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Greetings in Jesus' name.

Recently at the end of October we see startling news of a prominent Buddhist Thai Abbot Thammathorn Wanchai who was defrocked because he was caught red-handed wearing a military garb over his saffron robe impersonating

a military personnel and having a rendezvous with two female companions. Pornographic magazines, lingerie, condom and alcohol were found in his secret residence.

Religious figures are always under severe scrutiny in their behaviours and conduct, sometimes knowingly and at other times unknowingly such as Wanchai's case where his misdeeds was captured by an undercover ITV television camera crew. Many Christians have testified that they are often subjects of scrutiny by their work colleagues and relatives. They are often criticised and remarks such as "You are Christians how can you do that?" being hurled at them. Kenneth R. Samples noted that "virtually everyone who has publicly identified himself or herself as a Christian has encountered non-believers who base their rejection of Christianity on the apparent moral failures of individual Christians or on the reprehensible actions of Christians corporately through the centuries. While the objection is expressed in many forms, its central thrust is that the hypocrisy of Christians invalidates Christianity.

A thorough, sensitive response to this objection involves three elements: 1) identifying its illogic, 2) clarifying a common misperception about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and 3) discussing the emotional issues behind it.

Choosing to reject Christianity because "there are too many hypocrites in the church" or because of "a bad experience with Christian people" is to commit a fallacy known as the "trivial objection." In the study of logic, a trivial objection "focuses critical attention on some point less significant than the main point or basic thrust of the argument." The fallacy is committed when an arguer actually raises minor (and/or inconsequential) criticisms of a given position, but then erroneously asserts that the criticisms succeed in completely undermining the given position. The term for this type of fallacy does not indicate that the pain inflicted by Christians or so-called Christians was trivial; so we might do well to avoid the term in conversation with a wounded non-believer. When it comes to evaluating the truth of Christianity, however, Christians' success or failure in

adhering to biblical principles (ethics) is not the crucial issue. The central issue is whether or not the historical and factual claims of Christianity are actually true (e.g., Was Jesus of Nazareth truly the divine messiah? Did Jesus, in fact, rise from the dead?). From the standpoint of logic, the ethical inconsistency of some Christians (while certainly unfortunate and never to be condoned) has little bearing on the central truth-claims of Christianity. As Christian apologist John Warwick Montgomery once quipped, "If Albert Einstein were arrested for shoplifting, would that make  $E=mc^2$  wrong?"

The hypocrisy objection is often exacerbated by the non-believer's confusion concerning the true nature of the Christian faith. Many people see Christianity as primarily a system of ethics. In their thinking, to be "Christian" is to follow certain ethical principles, which will inevitably result in the individual becoming a "better person." This is indeed a serious misunderstanding. Christianity is about Jesus Christ, who He is—God incarnate—and what He accomplished—redemption. British theologian Alister E. McGrath articulately describes Christianity's true focus: It is impossible for the Christian to talk about God, salvation, or worship without bringing Jesus into the discussion, whether explicitly or implicitly. For New Testament writers, Jesus is a window onto the nature, character, and purposes of God. Jesus is the ground of salvation. Since the time of the New Testament onwards, Christians have worshiped Jesus as the risen Lord and Savior of the world.

The Bible describes sin as a debilitating force that permeates the being of humankind (see, for example, Ps. 51:5; 58:3; Prov. 20:9; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:3; 1 John 1:8). Nonbelievers often fail to realize that according to Scripture, conversion is the beginning—not the end—of a long process of transformation. Moral and ethical perfection is not instantaneous (1 Kings 8:46; 1 John 8-10). Thus a certain level of immaturity and imperfection, including some hypocrisy (though always regrettable) can be expected among Christians. We believers spend a lifetime struggling, not to gain freedom from sin's penalty, but rather to gain freedom from sin's power over our attitudes and actions. The ultimate transformation, of course, awaits the Christian only in the eternal age to come.

Unfortunately, we Christians reinforce the misunderstanding when we convey the message that to be a Christian means to follow a list of rules. Certainly, commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ demands submission to God's authority and willingness to obey His commands, but true righteousness comes by "divine rescue": Jesus Christ has rescued us from our sin through His perfect life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection from the dead. McGrath again provides some helpful clarification: "Christianity is a strongly ethical faith. This does not, however, mean that Christianity

is about a set of rules, in which Christians mechanically conform to a set of instructions. Rather, it is about a set of values which arises from being redeemed."

