



✠ **A fruitfull**
treatise of fasting, wherin is
declared what ye Christen fast
is, how we ought to fast, & what
the true vse of fasting is. New
lye made by *Thomas Becon.*

Mathew. vi.

When ye fast, be not sad, as the
hipocrites are.

Luke. xxi.

Take hede to your selues, lest at
anye tyme your heartes be overcome
with surtefynge and dronkenness.

Roma. xiii.

Make not prouision for the flesh
to fultyll the lustes, of it.

ii. Cor. vi.

Let vs giue no occasion of euill, that
our office be not euill spoken of, but
in al thinges let vs behaue our selues
as the ministers of God in muche pa-
ciance in watchynges and fastynges.

Ephe. v.

Be not dronke wyth wyne, wherin
is excesse, but be fylled with the spirit.

ARISE FOR

IT IS DAY.

TO THE
 MOST REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,
 THOMAS¹, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,
 PRIMATE OF ALL ENGLAND, AND METROPOLITAN, THOMAS BECON,
 HIS HUMBLE AND FAITHFUL SERVANT, WISHETH THE
 FAVOUR OF GOD, LONG LIFE, CONTINUAL
 HEALTH, AND PROSPEROUS FELICITY.

OUR Lord and alone Saviour Jesu Christ declareth in a parable of the gospel, that after a certain householder had sowed good seed in his field, while his servants slept, Matt. xiii. his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. This householder is Christ the Lord. The good seed is the children of God and God's word. The servants that slept are negligent prelates and sleepy shepherds, which watch not over the Lord's flock. The enemy is the devil. The tares are the children of the wicked, and errors and heresies, which Satan soweth in the hearts of the unbelieving.

Of this parable, as we learn the goodness of Christ toward us in begetting us anew, "not of mortal seed, but of immortal by the word of God, which liveth and lasteth for 1 Pet. i. ever," so likewise learn we the maliciousness of Satan, which, like a subtle serpent and old enemy of mankind, never sleepeth, but continually "walketh up and down 1 Pet. v. like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," and waresly watcheth his time to destroy, whensoever any occasion is given, be it never so little. Not without a great cause therefore did our Saviour Christ exhort us to watch and pray, that we fall not into temptation.

And albeit in this our frail and sinful life many occasions of doing mischief be offered Matt. xxvi. to the enemy on our behalf, such is our negligence and uncircumspect behaviour; yet the greatest occasion, wherein Satan most glorieth and soonest hopeth for the victory, is when the shepherds of Christ's flock give no attendance to their charge, but lie sleeping and snorting, wallowing and weltering in their pleasures, and suffer the wolf to Isai. lvi. scatter, yea, to catch, to kill, and to destroy the sheep. For although the devil letteth John x. go no proffer which may move him to do evil, but layeth hand on it straightways; yet, as the histories both of the holy scriptures and of credible writers do testify, he never sheweth himself so right a devil, nor so lively setteth forth himself in his true colours, as when the guides of the Lord's flock be either absent from their sheep, or else are negligent in doing their duty,—I mean, in preaching God's word, and in writing godly books, if need require, for the confutation of errors and heresies, and for the establishment of God's holy religion.

How soon had the people of Israel forgotten God and his goodness toward them, after Moses was gone from them into the mount Sinai to talk with God, and to receive Exod. xxxii. the law! Fell they not straightways from the one and alone true and living God unto abominable idolatry, and worshipped a golden calf? After the days of Moses and of other godly prophets and preachers, when wicked kings reigned, and the preaching of God's word ceased, did not the people of Israel fall to the worshipping of strange gods, and made of the brasen serpent, which was but a sacrament and figure of Christ, a god, John iii. and brent sacrifice unto it? Certain years before the coming of Christ into this world, 2 Kings xviii. into how many sects and sundry religions were the Jews divided among themselves, which notwithstanding counted themselves only the people of God, and hated all other nations as abominable idolaters! Yea, in the time of the apostles, were there not

[¹ Archbishop Cranmer.]

that denied Christ to be either true God or true man? How soon were the Corinthians and Galatians seduced by false apostles, after that the most worthy apostle St Paul was departed from them! How many kind of heretics rose there up in the church of Christ after the apostles' time! What great and how many contentions, both in sermons, disputations, and writings, had the holy bishops and godly fathers of the primitive church with the heretics of their time, for the maintenance of God's truth, and for plucking up the enemy's tares! Since the time that those virtuous bishops and learned fathers of Christ's church died, into how many sects have the people that profess God be divided! The number of sects and counterfeit religions, which yet live under the bishop of Rome, are almost innumerable. Neither ceaseth Satan, even in this most clear light of the gospel, to play the right devil, and to cast mists before the eyes of the unfaithful. Into how many sects is Christendom yet divided! Are not some called papists, some protestants, some anabaptists, some sacramentaries? Whence come all these abominations but only from Satan, the author of all evil? Moreover, in what field, where good seed hath been sowed, hath not the enemy sowed his tares also? how pestilently hath he corrupted the pure wheat of God's word with mingling his chaff, dross, darnel, cockle, and tares, I mean the false glosses and unsavoury expositions of the papists, anabaptists, and such other sectaries! How wickedly hath he perverted the right use of the sacraments, specially the sacrament of Christ's body and blood! fasting, prayer, and alms-deed, how hath he made to be abused! There is no point of christian religion, which Satan hath not attempted to overthrow by his ministers.

And albeit, as I said before, the enemy laboureth at all times to sow his tares in the Lord's field; yet, when the shepherds of Christ's flock be negligent in doing their duty, fall asleep, and look not to the Lord's field, then doth he most of all play his part, and bestir him like a right devil, as Salomon saith: "When the preaching of God's word faileth, the people perish."

It therefore becometh all men that tender the glory of God, but specially the Lord's ministers, to look diligently unto their Lord's field, and earnestly to take heed that the enemy sow not his tares among the Lord's wheat. If any be sowed, it is their duty to labour even to the uttermost of their power, not with violence and corporal armours, (for the use of the secular sword is not committed to the preachers of God's word, but to the temporal rulers only, to punish malefactors;) but with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," with prayers, supplications and tears, to weed them out. "The weapons of our warfare," saith St Paul, "are not carnal things, but things mighty in God to cast down strong-holds, wherewith we overthrow counsels, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity all imagination to the obedience of Christ."

And in this behalf, (I mean, in plucking up the enemy's tares, and in purging the Lord's field that nothing may grow therein but pure wheat,) your both godly and unrestful pains, most reverend father, are well known in this church of England, and thankfully accepted of all faithful christian hearts; insomuch that very many do daily render unto God most humble and hearty thanks for the singular and great benefits, which they have received of him through your virtuous travail, in attaining unto the true knowledge of justification, of the sacrament of Christ's body and blood, and such other holy mysteries of our profession. And albeit the devil roar, the world rage, and the hypocrites swell at these your most christian labours, which you willingly take for the glory of God and the edifying of his congregation; yet as ye have godly begun, so without ceasing continue unto the end. By this means shall it come to pass, that "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive an incorruptible crown of glory."

And forasmuch as so many as the Lord hath appointed watchmen over his flock ought, every one according to their talent, to follow your godly example in weeding out errors, and planting true and christian opinions in the hearts of the people, seeing that Satan hath not a little corrupted the true use of fasting, which being rightly used doth highly please God, and abused displeaseth him, I thought it good against this time of Lent, which of long continuance hath been appointed to abstinence, to

write somewhat of fasting, that might both open a way to the faithful how they may fast to please God, and also disclose the false manner of fasting brought in by the devil and his ministers.

And in this my treatise I have, first, declared what the christian fast is; secondly, how we ought to fast; and, thirdly, what the true use of fasting is. I took this labour upon me the more gladly, partly because no man hitherto hath written of that matter in our English tongue; partly to satisfy the hearty requests of divers faithful brethren, which ceased not to require me in the Lord's name to write somewhat that might instruct them in the true use of fasting. The matter, I grant, requireth a workman of riper judgment, and more exercised in the Lord's harvest than I am, which might, according to the worthiness of the matter, have set it forth pleasantly and learnedly; but, seeing no man hath hitherto taken it in hand, I thought it my part not to deny the godly requests of the brethren, but gladly to bestow upon them whatsoever the Lord hath given me in this behalf.

The contents
of this book.

This treatise, whatsoever it is, I your humble and faithful servant, not having otherwise wherewith to testify the thankfulness of my heart toward your most honourable lordship, for the manifold benefits which ye have bounteously bestowed upon me, do dedicate to your name, most humbly beseeching you, according to your accustomed gentleness, to take in good part this my rude and gross work, which to polish and to make neat, if ability had served, shortness of time would not suffer.

God, whose honour you most desirously seek,
mought vouchsafe to preserve your grace in
continual health and prosperous felicity
unto the glory of his most blessed
name, and the profit of his
holy congregation!

Amen.

TREATISE OF FASTING.

WHAT THE TRUE AND CHRISTIAN FAST IS.

The First Chapter.

The definition of the true fast.

THE true and christian fast is freely and willingly to abstain not only from all kind of meats and drinks, but also from all those things wherein the flesh hath pleasure and delectation; which abstinence or forbearing of meats, drinks, and other pleasures, wherein the outward man delighteth, riseth either of an heart contrite and sorrowful for the sins committed against God, or else of a mind fervently given to godliness.

The fast of the fathers of the old law.

That this is a true definition of the christian fast, it may be easily proved out of the holy scriptures. First, to whom is it unknown, that when the holy men in times past fasted, their manner was, so long as the fast continued, to abstain from all kind of meats and drinks, and from all pleasures wherein the flesh delighteth, and wholly to give themselves (all worldly affairs set apart) to godly exercises; as to the hearty and unfeigned lamenting of their sins, wherewith too much unkindly they had offended their Lord God, and provoked his fierce wrath and vengeance to fall on them; to fervent prayer and diligent calling on the name of God for turning away his heavy displeasure from them, and for remission of their sins through faith in the holy sacrifice to come of that blessed Seed of the woman, which by his own and alone oblation they believed should reconcile mankind to God the Father, pacify his wrath, and make him a merciful Lord; to the hearing and reading of God's word; to the comforting of one another; to the study of amendment of life; to the provision-making for the poor; to the redress of abuses in the commonweal; to the planting of true godliness, and abolishing of all wicked and strange religion? Of this manner of fasting speaketh the prophet, when he saith, "Hallow ye a fast;" meaning that they which fast should, in the time of their fasting, occupy themselves in spiritual, and not in worldly exercises; or else is it no fast before God.

Joel i. ii.

The Second Chapter.

THIS abstinence, or forbearing of meats, did always continue at the least one whole day without receiving of any corporal sustenance, many times two or three days, as the histories of the holy scripture teach us.

Judg. xx.

The Israelites, when they saw so great a multitude of their people slain of the Benjamites in the battle, went up and came unto Bethel, where the ark of the appointment of God was in those days, wept, sat there praying before the Lord, and fasted the same day unto even, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord. Again, when the Israelites gathered together at Mizpha, lamenting their sins and praying unto the Lord for help against the Philistines, they fasted the whole day. So likewise did David and they that were with him, when they heard that Saul and his sons were slain in battle. Nehemiah fasted two days together or more: for he said, as it is written of him: "I sat me down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven." We read that Queen Esther and her maidens, with all the Jews that were found at Susan, fasted three days and three nights together, and did neither eat nor drink. Moses, Elias, and Christ, fasted forty days and as many nights, without receiving of any corporal food: but such fasts are not to be practised, forasmuch as they are marvellous and past the bonds of men's

1 Sam. vii.

2 Sam. i.

Neh. i.

Esth. iv.

nature, and are done only by the unsearchable power and mighty working of God in few of his creatures.

But the common manner of fasting among the true godly was, when they did fast, to abstain from all meat the whole day till night, that they might the more freely give their mind to spiritual exercises, and at night to take some refection moderately, yea, and that with thanksgiving. And on this manner, as some fasted but one or two days together, so some fasted many, every one as they were moved by the Spirit of God, and as occasion required. We read that the prophet Daniel fasted thus three weeks together. His words are these: "I Daniel mourned for the space Dan. x. of three weeks, so that I had no lust to eat bread: as for flesh and wine, there came none within my mouth. No, I did not once anoint myself, till the whole three weeks were out." The scripture testifieth that the virtuous woman Judith "fasted all the Judith viii. days of her life, except the sabbaths and new moons, and the solemn days that the people of Israel kept." Likewise read we of Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, "which Luke ii. departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." On this manner did the apostles after Christ's ascension, and many other godly men in the primitive church, fast. So that their custom was on that day that they did fast to eat nothing till night, but to occupy themselves about such godly exercises, as heretofore are mentioned.

