are upon policy not respecting any religion at all in the same.” And Act 5 Elizabeth, which imposes similar abstinence on the old Romish days, expressly enacts that whosoever shall publicly declare that “any eating of fish or forbearing of flesh mentioned therein is of any necessity for the saving of the soul of man, or that it is the service of God, any otherwise than as other politick laws are and be, that then such persons shall be punished as the spreaders of such news are and ought to be.”

This abstinence or fasting was enjoined in the fishing interest under severe penalties; and in the opinion of Archbishop Whately, in his “Cautions for the Times” (pp. 188, 189), a list of such days was appended to the calendar, and the minister was required to give public notice of them every Sunday. “The coincidence of these fasting days with days set apart for purely religious purposes,” the same authority says, “fostered a confusion between the religious and political observance of them.” But on any hypothesis as to the reason of inserting these “Tables of Days of Fasting or Abstinence,” it is clear that on any day or in any season, unless fasting be the natural result and outcome of bitter sorrow for sin and repentance, or deep

concentration of thought on holy things, it is of the same value as scourging oneself or similar physical mortifications. Given this preliminary condition of soul, the agony of remorse, the bitterness of repentance for irrevocable sins, fasting is a necessity, and the natural expression of the inner feelings. This condition of the spirit it is which alone makes fasting legitimate on any day or in any of the seasons of the Church.

Nor is fasting to be regarded as one of "the three great means of grace, without which a Christian cannot be made perfect." Neither ought it to be spoken of as "the greatest religious exercise." Nor has it anything to do with the words in the Communion Service: "It is much to be wished that the godly discipline of the primitive Church might be restored again." That "godly discipline" consisted in open penance for notorious sin, but it has no reference whatever to fasting. There is, indeed, a passage in the last prayer but one of the Communion Service: "Be favourable to Thy people who turn to Thee in weeping, fasting, and praying," where fasting is manifestly spoken of, "not as a positive duty in itself, but as, like weeping, a natural expression of deep sorrow; and the Church plainly no more enjoins fasting here than it enjoins weeping, nor prescribes a measure of abstinence than it prescribes a measure of tears."

It cannot, therefore, be allowed for a moment that fasting is "one of the means" of deepening the life of the Church. Nor does it tend to self-control or to the subjection of the flesh to the Spirit. Bishop Taylor says: "In actions which are less material, such as pride and envy, and blasphemy and impenitence, and all the kinds and degrees of malice, external mortifications do so little co-operate to their cure, that oftentimes they are their greatest incentives and inflamers. . . . And besides that great mortifiers have been soonest assaulted by the spirit of pride, we find that great fasters are naturally angry and choleric. St. Hierome found it in himself, and Ruffinus felt some of the effects of it" ("Life of Christ," Part I., S. viii., § 17).

The advocates of fasting "as the greatest religious exercise"

always put forward as its alternative what may be called the "full-meal" argument, and ring the changes on the "full-meal" practice of congregations. Nothing can be more unfair or more utterly opposed to the facts of the case. Moderate participation in simple food, "sanctified by the word of God and prayer," ought not to be described as the "full meal," after which "congregations in some services are so sleepy because they have come directly from the dinner-table." As a matter of fact, the people who do come to Church are of all people those least open to the "full-meal" accusation.

The passages of Scripture which bear on the question besides those already considered are John xvi. 20: "Verily, verily, I say unto you that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice"; taken in connexion with Matt. ix. 15: "When the bridegroom shall be taken from them, then shall they fast." In both these passages "fasting" is no more prescribed than "weeping"; they are simply prophetic of what would happen "in those days."

In Matt. xvii. 21 and Mark ix. 29 we read: "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." The whole verse in Matthew and the word "fasting" in Mark are omitted by both  $\aleph$  and B, so that the best and weightiest manuscripts are against the ascetic gloss.

#### NOTE ON MARK IX. 29.

It has been asserted recently by a high authority (Dr. Salmon) that the omission of the words *καὶ νηστεία* leads to an unnatural exegesis for the text, which would then read as in R.V.: "This kind can come out by nothing save by prayer," and would, it is said, seem to imply either that prayer was only necessary for the cure of this particular kind (*γένος*) of possession, or that the disciples, in their attempt to exorcise, had not given themselves to prayer at all.

To this it may rightly be answered that the Saviour's words emphasize, in this case, the special necessity of a believing appeal, in all-conquering faith, to the almighty power of God, without conveying the suggestion that prayer was unnecessary in other cases. And it is also apparent that our Lord discerned the absence of faith—faith such as to remove mountains, both in the father and in the disciples themselves, as neither he nor they were hopeful of a cure.

Hence the reply recorded in St. Matthew to the disciple's question:

“Why could not we cast it out?” was “Because of your little faith, for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence . . . and it shall remove” (R.V.).