Closely related to the charge of personal hypocrisy is the more complex and grievous objection concerning all the evil done throughout history in the name of Christ (e.g., the crusades, the inquisition, the war in Northern Ireland). First, while we Christians must accept the fact that Christian history has a dark side, nevertheless we do not have to accept that all those who performed evil actions in the name of Christ were truly Christians or were following Christ's instructions. Their actions represent the very antithesis of His expressed will. Christian philosopher Thomas V. Morris remarks, "Certainly organizations calling themselves 'Christian' have often had deleterious and even disastrous effects on human society. But such movements have clearly diverged at least as far from the gospel of Christ as they have from the restraints of common morality. Sheep ought not to be judged by the actions of wolves who wear wool." Morris also points out that religion in general, and Christianity in particular, can be a "magnet for the unscrupulous" who prey upon and exploit the sincere and trusting souls who belong to the community of faith. Further, to blame "religious wars" exclusively on religion, on Christianity specifically, is naive. Religious wars of the past and present arise as much from economic, political, and social conflict as from religion per se.

Ironically, when Christians violate their own moral principles, it is their own worldview that provides the basis for moral judgement. What basis does secular humanism provide? Where do such concepts as right and wrong come from? If Christianity were to be judged according to the moral and ethical fruit it has produced, we would in all fairness be forced to factor in all of the goodness and benevolence that Christianity has been responsible for over the past two millennia. As Christian philosopher Richard Purtill points out, many of our contemporary views concerning social justice are deeply rooted in the Judeo-Christian religious tradition. For example, the view that all people are endowed with inherent dignity and moral worth is grounded in the timeless biblical truth that human beings were created in the image of Almighty God (Gen. 1:26-7).

A discussion of logic (and illogic) and clarification of what being a Christian means may be important steps along the way to discovering—and discussing—a person's deeper, often emotionally-charged reasons for rejecting Christ. Here we must proceed with care and compassion, as we would treat a life-threatening injury. An emotional arrow or sword may need to be pulled out, but not without some anaesthetic, antiseptic, bandaging, and follow up. In some cases, a warning about the danger of letting the wound become or remain infected with bitterness may need to be given.

In light of the tenderness and humility such a conversation demands, we Christians would do well to live transparent, exemplary lives, repenting not hiding from sin, motivated by hearts full of gratitude to God for his loving kindness toward us (Rom. 12:2; Tit. 2:1-15). Because of His grace, we can admit both to God and to fellow humans when our actions are hypocritical. After all, what better place for hypocrites to be than in church where the transforming power of God can continually convict, forgive, and renew us day by day?"

*Pastor Martin Yee*

## **Apologetics 101**

### **An Answer to the Hypocrisy Excuse**

#### **References:**

1. T. Edward Damer, *Attacking Faulty Reasoning*, third edition (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1995), pp. 159-161.
2. Alister E. McGrath, *An Introduction to Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), p. 75.
3. McGrath, pp. xix-xx.
4. Thomas V. Morris, *Making Sense Of It All* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), p. 152.
5. Morris, pp. 152-53.
6. Richard Purtill, *Thinking About Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976), p. 136.

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## **Letter from Mrs Kusserow to Dorothy Ow**

**Mrs Carol Kusserow writes:**

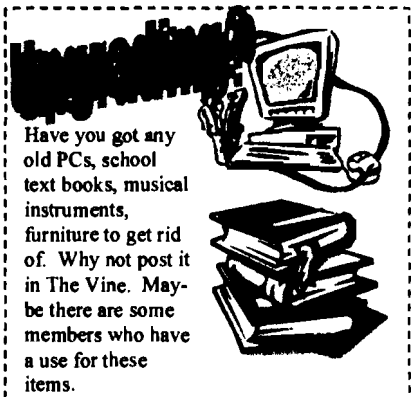
*Pastor is now serving in his first congregation in the North West Ohio Synod of the ELCA after leaving Tanzania in September 1998 and resting for sometime in Pittsburgh.*

*Instead of buying a house, they rented a small house in a rural area. The address is.:*

**19701 Anderson Road  
Bowling Green, OH 43402**

*Their new e-mail is - [kusserow@wcnet.org](mailto:kusserow@wcnet.org)*

*Pastor tried to send a message to David Ho but did not receive a reply.*



# REFORMATION in the age of GLOBALISATION

(Message by Rev Dr Choong Chee Pang delivered at the Lutheran Church in Singapore's Reformation Service 2000, 29 Oct 00, at Harbour Pavilion)

It was a first for me and indeed a great privilege to listen to Dr Choong deliver his message eloquently in one language and immediately translate it himself into another language. The impact of the message on the audience was not diminished by the translation, which is usually inevitable when an interpreter has to be used.

What is REFORMATION? The word is synonymous with Martin Luther. He was born in 1483 in Germany. As a university student, his life seemed set for a secular path. That was not to be. He was ordained a priest in the Roman Catholic Church and even made the pilgrimage to Rome. As a young priest, Martin Luther never felt at peace. He saw too many corrupt practices of the church and had great struggles with how such abhorrent sinfulness could be justified by a righteous God. On Oct 31, 1517, he communicated openly to the public his disagreement with and challenge to the priests. He was particularly concerned with the practice of indulgence. This great day was the beginning of the Reformation as we know it today. His views spread to all of Germany, to all of Europe and later to the world.