The Third Chapter.

AND as the godly men, in the time of their fasting, did abstain from meat and drink, so did they from all other things that might delight the flesh, and behaved themselves outwardly according to the sorrow and trouble of their heart inwardly. Out of a mourning and sorrowful heart did spring outward, yea, and those unfeigned tokens of sorrow and mourning.

For we heard before that, when Daniel fasted three weeks, and prayed unto the Lord his God, although he did eat bread every night for the comfort of his weak body, yet he neither eat flesh nor drunk wine, nor yet once anointed himself. And Dan. x. in another place he saith: "I turned me unto God the Lord for to pray, and to Dan. ix. make mine intercession with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes." "The people of Ninive," Jonah iii. when they heard the preaching of Jonas, which threatened them and their city destruction after forty days, repented, "believed God, and proclaimed fasting, and arrayed themselves in sackcloth, as well the great as the small of them. And when the tidings came unto the king of Ninive, he also arose out of his seat, and did his apparel off, and put on sackcloth, and sat him down in ashes." Again, the children of Israel (as we read in Esdras), when they fasted, did put on sackcloth, and Neh. ix. sprinkled earth upon their heads, knowledged their sins, prayed unto God, and read in the book of the law of the Lord their God. Queen Esther also, when she fasted, Esth. iv. laid away her glorious apparel, and put on the garments that served for sighing and mourning. In the stead of precious ointment, she scattered ashes and dung upon her head; and as for her body, she humbled it with fasting, and brought it very low. Likewise king Achab, when he was reproved of the prophet Helias for killing Naboth, 1 Kings xxi. fell to fasting; and as he fasted, so did he "put sackcloth about his flesh, lay in sackcloth, went barefoot, and hanging down his head."

The Fourth Chapter.

WHATSOEVER might make to the humbling and taming of the flesh, that did the godly men use for the most part in the time of their fasting. Neither did those corporal exercises displease God, seeing they came from a contrite heart and troubled spirit, wholly depending with strong faith on the great mercies of God. For David saith: "A troubled spirit is a sacrifice to God; neither doth he despise a contrite Psal. li. and humbled heart."

But these outward signs of humiliation God utterly abhorreth when they come not from a penitent and faithful heart, and casteth them away as hypocritical and

Isai. lviii.

devilish, as we read in the prophet Esay: "Wherefore fast we," say the hypocrites, "and thou, O God, seest it not? We put our lives to straitness, and thou regardest it not. Behold," saith God, "when ye fast, your lust remaineth still; for ye do no less violence to your debtors. Lo, ye fast to strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness. Now ye shall not fast thus, that your voice might be heard above. Think ye this fast pleaseth me, that a man should chasten himself for a day, and to writhe his head about like an hoop, and to lie upon the earth in an hairy cloth? Should that be called fasting, or day that pleaseth the Lord? Doth not this fasting rather please me; that thou loose him out of bondage that is in thy danger? that thou break the oath of wicked bargains? that thou let the oppressed go free, and take from them all manner of burdens? to deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the poor wandering home into thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and hide not thy face from thy neighbour, and that thou despise not thine own flesh?" (If thou thus fastest), "then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health flourish right shortly; thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall embrace thee. Then, if thou callest, the Lord shall answer thee; if thou criest, he shall say, Here I am. Yea, if thou layest away from thee thy burdens, and holdest thy fingers, and ceasest from blasphemous talking; if thou hast compassion upon the hungry, and refreshest the troubled soul; then shall thy light spring out in the darkness, and thy darkness shall be as the noon-day. The Lord shall ever be thy guide, and satisfy the desire of thine heart in the time of drought, and fill thy bones with marrow. Thou shalt be like a fresh watered garden, and like the fountain of water that never leaveth running." Again, God saith by the prophet Joel: "Turn you unto me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning: tear your hearts and not your clothes." Moreover, albeit St Paul counselleth that married folk should not "withdraw themselves one from another any long time, lest Satan tempt them to incontinency and uncleanness;" yet, that they might be the more apt to fast and to pray, he would have them some time to withdraw themselves one from another. Hereunto pertaineth the saying of the prophet Joel: "Blow out with the trumpet in Sion, proclaim a fasting, call the congregation, and gather the people together, warn the congregation, gather the elders, bring the children and sucklings together. Let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet."

Joel ii.

1 Cor. vii.

Joel ii.

The Fifth Chapter.

The true fast.

THUS have we learned out of the holy scriptures, that the true and christian fast is to abstain not only from all kind of meats and drinks (during the time of fasting), but also from all those things wherein the flesh hath pleasure and delectation, and to occupy ourselves in all godly and spiritual exercises unto the glory of God, the comfort of our neighbour, and the health of our own souls.

Constrained
fasts please
not God.

But it is to be noted, that this abstinence or fast must be freely and willingly done, or else can it by no means please God. For whatsoever cometh from an unwilling and constrained mind, God abhorreth, appear it never so godly and praise-worthy before the world. "God loveth a cheerful giver," saith St Paul. And the psalmograph saith: "An offering of a free heart will I give thee, and praise thy name, O Lord, because it is so comfortable." They therefore that fast for custom sake or at the commandment of man only, and not of a good-will and free spirit, do neither please God nor profit themselves. Therefore shall that chance unto them that God threateneth by the prophet, saying: "When they fast, I will not hear their prayers."

2 Cor. ix.

Psal. liv.

Jer. xiv.

The Sixth Chapter.

Fast com-
manded of
the high
powers.

HERE peradventure some man will say, Is it ungodly to fast at the commandment of man? What if the magistrates cause a fast to be proclaimed? Ought it not to be observed of their subjects? I answer, If the high powers at any time commandeth fasting, so that it be done unto a godly end, and riseth not of superstition, it ought to be observed of the subjects. For we have examples hereof in the holy scriptures,

which do both set forth the authority of magistrates in commanding fasting, and also the obedience of subjects in observing the same.

When the Israelites were in great fear and danger of the Philistines, Samuel, which ^{1 Sam vii.} at that time judged the people, called all the house of Israel together, proclaimed a fast, exhorted them unto prayer, willed them to put away the strange gods from among them, and with their whole heart to turn again unto the Lord their God, and he of his mercy would surely rid them out of the hands of the Philistines. The people gladly obeyed Samuel's commandment, put away their idols, confessed their sins, served the Lord only, and fasted the same day unto even. And God saved them from the hand of the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

King Jehosaphat, hearing that the Moabites and Ammonites came with an exceed- ^{2 Chron. xx.} ing great multitude against him to battle, was in great fear, sought for help at the Lord's hand, proclaimed fasting throughout all Juda, and called the people together to pray unto the Lord. The people willingly obeyed the king's commandment. All Juda came and stood before the Lord, with their young ones, their wives, and their children, to ask counsel of the Lord. They both fasted and prayed unto the Lord their God for help against their enemies: and the Lord gave them a wonderful and glorious victory.

Esdra, returning unto Jerusalem with the children of Israel, proclaimed a fast, and ^{Ezra viii.} exhorted them to call on the name of God, that he might give them a prosperous journey. The people obeyed, fasted and prayed unto the Lord their God, and they had good success in all their doings.

The king of the Ninivites, hearing of the most terrible and grievous plague that ^{Jonah iii.} was threatened unto them and their city by Jonas the prophet of God, humbled himself, and sent forth a proclamation unto all his people, commanding that neither man nor beast, ox or sheep, should taste any thing at all, and that they should neither eat nor drink water, but put on sackcloth, both man and beast. He commanded them also, in his proclamation, to repent, to believe God and his word, to turn from their wicked ways, and mightily to cry unto God for mercy. The people did according to the king's proclamation; so that both the king and his subjects together repenting, fasting, believing, turning from their wicked ways, and mightily calling on the Lord for mercy and forgiveness of their sins, were saved, both they and their city with all that they had.

Esther, hearing of the proclamation that king Ahasuerus, at the subtile suggestion ^{Esth. iv.} of wicked Haman, had sent forth for the destruction of the Jews, commanded Mardocheus to gather together all the Jews that were found at Susan, and to fast for her, so that they should neither eat nor drink by the space of three days and three nights, but spend all that time in fasting and praying. Her commandment was fulfilled. It came to pass that God preserved the Jews alive, and brought their enemies to a shameful end.

Thus have we learned out of the holy scriptures, that the rulers have authority given them of God to command their subjects to fast, whensoever any urgent cause is offered; as in the time of battle, hunger, drought, plague, pestilence, &c.; and that the people are bound by God's commandment to obey the magistrates and their ordinances in all such things, as they tender the glory of God, the conservation of the common-wealth, and the health of their own souls. This meaneth the prophet Joel, speaking unto the heads of the people on this manner: "Proclaim fasting, call the congregation, ^{Joel i.} gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land together into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord," &c. Again: "Blow out with the trumpet ^{Joel ii.} in Sion, proclaim fasting, call the congregation, and gather the people together."

The Seventh Chapter.

FURTHERMORE the true and christian fast riseth either of an heart contrite and sorrowful for the sins committed against God, or else of a mind fervently given to god- ^{The fast that cometh of a sorrowful heart.} liness. As touching that fast which cometh from a contrite and sorrowful heart for the

sins committed against God, it is a worthy and noble fast in the sight of God, and cannot but highly please him.

Psal. li.

For the psalmograph saith: "A troubled spirit is a sacrifice unto God; neither doth he despise a contrite and humbled heart." And God himself saith by the prophet: "Whom shall I regard and favour? Even him that is poor, and of a lowly and troubled spirit, and such one as standeth in awe of my words." Whosoever doth so fear God and stand in awe of his indignation and heavy displeasure, that he is loth to offend him, and therefore seeketh all means possible to please him; and if at any time through frailness of nature he chanceth to offend, he is straightways angry with himself, repenteth of his former misdeeds, and conceiveth such an inward sorrow in his heart, that he delighteth in no worldly thing, neither in meat, drink, apparel, riches, pastimes, pleasures, &c., but continually sorroweth for his disobedient unkindness and unkind disobedience against God our heavenly Father; so that the very trouble of his heart will not suffer him to eat or drink till, through continual calling on the name of the Lord, he feeleth in his mind some token of God's goodness, grace, and favour toward him, and is through faith in Christ's blood fully persuaded that all his sins are forgiven him, and he again received into favour; the fast of such one is an acceptable sacrifice unto God.

Isai. lxvi.

Mark well.

Of this inward sorrow of the heart did the fasts of many good men heretofore rise, as the holy scriptures do declare, and therefore did they highly please God; inasmuch that God granted them their requests, and was their merciful and most loving Lord. Examples hereof are the Israelites, that were gathered together at Mispha; the Ninivites; Esther and her company; Judith with the citizens of Bethulia; Achab, and divers other, whose fasts God allowed, because they proceeded from the hearts of such as humbled themselves in his sight, repented them of their sins, asked forgiveness, and promised amendment of life.

The Eighth Chapter.

The fast that cometh of a mind given to godliness.

Now as touching that fast which springeth of a mind given to godliness, it cannot be disallowed of God. For he that seeketh to please God, and to advance his glory by any godly means, and, that he may have the grace so to do, fasteth, prayeth, studieth, laboureth; his fasting, his praying, his studying, his labouring cannot but please God, and have good and fortunate success.

Dan. ix.

2 Esdr. v.

Matt. ix.

Matt. xxviii.

Acts i.

John xiv. xvi.

Acts ii. iii.

Luke ii.

Acts x.

On this manner fasted Daniel, that he might be the more apt to receive the knowledge of God's mysteries, which were afterward declared unto him of the angel. So likewise did Esdras. Of this godly manner of fasting spake Christ, when the disciples of John came unto him, and demanded why his disciples fasted not, as they and the Pharisees did. To whom Christ answered and said: "Can the bridegroom's children mourn so long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." According to this prophecy, when Christ, which is the bridegroom, was taken from them, (I speak concerning his corporal presence, for by his Spirit he is with the faithful unto the end of the world.) they mourned, fasted, and prayed for the gift of the Holy Ghost, which was promised to be sent unto them for to be their comforter and teacher, and to lead them into all truth; and the Holy Ghost was given unto them according to the promise of Christ and their expectation. They fasted also and prayed after they had received the Holy Ghost, that they might worthily fulfil that office which was committed unto them, that by their preaching many thousands might be converted and saved; and it so came to pass.

