

Fasting as a Factor in Soul Growth

NOT INFREQUENTLY questions concerning the benefit or detriment of fasting comes before the writer [Max Heindel]*, and it may therefore be well to elucidate the origin and rationale of this practice that we may determine what effect, if any, it has upon soul growth.

Under the ancient dispensations it was required that sacrifices of bulls and goats should be made as atonement for sin, for man then treasured his material possessions even higher than today, and felt keenly their loss when forced to give them up for such a purpose. Even in modern days indulgences

the vehicle of sense perception; the Reflecting Ether, which is the storehouse of memory. He was thoroughly instructed in the functions of the two lower ethers as compared with the two higher. He knew that all the purely animal functions of the body depended upon the density of the lower ethers, and the two upper ethers composed the soul body, which is the vehicle of service, and he aspired, naturally, to cultivate this glorious garment by self-abnegation and by curbing the propensities of the lower natures, just as we do today. These facts were kept secret from the masses, as said, or rather they should have been. But some neophytes

Fasting for soul growth is a pseudo-method which has exactly the opposite effect of that which it was designed to accomplish by its short-sighted originators.

are bought and forgiveness of sins promised anyone donating a sum of money to the Catholic Church for purchasing candles and similar paraphernalia required in the service. But there has always been an *esoteric teaching*, which is being promulgated exoterically today, and this teaching does not accept the sacrifice of an animal, money, or other possessions, but *demands that each one makes a sacrifice of himself.*

This was taught to the aspirants in the ancient Mystery School when they were prepared for the mystic rite of initiation. To them were explained the mysteries of the vital body, how it is composed of four ethers: The Chemical Ether, which is necessary to assimilation; the Life Ether, which furthers growth and propagation; the Light Ether, which is

*Reprinted from the December, 1915 Rays, when Max Heindel was the editor. His comments precede Dr. Leech's.

who were over-zealous to attain, no matter how, forgot that it is only by service and unselfishness that the golden wedding garment composed of the two higher ethers is grown. They thought that the occult maxim,

*Gold in the crucible,
Wrought in the fire;
Light as the winds,
Higher and higher.*

meant only that so long as the lower nature, the dross, was expelled, it did not matter how. And if they could find an easy method, they would have left only the gold composed of two higher ethers, the soul-body, in which they could then enter the visible world without let or hindrance. They reasoned that as the chemical ether is the agent of assimilation, it could be eliminated from the vital

body by starving the physical vehicle. They also thought that as the life ether is the avenue of propagation, they could starve it out by living celibate lives. By following that method, so they reasoned, they would retain only the two higher ethers, and therefore they practiced all the austerities they could think of, fasting among others. By this process the dense body lost its health and became emaciated. The passionate nature, which sought gratification by the exercise of propagative function, was stilled by castigations. It is true that in this horrible manner the lower nature seemed to be subjected, and it is also true that when the bodily functions were thus brought to a very low ebb—visions, or rather hallucinations, were often the reward of these misguided people. Others who heard of their supposed sanctity were eager to imitate them. Thus their example has diverted thousands of seeking souls from the true Way.

But the result obtained by these misguided people and their followers is far from being what was intended by the training in the Mystery school. The candidate was there taught, first and foremost, that the body is the temple of God, and that to defile, destroy, or mutilate it in any manner is a great sin. Indulgence of the appetite is a sin, a defiling practice which brings with it certain retribution, but it is no more to be reprehended than the practice of fasting for soul growth. Right living is neither feasting nor fasting, but giving the body those elements which are necessary to maintain it in the proper form of health, strength, and efficiency as an instrument of the spirit. Therefore, fasting for soul growth is a pseudo-method which has exactly the opposite effect of that which it was designed to accomplish by its short-sighted originators. "I am the door," said the Christ, "if any man enter not by the door, the same is a thief and a robber."

Similarly with the practice of celibacy for the sake of soul growth, the maxim enunciated at the beginning of this paragraph applies equally well. It is reprehensible when men and women made in the image of God degrade themselves by indulgence of the passionate nature to a status lower than that of beasts, but it is equally reprehensible when those who live otherwise good and holy lives refuse to sacrifice their aspirations to give a waiting soul the

body and environment it needs, that they may have all their time for self-development.