It was the “prayer of faith” that was lacking, and therefore the reply of our Lord: “This kind can come out by nothing save by prayer,” preceded by His words as to their “little faith,” shows exactly what was wanting in their action on this occasion. Prayer may or may not have been wholly absent, but most certainly there was not in them the “effectual fervent prayer” of “unwavering” faith which “availeth much,” and which our Lord prescribes. The exegesis, therefore, of the verse without *καὶ νηστεία* is satisfactory.

It may be mentioned that although the original scribe of the Sinaitic MS. omits the words *καὶ νηστεία*, the third (N<sup>3</sup>), who lived some centuries afterwards, inserts them, pointing to the growth of asceticism in the Church. In 1 Cor. vii. 5 we find the same word *νηστεία* foisted into the text, which is thus in the A.V. made to read, “that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer,” while the true reading, “that ye may give yourselves unto prayer,” is supported by such overwhelming MSS. authority that the R.V. does not even give “fasting” a place in the margin.

Dean Alford, in his note on this text (1 Cor. vii. 5) says, “The addition of these words (‘and fasting’) shows how such passages as this have been tampered with by the ascetics. See also Mark ix. 29.”

In the bitterness of repentance, in the heights of faith and devotion and communion with God, food is intolerable, and fasting, or, rather, non-eating, a natural outcome and consequence; but separated from these indispensable antecedents, or used itself as an antecedent to bring about these or other spiritual results, it has no value, and is neither suggested nor prescribed in the sacred Scriptures.

With reference to Matt. iv. 2, “And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights He was afterward an hungered”; and Luke iv. 2, “And in those days He did eat nothing, and when they were ended He afterward hungered,” it should be said that the Lord felt no need of food, no hunger, during these forty days. It was only “when they were ended” that He was “an hungered.” It was no voluntary self-imposed fast—He felt no want of food in this miraculous suspension of physical needs; and that neither He nor His disciples ever fasted as a means of grace, the text at the head of this article makes plain. “Thy disciples fast not” is decisive. But the fact is also decisive for our own times. For if fasting was “the greatest religious exercise,” if fasting “deepens the spiritual life,” “tends to self-control,” is “an aid to worship,” and “stirs up the deepest depths of the heart,” how was it that the Pharisees as

well as John's disciples could accuse the Master and His followers of depriving themselves of this "great means of grace, without which a Christian cannot be perfect"?

And, above all, how was it that the Lord Jesus Himself defended and justified His disciples for not fasting? It is inconceivable that, if it were "a great means of grace" and "a deepener of the spiritual life" He would not have absolutely prescribed it to His disciples and practised it as their exemplar. This He never did.

The practice of the Apostles has already been alluded to; but it is surprising to see St. Paul's expression, "I keep under my body" (1 Cor. ix. 27), pressed into the service of fasting, as, indeed, it has been used to justify the practices of the Middle Age flagellants, with the latter of which St. Paul's metaphor (*ὑπωπιάζω*) has much more to do than with fasting. Paul's "bodily exercises" were not self-imposed fastings; like his thorn in the flesh, they were given him by God. His stripes, prisons, stonings, shipwrecks, his weariness, watchings, hungers, fastings, often were imposed on him in the course of his wondrous ministry by his Master. His cross was not self-selected, and his discipline was laid on him, not chosen by him, but accepted by him from the loving hand of Him, the splendour of whose face he first saw on the road to Damascus. His bodily discipline was his daily suffering; the great things he suffered "for His name's sake" were his glory and blessing, as all discipline sent by God is still to all His suffering people. This *ὑπωπιάζω* (*contundo, sugillare*) was no act of "voluntary humility."

Self-chosen mortifications, scourgings, and fastings do not "cultivate the habit of self-control." Such acts, "not in any honour," really are "to the satisfying of the flesh." They, therefore, do not deepen the spiritual life at all. They have "a show of wisdom" in "will-worship"—*i.e.*, in bodily exercises chosen by one's own will and "self-imposed."

This *ἑλεσθησκεία* is so much easier than the true mortification of one's "evil and corrupt affections" that it puffs up and

ministers to spiritual pride. Witness, "I fast twice in the week," while the mortifications prescribed by God humble one to the dust.

Immediately following the warning as to being led astray by anyone "voluntary in his humility" comes the awful list of Divinely prescribed mortifications, to be observed, not merely at stated seasons and then abandoned, but ever to be practised until "Christ, who is our life, shall appear."

"Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. . . . But now ye also put off all these—anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication—out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds" (Col. iii.).

These are the mortifications that the Lord has commanded. The fast that He hath chosen, is it not to loose the bands of wickedness and "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts," thus truly to deepen the spiritual life, "looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ"?



## The Transfiguration.

BY THE REV. F. W. M. WOODWARD, B.D.

THE Transfiguration is little dwelt upon in the New Testament or in ecclesiastical commemoration. There is truth in a remark made by J. H. Newman that "to many persons this portion of the sacred history may have appeared without object or meaning." Nevertheless, as he proceeds to maintain, it has a real and permanent significance. In discussing its significance it will be convenient—

- (1) To study the context ;
- (2) To treat the narrative as marking an epoch in the lives of the chosen witnesses and of Christ Himself ;