The holy and devout widow Anna fasted and prayed continually in the temple for the coming of the promised Messias, and she saw him before her death. Cornelius, that godly man, being troubled in his mind, as it may be thought, with the multitude of religions which at that time reigned in the world, as the religion of the gentiles, of the Jews, of the Pharisees, of the Sadducees, of the Essees, and the late sprung up religion of the Christians, humbled himself in the sight of God, mourned, fasted, gave alms, and prayed that it would please God to declare unto him which among them all was the

true religion, that he might observe the same, frame his life according unto that, and so please God. And to obtain this thing of God, he continued long fasting and praying. God therefore accepted his fast, heard his prayer, and granted him his request.

The prophets and preachers at Antioch fasted and prayed, that both they themselves might preach with fruit, and that other also might be sent of God, and appointed unto that office, that the glory of God might be set forth, that his word might be received, and that all nations of the earth might believe in him, and in his Son Jesu Christ. Their fasting and praying were allowed before God, and their desires were satisfied. For "the Holy Ghost said unto them, 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 let them go." Paul and Barnabas also fasted when they prayed for the congregations of Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, and Pisidia, and when they ordained them elders in every congregation to teach and instruct them in their absence, and to confirm them in the faith and doctrine, which they had already received. And God gave good success to their doctrine and ministration. All these fasted of a mind fervently given unto godliness. Acts xiii.

Hitherto have we learned out of the holy scriptures, what the true and christian fast is. Now let us see, in few words, whether the popish manner of fasting, * which we have so many years unfruitfully observed, be like unto that trade of fasting^{1*} which the word of God hath painted and set forth unto us. Acts xiv.

The Ninth Chapter.

THE true and christian fast is done freely and willingly, and cometh from the fervent motion of the spirit. The popish and superstitious fast serveth the custom only, and is done at the commandment of man with a grudging and unwilling mind; which, being loth to fast if the custom and man's ordinance were not, wisheth both the fast and the commander of the fast at the devil. And if any in so great a multitude do willingly fast, yet is it done partly to satisfy the custom; partly because they will be counted good, devout, and catholic men; partly to honour some saint; partly to deserve remission of their sins, and to win everlasting life. Can this kind of fasting please God? "They worship me in vain," saith Christ, "teaching doctrines that are the commandments of men." St Paul also saith: "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Matt. xv.
Rom. xiv.

The true and christian fast, during the time of fasting, is to abstain from all kind of meats and drinks (except very necessity requireth the contrary), and from all those things wherein the flesh delighteth. For that was the manner of fasting among the fathers of the old law, as we heard afore. Hierome confirming the same, "The Jews," saith he, "on those days that they fast took no meat, till they see the evening star up²." And a certain council, called *Concilium Chalcedonense*, ordained that such should not be counted to fast that did eat before evensong was done³; which at that time was not celebrated, as it is now, at two or three at the clock after dinner, but at night, about the eighth or ninth hour, when the day was all past. Lib. ii. contra Jovinianum.

The popish and superstitious fasters persuade themselves to fast well, and to do a meritorious deed, if they only abstain from flesh; though in the morning, so soon as they rise out of their beds, they enfarce and stuff their bellies with as many fine cakes and toasts of white bread as they be able to eat, and with as much good ale, full of spices, or else burnt malmsey, as their paunches can hold. And when dinner O worthy fast
The papists' drinking in the morning.

[¹ The words between asterisks are printed twice over in the folio.]

[² Perhaps the following is the passage intended: Petrus apostolus non expectans stellam more Judaico, sed hora sexta in solarium pransurus ascendit.—Hieron. Op. Par. 1693-1706. Adv. Jovin. Lib. 11. Tom. IV. Pars 11. col. 198.]

[³ There is probably an error in the reference which should be to the council of Châlons, instead of Chalcedon. *Ex Concilio Cabilonensi*. Solent

plures, qui se jejunare putant, in quadragesima, mox ut signum audierint ad horam nonam, comedere. Qui nullatenus jejunare credendi sunt, si ante manducaverint, quam vespertinum celebretur officium.—Decret. Gratiani. Par. 1583. Decr. Tert. Pars. De Consecr. Dist. i. can. 50, cols. 2345, 6. But even among the canons of Châlons this does not appear; and Gratian adds: Habetur in capitulis Theodulphi Aurelianensi episcopi, c. 39.]

come, if they abstain from a smoky piece of bacon, or hard salted and powdered beef, or such-like, though they eat the most delicious fishes that can be gotten, and enforce their beastly bodies with all the sweet meats that can be invented and sought out; yea, and that so unmeasurably, that, after they have once dined, they are provoked either to the pleasure of the body, or else like beasts of the belly fall straightways unto sleep, so that they are not able to serve God, nor themselves, nor any other; yet think they that they fast well, and do God a great pleasure.

The papists' manner of dining.

A story of a monk which was a great faster.

This manner of fasting among many other used a certain monk in my country, which, notwithstanding, was counted the greatest and devoutest faster in all those quarters. His manner was for the most part to make but one meal a day, as they use to say, yet such a meal as the meat of that one meal might have seemed sufficient to any reasonable creature to have served six godly fasters at a meal. When he came unto dinner, and was set down at the table, his use was ever to unbuckle and let slack his girdle a great quantity, which before was strait girded to his body. He fell to his meat as the hungry wolf to his prey, and never left off devouring the best meats that were set before him, till he had so stuffed his religious paunch, that his girdle, being afore loose, was so hard to his body that he could not put his little finger between the girdle and his clothes. He sat so swelling and sweating at the table through the too much devouring of pleasant meats and hot wines, which if Apelles had been present with his pencil, he might have had a jolly pattern to paint a right epicure. And notwithstanding both he and such like were counted good, holy, devout, religious, and catholic fasters.

To consume at one dinner so much as would serve three was no breaking of a fast. To devour unmeasurably all kind of pleasant fishes, or whatsoever dainties besides could be devised, was fast good enough in the pope's kingdom: but to eat a piece of flesh, although never so gross, was twice a deadly sin, and punished with fire. The eater of the flesh was called a Lollore, and adjudged to be brent with fire for his (I know not how great) offence, as though God abhorred more the eating of flesh than of fish; or as though fish were clean in the sight of God, and flesh vile and abominable. O bellied hypocrites, which strain out a gnat and swallow down a camel! O spirits of error and teachers of devilish doctrines, which "speak false through hypocrisy, and have their conscience marked with an hot iron, forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth! For all the creatures of God are good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even the mind and conscience of them is defiled." Why do not those blind guides remember this saying of our Saviour Christ, and cease to condemn the innocent? "That which goeth into the mouth defileth not the man; but that which cometh out of the mouth defileth the man. For whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught; but those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, breaking of wedlock, whoredoms, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man."

Matt. xxiii.

1 Tim. iv.

Tit. i.

Matt. xv.

The Tenth Chapter.

AGAIN at night, albeit the popish fasters eat no meat, yet make they such a drinking, as might justly seem a costious kind of banqueting. Besides their white bread and fine cakes, they have their figs, raisins, almonds, apples, pears, nuts, carroways, biscuits, succat, marmalade, cherries condite, quinces condite, and I know not what. And besides their nappy ale and heady beer, they have sundry wines, some spiced, and some brewed with a cup of ipocras¹ at the latter end to make up their mouth withal, and to finish their holy and religious fast. Is it not to be thought

The papists' drinking at night.

[¹ Ipocras, or hippocras was a kind of piment or spiced wine.]

that these men take great pains in their fasting? Do not such fasts please God greatly, think you? O abominable mockers of christian abstinence!

These are those epicures which, as the poet saith, *Curios simulant et Bacchanalia vivunt*². These are those hypocrites which "bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not heave at them with one of their fingers." And as the wealthy worldlings and rich epicures think themselves to fast well if they make but one meal on a day, though otherwise they enfarce their bellies with never so many dainties, even so judge the baser kind of people that they fast well if they eat no meat, though they stuff their paunches with never so much bread and drink.

Matt. xxiii.
Luke xi.

Notable is this sentence of St Hierome against all such belly-gods. "What avail-
eth it," saith he, "to eat no oil, and to seek about for such meats as are most dainty and hardest to come by, as dry figs, pepper, nuts, dates, fine cakes, honey, and pistaciacs? All the dainties that gardens can bring forth are sought, that we should not eat the usual bread. And while we seek deliciously to live, we are plucked back from the kingdom of heaven. Moreover, I hear say, that there be some which, contrary to the rule and nature of men, drink no water, nor eat bread; but sup not out of a cup, but out of a shell, dainty broths, and herbs brayed, and the juice of beets. Fie for shame! are we not ashamed of such fondness, nor weary of the superstition? Yea, we, living in all deliciousness, seek to be praised for our abstinence. The mightiest fast is water and bread; but because it hath no glory nor notable fame, and because we all live with bread and water, it is not counted as the public and common fast³."

Ad Nepot.

Pistacium
is a kind of
nuts.

Nice and fine
fasters in St
Hierome's
time.

Would God that all they that fast, yea, and so many as profess Christ, would remember and continually set before their eyes this saying of St Austin! "It nothing profiteth," saith he, "to have passed an whole day in long fasting, if afterward the soul be oppressed with deliciousness or superfluity of meats; for so is the mind much filled soon dulled, and the earth of our body so watered will bring forth thorns of wicked lusts. Let therefore our meat be temperate and no more than is sufficient; and let our belly never be too full. And let us always have more mind of the meat for the heart than of meat for the body; because within the inward man we be made after the image of God, but in the flesh we are fashioned of the slime of the earth⁴."

Ex Serm. lvi.
De Tempore.

The Eleventh Chapter.

FURTHERMORE, the christian fast riseth of an heart contrite and sorrowful for the sins committed against God, as we have heard heretofore. The popish fast riseth either of custom, or else of superstition. For the papists, in their chief and solemn fasting days, are led with no true fear toward God, neither do they lament their sins, nor study by hearty repentance, true faith, and amendment of life, to appease the wrath of God kindled against them for their abominable living on those days that they fast, more than any other⁵ time. What papists among them forsaketh his

[² Juv. ii. 3.]

[³ Quid prodest oleo non vesci, et molestias quasdam difficultatesque ciborum quærere, caryacas, piper, nuces, palmarum fructus, similam, mel, pistachia? Tota hortorum cultura vexatur, ut cibario non vescamur pane; et dum delicias sectamur, a regno cœlorum retrahimur. Audio præterea quosdam, contra rerum hominumque naturam, aquam non bibere, nec vesci pane; sed sorbitiunculas delicatas et contrita olera, betarumque succum, non calice sorbere, sed concha. Proh pudor, non erubescimus istiusmodi ineptiis, nec tædet superstitionis? Insuper etiam famam abstinentiæ in deliciis quærimus. Fortissimum jejunium est aqua et panis. Sed quia gloriam non habet, et omnes pane et aqua vivimus, quasi publicum et commune jejunium non

putatur.—Hieron. Op. Par. 1693-1706. Epist. xxxiv. ad Nepot. de Vit. Clericor. Tom. IV. Pars ii. col. 364.]

[⁴ Nihil prodest tota die longum duxisse jejunium, si postea ciborum suavitate vel nimietate anima obruatur. Illico mens repleta porpscit, et irrigata corporis nostri terra spinas libidinum germinabit. Sit ergo temperatus cibus; et numquam nimium venter expletus; et plus semper de cibo cordis quam de cibo corporis cogitemus: quia intus in homine interiore facti sumus ad imaginem Dei; in carne autem de limo terræ formati sumus.—August. Op. Par. 1679-1700. Serm. cxli. 4. In Quadages. ii. Tom. V. Appendix, col. 251. This sermon is not Augustine's. It has been with some probability assigned to Cæsarius.]

papistry, hypocrisy, superstition, and idolatry, and gladly receiveth the truth of God's word? What covetous worldling leaveth his covetousness, and exerciseth mercy toward the poor members of Christ? What proud man giveth over his pride, and embraceth humility? What adulterer forsaketh his adultery, and leadeth an honest conversation? What glutton or drunkard giveth over his gluttony or drunkenness, and leadeth a sober life? what usurer leaveth his usury? what briber his bribery? what catchpole his extortion? what tyrant his tyranny? what whore her whoredom? what ribald his ribaldry? what blasphemer his blasphemy? what envious man his envy? &c. As they begin their fast with an unrepentant and wicked heart, even so do they continue and end the same; so far is it off that they have any sorrow in their heart for their sins committed against God, which should earnestly move them to forsake their meat, and to give themselves wholly to be reconciled unto God, by repenting and calling on the name of God for mercy in Christ Jesu our Lord. Their fast, therefore, is abomination before God; forasmuch as in the time of their fasting they give not over their wickedness, and earnestly seek to please God.