They may by fasting attenuate the chemical ether, and by their fanatical selfish celibate lives they may also eliminate the life ether to a great extent, but these measures will never build the golden wedding garment which is the 'open sesame' to the mystic marriage feast, for want of which some who have succeeded in surreptitiously entering—by just such illegitimate methods as fasting, castigation and celibacy—will be thrown out into outer darkness.

While, as we have shown, fasting for soul growth is utterly wrong and reprehensible, it may sometimes be necessary to fast for the sake of health, but it should be understood, that under normal conditions, there ought to be no necessity for such measures. If we live right, eat the proper food, get the necessary amount of sleep and adequate exercise, we do not need to fast any more than we need to take medicine. Dr. Leech shows some of the benefits of fasting for health in the following article. □

RANDOM SHOTS ON FASTING.

The observation and study of forty-odd thousand patients during a quarter of a century of continuous practice has impressed me profoundly of the importance of some of the neglected small things. When to eat and when not to eat seems an insignificant thing, but it concerns our very physical existence and often has much to do with our moral welfare. Yet in all the medical literature I am unable to find a practical book on the subject of fasting. There is a shameful dearth of medical writings along this line.

No acute infectious disease can be cured without fasting or having assimilation cut short at some point. The most important desideratum in the treatment of enteric typhoid fever is a two or three week's fasting. If the attendant fails to do this, nature interferes by producing anorexia, laxity, and delirium. Abstinence is the first thing thought of in an attack, or threatened attack, of appendicitis. In this condition, and a host of kindred troubles, if we give food we but add insult to injury.

The physician who has a robust patient suffering from acute arthritis will bring about a cure by an absolute fast lasting from four to fourteen days, providing he does not fail to supply him with suffi-

cient water and sees that the heart has proper support. Local anodynes may be necessary to alleviate the pain, but the degree of suffering is rarely great enough to demand morphine. Morphine will prolong the period necessary for fasting and will increase the nerve symptoms by locking up the secretions, preventing elimination, and causing the re-absorption of toxins.

Some may claim that they cure acute rheumatism by medication alone and not taking any heed to the amount and quality of food ingested. If so, the creosote, guaiacol, salicylates, or whatnots they may have given, arrested digestion and assimilation, forcing the physical organism to fast by being unnecessarily burdened. Iodine, phenol, and other antiseptics in enterics cut short in a nauseating manner the desire for food, compelling mechanically the system to fast. Fasting is not the doctrine of nihilism, but it is the old problem of when to or when not to medicate. It is no less a crime to give a sick infant food when not needed as it is to give morphine when it is not demanded. Either so given will either kill the child or prolong the disease.

An all-cereal and vegetable diet would practically eliminate appendicitis from the category of medicine, relegating it to the shelf of medical curiosities. A wineless and a meatless diet would reduce the divorce evil fully 90 per cent. It is but the natural law of vibration and it will gradually whip us collectively into obedience. An all-vegetable diet is not demanded.

The well-fed dog which barks daily after an automobile goes on absolute fasts three to five times a year, and after each period comes forth with renewed

energy. As a prophylactic of disease and the prolongation of life and that we may be better able to subdue our passions, it is my opinion that all strong individuals should fast from food absolutely from one to three days several times annually. It adds to the constructive work, giving the system ample time to eliminate poisons and rest from the overburdens.

Diuretics and purgatives may rapidly eliminate, but there are times when they are burdens to already overworked organs and vessels. Quick elimination, however valuable in some instances, is not necessary in healthy individuals. It is well here to caution those who fast to keep their friends ignorant of the fact during the period, and also to beware of self-pity; throwing off constantly that feeling of sorrow for one's self and keeping the body and mind lightly engaged. An idle brain and prolonged fasting will render one liable to subjective phenomenon where the person might become obsessed by an entity or "elemental" of another plane of existence. In eating

or fasting we must ever bear in mind that our Ego (real Self) is not

our physical body, and the more ponderous our dense body becomes, the less control has the Ego over vibrating atoms therein.

Judicious fasting is but living the "life," and it alone will banish from our system arteriosclerosis, enlarged prostate, hepatic, and renal calculi. Reckless yielding to our appetites and desires is more disastrous to our existence than war, and I will venture to state that amativeness [the author's euphemism for sexual promiscuity—Ed.] is the primary etiological factor in the production of cancer and mental poverty. □

—W. Stuart Leech, M. D.



Ripening Barley

Photostream