Moreover, the christian fast riseth also of an heart fervently given to godliness. In this behalf also the popish fast agreeth nothing with christian abstinence. For the papists' minds are set on no true godliness in the time of their fasting, but altogether on superstition and hypocrisy. Their godliness, yea, rather ungodliness, when they fast, consisteth in observing the pope's ceremonies and man's inventions. If they fulfil those, they think themselves godly enough, when, notwithstanding, they be furthest from all true godliness. Neither do they direct their fasts unto any godly end; but as every one fantasieth, so do they fast, yea, and that for sundry purposes. Some fast bread and water, some eat nothing but fruit, some taste no kind of meat or drink that is dressed with fire; some in their fast go woolward, bare-footed and bare-legged; some are so scrupulous and superstitious in their fasting, that in the time of their fast they will neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, nor yet swallow down their own spittle: if they do, they think themselves damned: provided alway that they also must be first and last at church. If they observe these fasts, they promise themselves I know not how great rewards, and how high seats in heaven above other, and how many gay garlands of red roses and sweet violets, that God and our lady and the blessed saints shall give them after this life for their devout fasting and pretty pains. O fond foolishness and foolish fondness, worthy rather to be lamented than to be laughed at!

If it be done of a good intent, say they, all is well whatsoever we do. If we fast the blessed saints' evens, and worship them with a *Pater-noster*, *ave*, and creed, they will do for us whatsoever we ask. St George will defend us in battle against our enemies. St Barbara will keep us from thundering and lightning. St Agasse will save our house from burning. St Antony will keep our swine. St Luke will save our ox. St Job will defend us from the pox. St Gertrude will keep our house from mice and rats. St Nicholas will preserve us from drowning. St Loye will cure our horse. St Dorothe will save our herbs and flowers. St Sith will bring again whatsoever we lose. St Apolline will heal the pain of our teeth. St Sweetlad and St Agnes will send us maids good husbands. St Peter will let us in at heaven-gates,—with a thousand such-like¹.

This superstition and idolatry is the godliness of the papists. If they fast and

[¹ Of most of the saints mentioned here an account was given, Vol. I. page 139, note 4. To what is there said, it may be added that St George is described as having been a knight of Cappadocia. The legend of his slaying the dragon is well known. He suffered martyrdom by beheading in 287, or as some say, 291, under Diocletian. Nicholas is stated to have been born of rich parents. He became bishop of Myra, and was at the council of Nice. He preserved by miracle some mariners from shipwreck who invoked his help. Dorothy was of the

noble lineage of Roman senators. She declared herself espoused to Jesus Christ. When led to martyrdom, Theophilus, a scribe, asked her in scorn for some of the roses and apples which grew in the garden of her spouse: upon which a child, just before her death, supernaturally appeared to bring them. So remarkable a prodigy converted Theophilus. Dorothy died in 288, under Diocletian and Maximian. Sweetlad seems to be a mock-saint invented by the author to be joined with St Agnes, in ridicule of the ceremonies practised on St Agnes' eve.]

In what things the godliness of the papists consisteth.

The fondness of the papists in their fasting.

The superstitious worshiping of saints.

serve the saints unto this end, and on their feastful days fare daintily and drink largely in the honour of the good saint, they think they have done much for the saint, and have shewed themselves good, godly, and devout persons. O double ungodliness!

What shall I speak of the spiritual exercises, which the true and christian fast requireth to be done in the time of fasting? If we mark well the manners of the papists, and note their behaviour on their fasting days, we shall easily perceive, that in the midst of their fasting they are no less wicked and ungodly, no less proud and envious, no less lecherous and covetous, no less backbiting and slanderous, no less polling and pilling, no less churlish and unmerciful, no less given to gluttony and drunkenness, than they were afore. They lament not their sins, they fall not to faithful prayer, they call not on the name of God as they ought, but flee unto creatures; they give not themselves to the hearing or reading of God's word, which many of them extremely abhor, they go not about to leave their idolatry and wish to be better instructed in the knowledge of God's law, &c.; but continuing still in their old superstition and idolatry, they think themselves godly enough and good enough. If they eat not flesh, if they forbear white meats, all is well whatsoever they do, though there be no repentance, no calling on the name of God, no correction of manners, no amendment of life. God have mercy on us! God open their eyes and give them grace to amend!

Hitherto have we learned out of the word of God, what the true and christian fast is. We have heard also, how greatly the popish manner of fasting differeth from the true use of fasting which the holy scriptures teach. Now the order requireth that we also declare how we ought to fast that we may please God, and not fast in vain, as the hypocrites do.

HOW WE OUGHT TO FAST.

The Twelfth Chapter.

IN declaring how we ought to fast, whom should I rather follow than our Saviour Jesus Christ, the teacher of all truth? which saith: "When ye fast, be not sad, as the Matt. vi. hypocrites are. For they disfigure their faces, that they might be seen of men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face; that it appear not unto men that thou fastest, but to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Christ our Saviour in this place doth not only rebuke the hypocritical and superstitious manner of the ungodly fasters, but he also teacheth the true manner of fasting.

Of these his words we learn, that whosoever intendeth to fast aright, he must observe three things. The first is that he anoint his head. The second, that he wash his face. The third, that he fast in secret. These phrases, "anointing of the head," and "washing of the face," with many other, seem very strange manners of speaking to such as are not perfectly exercised in the reading of the holy scriptures and of the ancient writers: it is convenient therefore that we learn to know what is meant by them.

And no man in this behalf can satisfy your desire better than our golden-mouthed doctor, St John Chrysostom, whose words are these: "In the anointing of the head," Hom. xli. ex cap. vi. saith he, "we know that mercy is signified. Therefore to anoint the head is to shew Matt. ix. mercy to our neighbour. For that mercy that is done unto a poor man is referred What it is to anoint the head. unto God, which is the head of the man, as the apostle and the Lord himself saith: 1 Cor. xi. 'Whatsoever ye have done to one of my lessest brothers, ye have done it unto me.' Matt. xxv. In the stead of the which mercy, with the divine retribution, as with a certain heavenly oil, we are poured and shed over by him which saith: 'Blessed are the merciful; for Matt. v. God shall have mercy on them.' Holy David also did know the unction and anointing of the celestial oil in the head, when he said: 'As in the ointment which came down Psal. cxxxiii. into the beard.' But in washing the face the purity of a clean body and of a sincere conscience is known to be signified; so that to wash the face is to make clean the What it is to wash the face. face of our heart from all filthiness of sin, and from the uncomeliness of trespass, and

to have a very pure conscience, that we may truly have in us the gladness of celestial joy, and the familiarity and cheerfulness of the Holy Ghost¹."

Hitherto have I rehearsed the words of St John Chrysostom, whereby we may learn that to "anoint our head" is none other thing than to shew ourselves beneficial to the poor members of Christ. Again, to "wash our face" is to make clean both body and soul from sin and wickedness. If we therefore will fast aright, after the mind of St John Chrysostom, we must first anoint our head, that is to say, comfort the poor people with such good as God hath committed unto us. For the riches that we have be not ours, but they be God's, as he saith by the prophet: "Gold is mine, silver is mine." The psalmograph also saith: "The earth is the Lord's, and all that is contained in it."

The Thirteenth Chapter.

Hag. ii.
Psal. xxiv.

God hath put the goods of this world into the rich men's hands, that they should distribute part of them to the poor people. They are the stewards of God and the dispensators of his treasures, that they, continually living of them, should also with the distribution of part of them comfort the needy members of Christ. If they spend them otherwise than God hath appointed in his word, they shall render a strait accounts for it to the high Judge Christ. They have nothing at all, but that they shall be called to accounts for it, even to the uttermost farthing.

Matt. xxii.

If they be not found to have used their talent well, and unto the profit of other, they shall with that unprofitable servant of the gospel be cast into utter darkness, where weeping and gnashing of teeth shall be. If they be proved unmerciful and negligent in the distribution of the worldly goods, surely they shall be carried with the rich glutton, of whom blessed Luke speaketh in the gospel, unto hell, and there burn in such cruel and bitter flames, as the fire whereof shall never be quenched, "neither shall the worm," which shall gnaw the consciences of them that are there, "die at any time," as the prophet saith. What cause then have the rich men to boast themselves, and to glory of their worldly goods, or to avance themselves above other for their possessions' sake? Certes none at all, more than a great man's servant hath, to whom his lord and master hath committed his goods for a certain space to keep, the servant looking at every hour, when his master will call him to accounts, and require them of him again.

Luke xvi.

Isai. lxvi.

Ser. i. in
Divites
Avaros.
An hard
saying for
unmerciful
rich men.

Basilus Magnus hath a notable sentence, and it is this: "He is a very thief and a robber," saith he, "which maketh that thing his own that he hath received to distribute and give abroad. For the bread that thou retainest and keepest is the bread of the hungry: the garment which thou keepest in thy chest is the garment of the naked: the shoe that is mould with thee is the shoe of him that is unshod; and the money which thou hidest in the ground is the money of the needy. Moreover thou doest injury and plain wrong to so many as thou forsakest, when thou art able to help them²."

Eccles.
xxxiv.

Hereto pertaineth the saying of the wise man: "The bread of the needy is the life of the poor: he that defraudeth him of it is a manslayer." God also by the prophet teacheth, that that fast pleaseth him best, which is accompanied with the works of mercy, saying: "Break thy bread to the hungry, and lead the needy and wayfaring into thy house. When thou seest a naked man, cover him; and despise not thy flesh." Mark that he saith: "Break thy bread to the hungry." Certain that expound this text say, that thou then breakest thy bread to the hungry, when thou so fastest that thou sparest from thine own belly to give to the poor hungry man. For a christian man ought to be no less careful for the poor than for himself. We therefore do break our bread to the hungry, when we give him that which we ourselves necessarily should have eaten. So that to "anoint our head" is to break our bread to

Isai. lviii.

What it is
to break thy
bread to the
hungry.

[¹ Chrysost. Op. Lat. Basil. 1547. Ex Var. in Matt. Loc. Hom. ix. ex cap. Matt. vi. Fer. Quart. Cin. Tom. II. col. 1162. See Vol. I. page 107, nota 4.]

[² Basil. Op. Par. 1721-30. Hom. vi. in Luc. xii. 18. Tom. II. p. 50. See Vol. I. page 25, note 9.]

the hungry, to lodge the poor in our house, to give clothes to the naked, and to comfort according to our ability so many as have need of our help. Unto these works of mercy doth our Saviour Christ exhort us in the gospel, saying: "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsfolk, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the feeble, the lame, and the blind; and thou shalt be happy: for they cannot recompence thee; but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the righteous." Again he saith: "Give alms of those things ye have; and behold, all things are clean unto you." But of this we shall entreat more largely, when we come to the true use of fasting.

The Fourteenth Chapter.

MOREOVER, if we will fast aright, we are not only commanded to "anoint our head," that is to say, to shew mercy to the poor people, but also to "wash our face," that is, to make our hearts clean from all sin through faithful repentance, that we may have a pure conscience. For it is not enough to be beneficial to other, except we also be beneficial to ourselves. This shall come to pass, if we labour with all main to have a mind pure and clean from all carnal affects, a body void of wicked deeds, and a life garnished with good works. For what was the cause that God did cast away the fasts and solemn feasts of the Jews, but only that they washed not their face, that is, they went not about to put off their old conversation, and to become new men? "I hate and abhor," saith God, "your sacrifices, your solemn feasts, and your fasts. Offer me no more oblations; for it is but lost labour. Your incense is abomination unto me: I have no pleasure in your sacrifices. I may not away with your new moons, your sabbaths," &c. Why so? "For your hands," saith he, "are full of blood." Your hearts are full of vengeance, your consciences are spotted and defiled with all kind of sins, your life is abominable in my sight, ye walk having no fear of God before your eyes, &c. What is then to be done? "Be ye washed," saith he, "be ye clean, take away your evil thoughts from mine eyes. Cease to do evil: learn to do well. Seek judgment, help the poor oppressed, be favourable to the comfortless, defend the widow," &c. Again God saith: "Wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be helped. How long shall thy noisome thoughts remain with thee?" God hateth those fasts, those prayers, those good deeds, as they call them, that come from a bloody conscience, a spotted and pocky soul, a defiled body, and wicked life, as a certain man saith: "It profiteth a man nothing at all to fast and pray, and to do other good things of devotion, except the mind be refrained from ungodliness, and the tongue from backbitings³." For God hath ever a principal respect to the heart of the doer of the work, as we see in the history of the sacrifices of Abel and Cain. If the heart be pure, clean, and faithful, then doth God approve the work; but if it be spotted with sin, God casteth it away, appear it never so glistening and commendable in the sight of the world. "Offer not," saith the wise man, "wicked gifts; for God will not receive them." Salomon also saith: "The sacrifices of the ungodly are abominable." That fast therefore, that cometh not from a pure heart, from an uncorrupt conscience, and from a godly life, pleaseth not God, but is abomination unto the Lord our God, yea, it is by no means worthy the name of a fast.

For Basilius Magnus saith: "The true and christian fast is not only to abstain from meats, but also to eschew evil things⁴."

And our golden-mouthed doctor saith: "He that abstaineth from meat, and not from evil works, appeareth to fast, but yet he fasteth not in deed. For look, how much he fasteth unto men, so much doth he eat before God; seeing he goeth forth still to sin⁵."

[³ Pii Papæ I. Epist. i. in Concil. Stud. Labbei. Lut. Par. 1671-2. Tom. I. col. 562. See Vol. I. page 109, note 2.]

[⁴ Basil. Op. De Jejun. Hom. i. Tom. II. p. 9.]

See Vol. I. page 106, note 2.]

[⁵ Chrysost. Op. Par. 1718-38. Opus Imperf. in Matt. Hom. xv. ex cap. vi. Tom. VI. p. 80.]

See Vol. I. page 105, note 4.]

In Levit.
Hom. i.
cap. 6.

The ancient doctor Origen saith also: "Wilt thou that I shew unto thee what fast thou oughtest to fast? Fast from evil deeds, abstain from evil words, refrain from evil thoughts, &c. Such a fast pleaseth God'."

Again St Hierome saith: "Then is the abstinence of the body commendable before God, when the mind fasteth from vices. For what doth it profit to make weak the body with abstinence, when the mind swelleth with pride?"

Ex Sermone
clxxii.

Hereunto pertaineth the saying of St Austin: "The fasts of christian men," saith he, "are rather to be observed spiritually than carnally. In consideration whereof, let us fast principally from our sins, lest our fast be refused of the Lord, as the fast of the Jews were. What a fast is this, that an impostor or deceitful fellow, I cannot tell who, should abstain from meats which the Lord hath created, and yet waxeth fat with the fatness of sins! 'Have I chosen such a fast?' saith the Lord. Read the eight-and-fiftieth chapter of the prophet Esay." And a little after he saith: "The fast, which the Most Highest do approve and allow, is not only to leave off to refresh the body, but also to depart from evil deeds." In another place he also saith: "The great and general fast is to abstain from iniquities and unlawful pleasures of the world, which is a perfect fast; that we, 'forsaking ungodliness and the lusts of the world, should live in this world soberly, righteously, and godly'."

Isai. lviii.

Ex Tract.
xvii. in Joan.
Tit. ii.

Of these authorities of the holy doctors also do we learn, that the true christian fast doth not only consist in the abstinence of meats, but also in the forsaking of sin. Therefore, if we intend to fast aright, and to make our fast acceptable to God, let us provide earnestly that our fast proceed from a pure and clean heart, void of all carnal affects, stuffed full of faith and charity, and altogether studious of true innocency and unfeigned godliness. So shall it come to pass, that both our fasts and all that ever we do according to God's word shall highly please God. Hitherto have we heard what it is to "anoint the head and to wash the face." Now remaineth to declare what it is to "fast in secret."

The Fifteenth Chapter.

What it is
to fast in
secret.

To fast in secret is not to keep ourselves close from the sight of men, and so, hiding ourselves in privy corners, to abstain from meat; but not to hunt and hawk after vain-glory, and the praise of men, for our fasting, nor to seek to be seen of men while we fast, to the end that they may commend and praise us, as the hypocrites did, whom Christ reproveth for their vain-glory and ambition, and saith, "They have their reward," not of God, but of men. We are counted before God then to fast in secret, when we fast with such a mind, that we would fast in deed, though no man living did see us, and when we regard more the accomplishment of God's will and the subjection and taming of our body, than all the glory and praise that man can give unto us.

Matt. vi.

It is lawful for a christian man to fast, to pray, to give alms, or to do any other good work before the world, so that the desire of worldly praise and vain-glory be not in his mind. For our Saviour Christ saith: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which [is] in heaven." St Paul also saith: "Be such as no man can complain on, and the unfeigned sons

It is lawful
to do any
good deed in
the sight of
men, so the
vain-glory
be absent.
Matt. v.
Phil. ii.

[¹ Orig. Op. Par. 1733-59. In Levit. Hom. x. 2. Tom. II. p. 246. See Vol. I. page 105, note 7.]

[² Magis a vitii jejunemus quam a cibis. Serm. de Quadrages. xxxii. Tom. IX. p. 117. This may be the passage referred to. Or is Jerome an error for Ambrose? See the following quotation: Est enim interdum inutile et inane jejunium, quod licet ventrem et omnia viscera succo saturitatis exaurit, non tamen acceptum est Deo, quia mentem et intimos sensus minime vinculo iniquitatis evacuat. Quid enim prodest jejunare visceribus, et luxuriare venatibus? abstinere cibis, errare peccatis? castigare

corpus inedia, mentem exercere nequitia?—Ambros. Op. Par. 1614. Serm. xli. Dom. III. Quadrage. Tom. V. col. 68. The Benedictine editors omit this sermon, as certainly not the work of Ambrose. It is in their appendix to Augustine, where they ascribe it to Cæsarius; but they afterwards retracted this opinion.]

[³ August. Op. Par. 1679-1700. Serm. clxxv. 1, 2. Tom. V. Appendix, col. 300. See Vol. I. page 105, note 8.]

[⁴ Id. in Johan. Evang. cap. v. Tractat. xvii. 4. Tom. III. Pars II. col. 424. See Vol. I. page 106, note 1.]

of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom see that ye shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life." Again St Peter counselleth us that, "whereas some backbite us as evil-doers, we should lead an honest and godly life among them, that they seeing our good works may praise God in the day of visitation." But if we seek any praise of men, and desire to be magnified for our good deeds-doing, verily then have we our reward not of God but of the world. For there is not a more pestiferous infection to poison any good work, that it should lose the reward before God, than the desire of vain-glory and worldly praise. For that it is which Christ condemneth in the alms-deeds, prayers, and fasts of the hypocrites. 1 Pet. ii. The desire of vain-glory poisoneth all good works. Matt. vi.

St John Chrysostom saith: "They that so fast that they please men rather than God, they have a labour concerning the affliction of the body; but through vain-glory they can have no reward of their labour with God, which, when they ought to do it only for religion or faith's sake, had rather to seek the vain-glory of the world. And therefore saith the Lord, 'Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward'." Hom. xlv. in Matt. vi.

St Austin also saith: "Some good thing may be done, and yet they not doing them well, of whom they are done. For it is a good thing to help a man that is in jeopardy and in danger, namely if he be an innocent. But he that doth this good deed, if he doth it because he loveth the praise of men rather than the glory of God, it is not good that he doth; forasmuch as he that doth it is not good. For God forbid that that should be, or be counted a good will, which glorieth in other or in itself, and not in the Lord." Lib. iv. contra Julianum, cap. 3. Mark well.

Hereto pertaineth the saying of St Ambrose: "When thou fastest, boast not thyself, nor brag not of it; for in so doing thy fast profiteth thee nothing. Those things that are done unto ostentation and boasting continue not to be recompensed in the world to come, but they are consumed and brought to nought with the reward of present things." In Lib. de Helia et Jejunio.

Of eschewing vain-glory our Saviour Christ gave us notable examples in all his doings. When he had healed the leper, he said unto him: "See thou tell no man." After that he had restored the two blind men to their sight, he charged them that no man should know of it. And when he had made whole the dumb and deaf man, he commanded them that were present that they should tell it no man. In all these his doings and such-like he gave us example to flee vain-glory and worldly praise, and only to seek the glory and honour of God, and that we should rejoice and glory in nothing but in God alone, as it is written: "He that rejoiceth, let him rejoice in the Lord." Therefore all the works that we do, whether they be prayer, fasting, alms-deed, watching, visiting of the sick, comforting of the prisoners, or any other that be agreeable to the word of God, we must do them with a single mind, and with such an heart as, being altogether estranged from vain-glory and worldly praise, seeketh only the honour of God, and the accomplishment of his most blessed will. So shall we do our works in secret; and our Father, which seeth in secret, shall recompense us openly. Matt. viii. Matt. ix. Mark vii. Jer. ix. 1 Cor. i. Matt. vi.

Thus have we heard both what the true and christian fast is, and also how we ought to fast. Let us now fall in hand with the third and last part of this treatise, and so make an end.

[5 Verum qui ita jejunant, ut magis hominibus quam Deo placeant, habent quidem laborem de corporis afflictione, sed per inanem gloriam mercedem laboris apud Deum habere non possunt: qui cum solummodo id causa religionis ac fidei agere debeant, humanam potius laudis gloriam quærere malunt, et ideo ait Dominus: Amen dico vobis, perceperunt mercedem suam.—Chrysost. Op. Lat. Basil. 1547. Ex cap. Matt. vi. Hom. ix. Fer. Quart. Cin. Tom. II. col. 1161.]

[6 Possunt ergo aliqua bona fieri, non bene facientibus a quibus fiunt. Bonum est enim ut subveniatur homini periclitanti, præsertim innocenti:

sed ille qui hoc facit, si amando gloriam hominum magis quam Dei facit, non bene bonum facit; quia non bonus facit, quod non bona voluntate facit. Absit enim ut sit vel dicatur voluntas bona, quæ in aliis, vel in se ipsa, non in Domino gloriatur.—August. Op. Cont. Julian. Pelag. Lib. iv. 22. Tom. X. col. 596.]

[7 Noli ergo te jactare cum jejunas, noli gloriari, ne nihil tibi prosit jejunium. Quæ enim ad ostentationem fiunt, non in futurum fructum extendent suum; sed præsentium mercede consumunt.—Ambros. Op. Par. 1686-90. De Elia et Jejun. Lib. cap. xi. 40. Tom. I. col. 547.]

[8 Folio, with.]

OF THE TRUE USE OF FASTING.

The Sixteenth Chapter.

The manner of fasting in the pope's kingdom was wicked.

THE use, yea, rather the abuse of fasting in the pope's kingdom was very wicked, and worthy to be abhorred of the faithful. For, besides the fondness of the simple people in abusing the notable virtue of fasting, for want of knowledge, unto many and sundry superstitious and ungodly purposes, as partly heretofore we have heard; there have not wanted among them that profess divinity, which both in their sermons and writings corrupted the true and godly use of fasting. For they have taught that fasting of itself is so worthy a virtue, and of so great power, that it is able to satisfy for sins, to appease the wrath of God, to reconcile us to God, to deserve righteousness, and to win everlasting life.

The erroneous doctrine of the papists concerning fasting.

Fasting is a fruit of repentance.

This doctrine is an enemy to the free grace of God, injurious to the fruits and merits of Christ's passion, and by no means to be received of the faithful Christians. For albeit fasting be without doubt a worthy fruit of repentance, and pleaseth God, when he that fasteth humbleth himself in the sight of God, confesseth his sin, repenteth him of his misdeeds, calleth for mercy, believeth to be forgiven for Christ's sake, and studieth earnestly from henceforth to lead a life conformable¹ to the rule of God's word; yet is it not of such virtue in itself, that it is able to bring unto us those good things which we look for at² the hand of God through Christ our Lord,— I mean the favour of God, the forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost, a new heart stuffed with spiritual affects, righteousness, peace, quietness of conscience, and everlasting life. These be the singular and free gifts of God, given only of him to so many as be born anew by the Holy Ghost, and believe in him.

Gen. xii. xxii. xxvi. and xxviii.

The fasts of the old fathers.

If the fasts of the holy men of whom we heard heretofore had been directed unto that end, that is, if by their fasts they had sought to be justified, and turned their eyes from that blessed Seed, in whom all nations of the earth were promised to be blessed, so had their fasts been not commended of God, not favoured but abhorred, not received but rejected. But their fasts came from a penitent and faithful heart toward God, and were exercised of them unto godly purposes, as we have heard, they seeking salvation only at the merciful hand of God for the promised Seed sake; therefore were both they and their fasts allowed of God. Let us therefore learn the true use of fasting, that we may know to what end our fasts ought to be directed, lest while we seek for medicine we find poison, and receive for salvation damnation.

The Seventeenth Chapter.

Job vii. Gal. v.

FIRST, forasmuch as the life of man upon earth is nothing else than a "warfare" and continual afflict³ with her ghostly enemies; seeing also that "the flesh" without ceasing, through the subtile suggestion of Satan, "lusteth contrary to the Spirit," so that man in this vale of misery is never at quiet, nor hath so much leisure as once to breathe; so greatly on every side is he besieged and compassed about with cruel enemies, which assault him and tempt him vehemently, that, except he strongly fight against him with the weapons of the Lord, and also if he giveth not diligent watch, he straightways falleth into his adversaries' hands and is utterly undone; it is convenient, that whosoever intendeth to get a glorious and triumphant victory over his enemies, and not like a coward either to be put to flight, or else to be overcome, and for ever and ever perish, but rather valiantly to fight and never to cease till he hath subdued his enemies, that he striving courageously may obtain that reward which is promised to so many as fight lawfully, even the crown of glory and the inheritance of everlasting joy; it is convenient, I say, that he seeketh all means possible to avoid the danger of his enemies, and so to behave himself in all his doings, that his adversaries may have no interest in him, nor spy any void place about him, where they may give

2 Tim. ii.

[¹ Folio, *comfortable.*]

[² Folio, *all.*]

[³ Afflict: *conflict.*]

the first adventure, and by this means be encouraged not only to assail him, but also to vanquish him.

And forasmuch as the devil, our head enemy, "goeth about" not only himself ^{1 Pet. v.} "like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," but, besides innumerable thousands of wicked spirits, which pertain to his army, and are ready at every moment to seek the destruction of man, hath also two special servants, which daily procure our utter subversion, I mean the world and the flesh, the one being his waiting-man, ^{The devil's army are the wicked spirits, the world, and the flesh.} the other his hand-maid, ready at every hour to assail and to subdue man, if diligent watch be not given on our behalf; and forasmuch as among these our deadly adversaries the flesh is the most present and mortal foe, and an household enemy ever at home and never without, even within our own breast, carried about with us wheresoever we go, and accompanying us whatsoever we do, and continually provoking us unto those wicked acts which strive against the heavenly motions of God's holy Spirit, ^{Gal. v.} that by this means she may do her master the devil great pleasure, by bringing us to destruction; if we intend to subdue and get the victory of this our household enemy the flesh, let us know for a certainty that there is not a more speedy way nor a more present remedy against her assaults, than godly fasting is; which enemy, that is the flesh, being once subdued, the foreign enemies shall the easilier be kept out, and we live in the more quietness by the help of God's Spirit and fervent prayer.

The Eighteenth Chapter.

AND here begin we to learn the true use of fasting, and to know unto what end our fasts ought to be directed. The first true and godly use of fasting is to subdue ^{The first use of fasting.} the flesh, to mortify her beastly affects, and to repress the wild and rank motions thereof, that it may be subject and obedient to the spirit, as an hand-maid to her mistress, or a servant to his lord.

For albeit God hath made us of two parts, that is, of body and spirit, yet hath he ordained the spirit to be ruler, and the flesh to be in subjection to the spirit. But, notwithstanding, the flesh (such is her wild disobedience and disobedient wildness) can by no means abide to submit herself to the rule of the spirit, but continually striveth to have the upper hand, and contrary to God's appointment to make the spirit subject unto her. The spirit provoketh unto humility, charity, patience, quietness, continency, pureness of life, moderate eating and drinking, &c. The flesh contrariwise calleth unto pride, haughtiness of mind, envy, malice, vengeance, discord, whoredom, avoutry, gluttony, drunkenship, &c. So that there is a continual conflict between the spirit and the flesh, who shall have the victory, as St Paul saith. If the flesh sub- ^{Gal. v.} dueth the spirit, then perish we; but if the spirit according to God's ordinance beareth rule, and hath the flesh in subjection, then well are we.

Now that this may be brought to pass, godly and christian abstinence shall help greatly. For there is nothing that so tameth and bringeth under the wild and unruly ^{Fasting tareth the flesh.} lusts of the flesh, as fasting and abstinence, even as there is nothing that maketh a wild and fierce horse so tame and obedient to his master as the withdrawing of his⁴ hay, oats, bread, and such other provender. They therefore, that will use their fast aright and unto a godly end, must first direct it unto this purpose; that by the exercise thereof they may bridle the wantonness of the flesh, and refrain their bodies from sin, that the "spirit, which is a precious thing before God," may be "quiet," or else all other ^{1 Pet. iii.} exercises and travails, although never so painful, are vain.

To this use served the fasts of many godly both men and women in times past, that, the body being mortified, the spirit might the more freely attend on God. The prince-like prophet saith: "I put on sackcloth, and humbled my soul with fasting." ^{Psal. xxxv.} This holy prophet and king used fasting to this end, that he might bring his body low and in subjection to the spirit, that the ungodly lusts thereof might no more rage and rule in him as they did, what time he took Bethsaba, the wife of Urias, and lay ^{2 Sam. xi.}

[⁴ Folio, *this*.]

with her, and that he might freely enjoy her, caused her husband to be slain in battle. In another place he also saith: "My knees are weak through fasting, my flesh dried up for want of fatness." We read likewise, that that most virtuous queen Esther brought her body very low with fasting. Again, St Paul saith of himself: "I chastise and tame my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means it come to pass that, when I have preached to other, I myself should be cast away." These with many other chastised and tamed their bodies with fasting, that the spirit might have free course unto God, and be occupied about heavenly things. After this manner ought all true Christians to do, that, the body being kept in subjection, the spirit may rule and have the overhand; and by no means to follow the wicked manner of the papists, which in their fasts abstain from gross flesh, and devour all kind of dainty and fine fish, which make their bodies much more prone to lewdness than the eating of flesh, and also bringeth the spirit into miserable servitude and bondage. O ungodly manner of fasting!

The Nineteenth Chapter.

UNTO this taming, chastening, subduing, and mortifying of the flesh, by the true use of fasting, doth St Austin exhort us, saying: "Let our flesh be continually subject to our soul, and serve it as an hand-maid doth her mistress. Let us not suffer our body to be over-lusty, lest it war against the spirit; but always let the flesh be subject, that it obey the commandment of the Holy Ghost. Neither let us suffer the hand-maid to wax too rank, lest she set light by her mistress; but rather let her obey all her commandments and do her service. For as horses must be bridled, so must our bodies be restrained with fasting, watching, and prayer. For as, if the guides of chariots do give their horse the reins, they draw them into headlong downfalls; so if our body be not bridled, the soul and it both together slip into the deep pit of hell. Let us therefore be good and expert carters or chariot-drivers to our body, that we may go the right way," &c. Again he saith: "Fasting swageth the intemperancy and unruliness of the body, and expreseth or keepeth under the troublous motions and raging lusts thereof. It causeth the soul to be at liberty, and not to be oppressed of the flesh, as the Lord saith: 'Take heed that your hearts be not overcome with surfeiting and drunkenness.' For when the soul is delivered from too much eating and drinking, then doth it consider itself the better, and weigheth in what case it standeth. For as a man in a filthy glass seeth not himself such one as he is indeed; so likewise, if he be overladen with too much eating and drinking, he² thinketh himself to be another manner of man than he is. Yea, then is he provoked unto sensuality and filthy lust, moved unto anger, puffed up with pride, and stirred unto lechery. In respect whereof the apostle saith: 'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is dishonest behaviour.' But if the body be kept in order, and accustomed with fasting, then doth the soul know the better with what devotion she ought to serve her Redeemer. Fasting, therefore, is very necessary."³

[¹ Et semper atque semper caro nostra subjecta sit animæ, et sicut ancilla famuletur dominæ suæ. Ne præbeamus vires illicitas corpori nostro, ne committat bellum adversus spiritum nostrum: sed semper subjecta sit caro, ut obtemperet jussis sancti Spiritus. Neque incrassari permittamus ancillam, ne contemnat dominam suam; sed omnibus jussis ejus et obsequiis mancipetur. Sicut enim equis frena sunt imponenda; ita corpora nostra jejuniis et orationibus sunt infrenanda. Nam quemadmodum aurigæ, si frena laxaverint, per præcipitia ducuntur; ita et anima cum ipso corpore, si ei frenum non imposuerimus, ad inferni præcipitia delabitur. Simus ergo boni et edocti aurigæ corpori nostro, ut per viam rectam possimus incedere.—August. Op. Par. 1679-1700. De Salutar. Document. cap. xxxv. Tom. VI. Appendix, col. 200. This is not a genuine treatise of Augustine. It is ascribed with every appearance

of reason to Paulinus, patriarch of Aquileia.]

[² Folio, *be.*]

[³ Jejunia ergo intemperantiam corporis mitigant, motus adversos reprimunt, pressuram animæ auferunt, sicut ait Dominus, Nolite dediti esse in esca et crapula, ne graventur corda vestra. Cum enim anima ab esu et potu nimio fuerit liberata, tunc se melius recognoscit. Sicut enim in speculo sordido non se talem homo adspicit qualis est; ita et si esca et crapula fuerit gravatus, alterum se sentit quam est. Tunc exsuscitatur libido, accenditur ira, inflammatur superbia, generatur luxuria. Unde apostolus, Nolite, ait, inebriari vino, in quo est luxuria. Quod si temperatum fuerit corpus interposito jejunio, cognitione sui recepta anima intelligit qua devotione obsequi debeat Redemptori. Magna ergo ex parte jejunia sunt necessaria.—Id. Quæst. ex Utroq. Mixt. Quæst. cxx. Tom. III. Appendix, col. 130.]

Psal. cix.
Esth. xiv.
[Apocrypha]
1 Cor. ix.

De Salut.
Docu. cap.
xxxv.

Gen. xvi.

Quæst. cxx.
Vet. et Nov.
Test.

Luke xxi.

Eph. v.

Hereunto pertaineth the saying of St John golden-mouth: "The abstinence from meats is received for this purpose, that it should restrain the vigour and fierceness of the flesh, to make it obedient to the spirit, even as an horse is to his keeper. For he that fasteth must above all things refrain anger, learn meekness and gentleness, have an heart contrite, and such one as may repel and put back unclean concupiscences and lusts. He must also set before his eyes alway the eye of that everlasting Judge, and the judging-place that cannot be corrupted. Again, he must by his money be made the better by distributing it to the poor, and have rule over it. He must be liberal in giving alms, and receive into his heart no evil against his neighbour, as Esay, speaking in the person of God, saith: 'Have I chosen this fast?' saith the Lord. 'Though thou wry about thy neck like an hoop, and strawest under thee sackcloth and ashes, yet will not I regard thy fast,' saith the Lord. What fast then, tell me? 'Loosen,' saith he, 'the bonds of the wicked bargains, break thy bread to the hungry, bring the poor man that hath no house into thy house. If thou doest these things,' saith he, 'then shall thy light break forth as the morning light, and thy health shall spring right shortly.' Hast thou now seen, my well-beloved, what the true fast is? Let us look upon this fast, and let us not think, as many do, the fasting standeth in this point, if we continue without any dinner till it be night⁴."

In Gen. Hom. ix. Why we abstain from meats.

Isai. lviii.

St Hierome also saith: "Satiety or fulness is to be eschewed even of the most vile meats. For there is nothing that so overwhelmeth the mind as a full belly⁵."

Thus have we heard that the first and principal use of fasting is to tame, chastise, subdue, and mortify the flesh, that it resist not, but rather obey the rule of the spirit, as an hand-maid her mistress, or an horse his keeper. But this is to be considered in our fasting, that we do not with our unmeasurable fasts so make weak and feeble the body, that it be able to serve neither God, nor our neighbour, nor yet ourselves; and by this means utterly quench the use and working of the spirit, as we read that many in times past have done: such fasts please not God. This commandment therefore of St Paul is to be observed in all our fasts: "Make not provision," saith he, "for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it." An horse, that is too much delicately fed, casteth his master; again, if he be kept too hungry, he fainteth in the midst of the journey, and doth not his office. A mean therefore is to be had, as in feeding of the horse, so likewise in ordering of the body. We live not to eat, but we eat to live.

A rule to be observed in fasting.

Rom. xiii.

The Twentieth Chapter.

THE second cause why we ought to use fasting is that we, abstaining from meats, may have to give unto the poor and hungry the more liberally. For this kind of fasting pleaseth God greatly, when he seeth that we have so put on the bowels of tender mercy, and are led with such and so hearty compassion toward our poor neighbour, that we cannot find in our heart he should want; yea, rather than he should lack, we will spare it out of our own belly and give it him. God right well accepteth this fast, and blesseth the faster with plenty and abundance, as the wise man saith: "He that hath pity on the poor maketh the Lord his debtor; and look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again." Unto this manner of fasting doth God exhort us by the prophet, where he saith: "Break thy bread to the hungry, and lead the needy and wayfaring men into thine house. When thou seest a naked man, cover him; and despise not thy flesh." What it is to break thy bread to the hungry, we heard afore in the thirteenth chapter. The angel of God told Thoby, that when fasting, prayer, and alms-deeds go together, that is good and accepted in the Lord's sight.

To fast to give unto the poor.

Prov. ix.

Isai. lviii.

Tob. xii.

It is written in a certain book called "Pastor" (the author whereof they say Hermas, St Paul's disciple, was) on this manner: "On that day that thou shalt fast, thou shalt taste nothing at all but bread and water; and when thou hast counted the

Hermas, St Paul's disciple.

Mark and follow.

[⁴ Chrysost. Op. Par. 1718-38. In cap. i. Genes. Hom. viii. Tom. IV. pp. 62, 3. See Vol. I. page 105, note 6.]

[⁵ Sed ex vilissimis cibis vitanda satietas est.

Nihil enim ita obruit animum, ut plenus venter et exæstuat.—Hieron. Op. Par. 1693-1706. Adv. Jovin. Lib. II. Tom. IV. Pars II. col. 205.]

quantity of the meat that thou wast wont to eat on the other days, the cost that thou shouldest make on that day that thou fastest, lay it up, and give it to the widow, to the fatherless child, or to the poor man, and so shalt thou fast a good fast; that he which hath received it of thee may fill his soul, and that his prayer may go unto the Lord for thee. If thou fulfillest thy fast on this manner, as I command thee, thy sacrifice shall be acceptable to the Lord, and thy fast shall be written in the book of life.¹"

In Lev. c. vi.
Hom. x.

Origen saith: "We find in a certain book that the apostles said, Blessed is he that fasteth to this end, that he may nourish the poor man. The fast of such one is wonderfully accepted before God."²

A notable
sentence.
Quest. cxx.
Acts x.

Hereto pertaineth the saying of St Austin: "Mercy did commend and greatly set forth the prayer and fasting of Cornelius. For he, being rich and a wealthy man, fasted. He did not only fast, but he also fed them that wanted, that their fulness might make his fast acceptable."³ Again in another place he saith: "Before all things, that which we were wont to eat at our dinner, on the fasting days let us bestow it on the poor."⁴

Ser. lvi. de
Tempo.

Our golden-mouthed doctor in a certain homily counselled us that, whensoever we fast, we should be liberal to the poor, and give them largely of our goods⁵. In another place he also saith: "He that eateth his meat and is not able to fast, let him give the larger alms: let him be the more diligent in praying: let him have the more fervent desire to hear the word of God."⁶

In Gen.
Hom. vii.

Hom. ix. in
Gen.

Here Chrysostom esteemeth alms among other virtues of so high price, that if there be any which cannot abide to fast for the weakness of their body, yet if they be plenteous in doing the works of mercy, and in praying and hearing the word of God, they are not refused of God, but accepted as good Christians. Mercy therefore and alms is a precious thing in the sight of God, and ought to be exercised of the faithful, whensoever occasion is given, whether they fast or not. "Mercy," saith the angel, "is better than to hoard up treasures of gold. For mercy delivereth from death, cleanseth sin, and causeth to find everlasting life."

Tob. xii.

Thus have we heard that christian men ought to use their fast unto this end, that they, abstaining from meat and drink, might have whereof to give the more abundantly to the poor, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to relieve the sick, to help the indebted, and to comfort the needy. O blessed are they that so fast! But where are they? and we shall commend them, and call them blessed. For great and commendable things do such work among their neighbours and christian brethren.

Rara avis in
terris.

The Twenty-First Chapter.

THIRDLY, if we will use fasting aright, we must use it unto this end also, that by the diligent doing and often exercise thereof, we may be made the more apt to pray

Fasting to
serve prayer.

[¹ Peractis quæ supra scripta sunt, illo die quo jejunabis, nihil omnino gustabis, nisi panem et aquam; et computata quantitate cibi, quem ceteris diebus comesturus eras, repones, et dabis viduæ; pupillo, aut inopi; et sic consummabis humilitatem animæ tuæ; ut qui ex eo acceperit, satiet animam suam, et pro te adeat Dominum Deum oratio ejus. Si igitur sic consummaveris jejunium tuum, quemadmodum præcipio tibi; erit hostia tua accepta Domino, et scribetur hoc jejunium tuum.—Herm. Past. Lib. III. Sim. v. 3. in Patr. Apostol. Stud. J. B. Coteler. Antv. 1698. Vol. I. p. 105.]

[² Invenimus enim in quodam libello ab apostolis dictum: Beatus est qui etiam jejunat pro eo ut alat pauperem. Hujus jejunium valde acceptum est apud Deum, et revera digne satis.—Orig. Op. Par. 1733-59. In Levit. Hom. x. 2. Tom. II. p. 246.]

[³ Denique orationem et jejunium Cornelii mise-

ricordia commendavit. Ipse enim, abundans copiis, jejunabat; sed et non habentes pascebat, ut illorum saturitas jejunium ejus faceret acceptabile.—August. Op. Par. 1679-1700. Quæst. ex Utroq. Mixt. Quæst. cxx. Tom. III. Appendix, col. 130.]

[⁴ Ante omnia in diebus jejuniorum quod solebamus prandere, pauperibus erogemus.—Id. Serm. cxli. 4. in Quadrag. ii. Tom. V. Appendix, col. 251.]

[⁵ Τὸν νηστεύοντα μάλιστα πάντων προσήκει... περὶ τὴν ἐλεημοσύνην πολλὴν τὴν δαφίλειαν ἐπιδείκνυσθαι.—Chrysost. Op. Par. 1718-38. In cap. i. Genes. Hom. viii. Tom. IV. p. 63.]

[⁶ Ὁ τροφῆς τοῖνυν μεταλαμβάνων, καὶ νηστεύειν μὴ δυνάμενος, δαφίλειστέραν τὴν ἐλεημοσύνην ἐπιδεικνύσθω, εὐχὰς ἐκτενεῖς, τὴν προθυμίαν ἐπιτεταμένην ἐχέτω περὶ τὴν ἀκρόασι τῶν θείων λόγων.—Id. Hom. x. p. 73.]

and to lift up our hearts unto the Lord our God with fervent prayers, humble supplications, and hearty thanksgiving.

For unto this end served fasting in times past, as divers histories of the holy scripture do declare. If any misfortune or grievous plague chanced at any time to the people of God, then straightways they fasted, as we read in the book of Judges. Judg. xx. Again, if any plague were threatened them by the prophets of God for their wickedness, as we read of the Ninivites; or if they perceived any great evil to be at hand, as we read in the histories of the Israelites, of Jeosaphat, Judith, Esther, &c.; then fell they straightways to fasting. And their fasts were taken unto this end, that they might humble themselves in the sight of God, and be made the more meet for to pray, and to swage the wrath of God. Neither do we read that any solemn fast was proclaimed at any time, but it was done to this end, that the fasters might the more quietly and freely serve God, and call on his holy name, by fervent and continual prayer.

And as we read this in the old testament, so lack we not the like examples in the new. Is it to be doubted, but that our Saviour Christ, in that time of his long and solemn fast, joined to his fast prayer? He without doubt prayed unto God his Father all that time, that by his preaching, which was at hand, many might be turned from their ungodliness unto the true worshipping of God, from wickedness of life unto innocency of manners. We read also, that the godly matron Anne served God in the temple with fasting and prayer both day and night. The apostles likewise, after Christ's ascension, did always join to their fasting prayer. In like manner read we of the virtuous man Cornelius, which joined to his fasting both prayer and alms-deed. And the angel said unto Toby: "Prayer is good with fasting." Esdras said likewise to the Jews: "We fasted and prayed unto the Lord, and we had good luck." Queen Esther also sent word to Mardocheus, saying: "Gather together all the Jews, and pray for me; but see that ye neither eat nor drink three days and three nights; and I, with my maids, will fast and pray likewise." Again, Eliachim the priest said to the children of Israel, when they were in great sorrow and danger of their enemies: "Be ye sure that the Lord will hear your petitions, if ye continue stedfast in fastings and prayers in the sight of the Lord."

Thus see we that the godly people, both of the old and of the new testament, joined always for the most part fasting and prayer together, thinking themselves then to fast well, when their fast was accompanied with prayer, as it is written: "Prayer is good with fasting." St Peter also saith: "Be ye sober, and watch unto prayer."

The Twenty-Second Chapter.

MOREOVER, our Saviour Christ also joineth prayer and fasting together, where he saith: "This kind of devils is not cast out but by fasting and prayer." To this kind of fasting doth St Paul exhort us, when he saith: "Let us give no occasion of evil, that in our office be found no fault; but in all things let us behave ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in labours, in watchings, and fastings." Also St Peter: "Be ye sober," saith he, "and watch unto prayer." And from the contrary doth our Saviour Christ call us away, saying: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcome with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life; and so the day of judgment come on you unwares." The prophet Esay thundereth against them which, despising this godly manner of abstinence, set all their minds on banqueting and belly-cheer. "Wo be unto them," saith he, "that rise up early to follow drunkenness, and to them that continue so until night, and till they be set on fire with wine! In those companies are harps and lutes, tabrets, and pipes, and wine. But they regard not the work of the Lord." Again he saith: "Wo be unto them that are strong to sup out wine, and expert men to set up drunkenness! These give sentence with the ungodly for rewards, but condemn the just cause of the righteous. Therefore, like as fire licketh up the straw, and as the flame consumeth the stubble, even so their root shall be as corruption, and their blossom shall vanish away like dust; for they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and blasphemed the

word of the holy Maker of Israel." From beastly banqueting unto faithful fasting, and continual calling on the name of the Lord, doth the prophet Joel call these belly-gods, saying: "Wake up, ye drunkards, and weep; mourn, all ye wine-bibbers:" and not without a cause. For he that hath his body loaden with meat and drink, is no more meet to pray unto God than a dead man is to tell a tale; neither can the mind of such one any more fly unto God with heavenly desires, than a ship, too much cumbered with burdens and at the point to sink, can any longer float upon the waters.

Joel i.

A true and common proverb.

We have a proverb no less true than common among us, When the belly is full, the body would be at rest; meaning that he, which hath enfarced his belly with delicious meats and costious drinks, is more meet to sleep like a swine, than to take any earnest and weighty matter in hand.

Ser. de Tent. et Jejunio Christi.

"We have not read," saith St Cyprian, "that the godly men did ever take any great thing in hand, except they first fasted. So oft as they went about to obtain any thing of God, they fasted, and wept, and watched whole nights in prayer, and ware garments of hair next to their flesh, and so with all humbleness desired God to be beneficial to them. Neither wanted they of their purpose, when they most humbly fell down at the feet of God, and offered unto him the sacrifice of a contrite heart; but God was near unto them that called on him, and reached forth his hand to them that were in danger, and help them that were in trouble¹." Again he saith: "Prayer is of great virtue when fasting goeth afore²."

In Regul. Mon. cap. 1.

Basilius Magnus saith also, that fasting is necessary when we desire to obtain any thing of the Lord³.

Why fasts were appointed of the fathers of Christ's church. Note.

The ancient fathers of Christ's church, godly considering how necessary a thing prayer is in the church of Christ, ordained certain feastful days in the year, on the which the people should resort and come together unto the temple for to pray unto the Lord God; and that they might come the more devoutly and pray with the greater fruit, they appointed also that the day before the solemn feast they should fast, that they might be the more apt to pray when they come together into the temple. For where the body is burdened with meat, there the mind can have no free passage unto God. Let them therefore that fast appoint their fasting also to this use, that by their abstinence they may be the more ready to pray, and not only to prepare themselves to pray, but also earnestly to give their minds unto prayer; or else what doth their fast profit them?

Ambrose.

To fast from meat and to go about worldly matters, what other thing is it than a mocking of God, and a derision of christian abstinence? as St Ambrose saith: "Dost thou think that he fasteth aright, which waking betimes in the morning goeth not unto the church to pray and to hear the word of God, but, as soon as he is up, gathereth together his servants, layeth abroad his nets, bringeth forth his dogs, and goeth running about the forests⁴?"

Therefore if we fast, let us fast aright; and, after the examples of the ancient holy fathers, let us alway couple prayer with our fasting. So shall both we, our fasts, and our prayers please God.

The Twenty-Third Chapter.

FOURTHLY and finally, forasmuch as the word of God is the singular and unspeakable gift of God, given of him to be "a lantern to our feet and a light to our paths," to turn souls from idolatry unto true godliness, to give wisdom to the humble,

Psal. cxix.

Psal. xix.

[¹ Quotquot viros virtutum vidimus, non sine jejunio legimus ascendisse: nec aliquid magnum moliti sunt, nisi prius abstinentia præcessisset. Quotiens aliquid a Deo obtinere conati sunt, jejunio incubuere et lacrymis, et pernoctantes in orationibus, ciliciis carni hærentibus supplices beneficia postularunt. Nec defuit proventus, ubi ad pedes Dei sacrificium contriti cordis offerens, se prostravit humilitas; sed prope fuit invocantibus se Deus, et porrexit manum naufragis, et subveinit afflictis.—Cypr. Op. Oxon. 1682. De Jejun. et Tentat. Christi. (Arnold.) p. 35.]

[² Id. ibid. See Vol. I. p. 162, note 2.]

[³ The editor has not discovered these precise words; but see Basil. Op. Par. 1721-30. Const. Monast. cap. i. Tom. II. p. 536.]

[⁴ An putatis illum jejunare, fratres, qui primo diluculo non ad ecclesiam vigilat, non beatorum martyrum loca sancta perquirat, sed surgens congregat servulos, disponit retia, canes producit, saltus silvasque perlustrat?—Ambros. Op. Par. 1614. Serm. xli. Dom. 111. Quadrages. Tom. V. col. 58.]

to make the faithful penitent hearts glad, to lighten the eyes of the ignorant, to teach the true religion, to improve errors and heresies, to amend sinners, and to instruct all degrees in righteousness, "that the man of God may be perfect and prepared unto all good works;" it is convenient, whether we hear it of other or read it ourselves, that we both hear and read it with great reverence and all humility, seeing that not man but the Holy Ghost is the author of it, which breathed into the hearts of holy men the knowledge of it, and put in their minds what they ought to write; as St Paul saith: "The whole scripture was given of God by inspiration." And St Peter recordeth the same, saying: "The scripture came never by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." If the holy scripture then cometh from God, and God be the author of it, who dare presume either to hear or to read it, but with an humble reverence and reverent humility?

As St Austin saith: "By the books of the holy scripture God himself and our Lord speaketh unto us, and sheweth unto us the effect of a godly will. Let us then consider and mark well with what honour the message of that God and Lord ought to be received of us. What if a message came unto us very early in the morning from a king, would we not straightways (all other cares laid aside) receive the letters with a ready will and with all devotion, and, after we had read them, labour to fulfil the king's request to the uttermost? And behold, from the heaven of heavens the King of kings and Lord of lords, yea, and our Redeemer hath vouchsafed to direct his letters unto us by the prophets and apostles, not that he should commit unto us any service necessary for him, but signify what things may do us good unto salvation and glory." O with what reverence and great honour ought we then to receive, read, or hear the letters of this⁶ everlasting King and immortal God, sent for our glory and for our salvation, seeing that by them not man, but God speaketh unto us, as our Saviour Christ testifieth: "He that heareth you (he speaketh of the preachers of God's word) heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." Now that we may come reverently and humbly to the hearing of God's word, it shall not be unfitting to use our fast unto this end also, that we may come unto it with fasting and empty stomachs, that our mind and inward man may have the purer senses to understand, the clear sight to behold, the more open ears to hear, and the greedier stomachs to digest the holy mysteries of God. For likewise as he is no meet man to pray unto God, that cometh out of the tavern sweating and set on fire with drinking of hot wine and eating of delicious meats; so in like manner is he no fit man either to read or to hear the word of God, that hath a full gorge and stuffed belly. The more the body is filled, the more is the mind dulled, and made unapt to receive any message from God. "But albeit the outward man decay and be made feeble for a time, yet the inward man is renewed day by day, and made strong." And this meant the holy fathers and godly bishops of Christ's church in times past, when they appointed fasting on the evens of solemn feasts, that the people by their fasting might be made the more apt the day following, when they came to the temple, to hear the blessed word of their salvation.

The holy letters do testify that, when Moses received the law, he was in the mount with God, and fasted forty days and forty nights, before the tables of the law were delivered unto him: whereof we may learn how reverently we ought to take the word of God, and not to come unto it with unwashed feet, as they use to say. And this is to be noted by the way, that, as Moses' fasting was found worthy to receive the law of God, so likewise when he came down from the mount and saw the people drunk and mad, singing and piping, dancing and leaping, he threw down the tables

[⁶ In quibus libris tua dignitas optime exercere se novit: quia per illos nobis loquitur ipse Deus et Dominus noster, et piæ voluntatis nobis demonstrat affectum. Recognoscamus et recogitemus, quali honore nobis illius legatio sit accipienda. Quid si a rege legatio aut indiculus ad nos veniret, numquid non mox aliis curis postpositis prompta voluntate et cum omni devotione literas acciperemus, et legentes implere satageremus? Et ecce de cælo Rex regum

et Dominus dominantium, immo et Redemptor noster, per prophetas et apostolos dignatus est nobis dirigere literas suas: non ut aliquod servitium sibi necessarium nobis demandet, sed quæ ad salutem et gloriam nobis prodesse possint innotescat.—August. Op. Par. 1679—1700. De Salutar. Document. cap. ix. Tom. VI. Appendix, col. 194.]

[⁶ Folio, *his*.]

2 Tim. iii.
God's word is reverently to be both read and heard.

2 Tim. iii.
2 Pet. i.

Ad Julianum, Ep. cap. 11.

2 Cor. iv.

Why fasting was instituted on evens of solemn feasts.

Exod. xxiv.

Belly beasts are not meet to receive the word of God. Exod. xxxii.

of the law, and brake them on pieces, by this declaring that epicures and belly-gods be no worthy and meet vessels to receive the new wine of God's word.

Neh. ix. When the children of Israel at a certain time came together to read the book of the law of the Lord, they fasted the whole day, that they might read the holy scriptures with the more reverence, and be made the more meet to have the Holy Ghost present with them to teach them by his godly inspiration.

2 Esdr. v. Esdras also, being greatly desirous to have certain secrets opened unto him, was commanded of Uriel the angel to fast seven days first of all. Which thing he did, and had his desire satisfied.

Dan. ix. x. In like manner, after the prophet Daniel had fasted and prayed unto the Lord for knowledge of certain mysteries, Gabriel, the angel of God, came and revealed unto him the secrets of Christ's incarnation, passion, death, &c.

Bar. i. When Baruch read his book before the king and the king's council, and before all the people, they all wept, fasted, and prayed before the Lord.

Matt. iv. Before that our Saviour Christ took upon him the office of preaching, to declare unto the people the joyful tidings that he brought from heaven, he fasted forty days and forty nights, and did eat nothing at all; giving us example by his fasting, not to fast the like fast, (which is impossible and above the natural strengths of any man,) but to come unto the word of God through fasting with all reverence and humility, whether we read or hear it.

Acts i. ii. The apostles of Christ likewise, before they universally preached the kingdom of Christ, fasted and prayed; and as they were fasting and praying, the Holy Ghost came down upon them, and endued them with the knowledge of all languages, and taught them the true understanding of God's holy mysteries.

Acts x. To end, Cornelius, being very desirous to know the true and approved religion before God, fasted and prayed unto the Lord; and God graciously satisfied his desire.

The Twenty-Fourth Chapter.

We must come to the word of God reverently.

THUS see we that all godly men both of the old and new testament used abstinence for the most part, when they should either preach, hear, or read the word of God, that they might come the more reverently unto it, and be made the more meet to handle so holy and worthy mysteries. It is convenient therefore that we also, if we will use fasting aright, do follow the examples of these holy men whensever we intend either to preach, read, or hear the word of God; and not unreverently to come unto the holy scripture as unto profane writings, after the example of many ungodly persons, which without all humility and reverence read the word of God as though it were an ethnick chronicle, a book of man's statutes, of Bevis of Hampton, of Guy of Warwick, of Robin Hood, and such other like fond and foolish fancies; yea, there want not (the greater shall be our plague) which scorn the word of God, and most shamefully abuse it, some unto scoffing and jesting, some unto the taunting of other, some unto the upholding of their fleshly liberty and corrupt manners, some unto the maintaining of wicked opinions, &c., whose destruction sleepeth not, whose damnation is at hand.

Abusers of the word of God.

Matt. vii. For, if it be not lawful to "cast pearls before hogs, nor to give that is holy to dogs," neither is it lawful for hogs to touch pearls, nor dogs to taste that is holy.

Exod. xii. If they were punished that did eat unleavened bread at the feast of the passover, if Uza were stricken unto the death for touching the ark, if that guest that came unto the marriage, not having the wedding garment, was bound hand and feet, and cast

2 Sam. vi.
Matt. xxii.

1 Cor. xi. into utter darkness, where weeping and gnashing of teeth is, if the Corinthians were plagued for abusing the Lord's supper; let not those swinish epicures, doggish papists, licentious libertines, ungodly anabaptists, gross gospellers, and wicked worldlings think that they shall escape unpunished, if they go forth to abuse the word of God, or to come unreverently unto it. For the holy scripture is the message of God, brought unto us from heaven by his holy ambassadors the prophets and apostles, yea, by his own dearly-beloved Son, that King of glory, which sealed and confirmed it with the

shedding of his most precious blood: it may not therefore be lightly regarded, nor unreverently handled. "For if he that despiseth Moses' law," saith St Paul, "dieth Heb. x. without mercy under two or three witnesses, how much sorer, suppose ye, shall he be punished, which treadeth under foot the Son of God, and counteth the blood of the testament, wherewith he was sanctified, as an unholy thing, and doth dishonour to the Spirit of grace?"

That we therefore may humbly, reverently, devoutly, and honourably come unto the preaching, hearing, or reading of the blessed word of God, let us not neglect this noble virtue of fasting; but, after the example of the aforesaid godly men, prepare ourselves by the diligent exercise thereof to be meet to handle so holy and heavenly mysteries. By this means shall it come to pass, that God, which is the author of the holy scripture, shall alway be present with us by his holy Spirit, and teach us the true knowledge of his godly will, unto the glory of his blessed name, the profit of his holy congregation, and the singular comfort of our conscience.

Now have we heard, first, what the true and christian fast is: secondly, how The conclu- sion of the book. we ought to fast: thirdly, what the true use of fasting is. It remaineth that we be not like that negligent servant which knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, Luke xii. and therefore is beaten with many stripes; but rather that we be likened unto that good seed which bringeth forth her increase, some an hundred-fold, some three-score- Matt. xiii. fold, some thirty-fold. If we now know the true doctrine of the holy scripture concerning fasting, let us practise it in our conversation, whensoever any such occasion is offered as heretofore is declared; and at all times let us "live soberly, righteously, Tit. ii. and godly¹ in this present world." Let us not with the abuse cast [a]way the use:

but let us so much the more gladly exercise the godly manner of fasting, because the ungodly papists rail on us, and continually beat into the simple people's heads, that we, which profess the gospel, abhor and condemn all fasting and praying, all commendable customs and godly ordinances; that "by well-doing we may stop the mouths 1 Pet. ii. of foolish and ignorant men," and that "they, which backbite us as evil-doers, may see our good works and praise God in the day of visitation;" to whom be all honour and glory for ever and ever.

Give the glory to God alone.

[¹ Folio, *godly.*]