Martin Luther was pressurised to renounce his position but he remained staunch. The Church burned all his writing and in 1521, he was excommunicated from the Church. Despite this, he continued to translate the Bible to the common man's language. This helped the Reformation movement tremendously.

Dr Choong cited 2 verses as being most descriptive of the meaning of Reformation – Ephesians 2: 8, 9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast." Yes indeed, it is not

what we do which saves us but God's wondrous grace.



What then is Globalisation? Dr Choong clearly spelled it out as a process. A gigantic tidal wave of transformation that the world is caught in. Although its impact is phenomenal, the process is a dangerously subtle one, which affects all aspects of human existence. The frightening thing is that it is not stoppable by any human endeavour; only God's divine intervention can arrest it.

But Globalisation is not all bad news. Dr Choong went on to elaborate on the pros and cons of Globalisation.

## PROS

1. It makes the world a much smaller place where intermingling between different cultures, races, languages need not be hindered unnecessarily by geographical constraints.
2. The world has become a global village. Due to the advances of Information Technology, the world's resources are more accessible and easily shared by all. There is tremendous increase in the volume of world trade.
3. No nation can afford to remain isolated from the world community. Traditionally closed cultures like China and Vietnam have to open up their doors to remain viable.

## CONS

1. Due to the close proximity of states, differing cultures and backgrounds, there is a tendency for conflicts to arise. This has been referred to as the "clash of civilisations".

2. Increase in world trade brings in its wake increase in competition across nations. The larger players in the global arena, the fittest, will probably dominate. The less able will have to fight hard for survival. This may explain why some developing nations are reluctant to jump on the Globalisation bandwagon. They perceive it as a subtle form of Neo-imperialism or colonialism.
3. Globalisation also brings about a 'de-humanising' process. The dignity, identity and worth of an individual are lost. The community has become faceless.
4. Individuals are reduced to mere digits in the computer. Businesses only recognize your email address. There is a massive drive to woo customers via the Internet.
5. There is also a frightening tendency for the human race to want to play God with their senseless dabbling in biotechnology. Incredible amounts of resources are being diverted to dangerous exploitations of natural sciences; e.g., cloning of animals.
6. Our beautiful earthly home presented to us by our Creator is in sad danger of losing many of its natural richness. There is incredible damage being done to our environment and delicate ecological balance.

What is the relevance of Reformation in the face of Globalisation making massive in-roads to our existence?

Dr Choong reminded us in his message that God's directions and instructions have always been relevant and will always be. The turbulence of the world must not deflect us from our quest to always look to God. We must not be caught up in the worldly web of cyber-hype to the extent that we lose sight of God.

*Iris Goh*

*Ed.*

*YES, in the midst of our struggles in the age of Globalisation, we should not lose our spiritual focus to the daily hustle and bustle. The Reformation was like the breaking of a new dawn in the church. Yet, it was not a reformation that came gradually; neither was it a response to people's expectations of a change in a corrupt church. The Reformation was budding in a person named Martin Luther as he went through dramatic personal experiences. It finally burst forth with 95 theses on a church door, setting into motion a wave that was both sudden and unstoppable. The far-reaching aftereffect of the Reformation that ultimately changed the face of Europe could be attributed to the response of one man to God's calling. It was not merely an answer to a public clamour.*



*In today's world, are we looking forward to a reformation of a different kind? A reformation from worldly indulgences with computer gaming, individualism, materialism, internet yellow culture, etc. - all in the name of "cannot-help-it" encumbrances we face in life?*

*Globalisation itself upon the advent of IT has caught nations unprepared for the forces that it unleashes in a brief period. The climactic changes of scenes on the international stage (of politics, economics, ideological battles, etc.) at short intervals tell us in no uncertain terms that change is one certainty in life we cannot escape from. Nobody can gainsay what will be the next wave that will be unleashed by the will of God, whether by way of dramatic global happenings or the humble stands of individuals. Will we be as unprepared for it as we have for the forces of Globalisation?*

*In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, when Martin Luther alone made his stand against the decadence of the*

church of his time, he faced coercion to retract his position. Steadfastly, he chose to stick to his conscience and declared: "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen."

Martin Luther was aware of his human powerlessness against the Roman Emperor and the princes of Germany. He counted on God to help him and so the Reformation was wrought. Today, we are all cognisant of our human powerlessness in harnessing the positive aspects of Globalisation to counteract its overriding negative forces churning the world. Whenever we celebrate Reformation Day, we are reminded of our Lutheran heritage. In the age of Globalisation, the story of Reformation is also a story of hope that change for the better, no matter how distant it is in our imagination, is always possible with God. This change may come like a tsunami without warning. Meanwhile, we can take our personal stands in life according to our conscience and count on God to bring about the necessary reformation of a different kind for a better world.

John Lee

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## GOSPEL MISSION TO THE BLIND - UPDATE

The Gospel Mission to the Blind (GMB) was established some twenty years ago. It is an interdenominational ministry, which seeks to reach the blind with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We can also be involved in the ministry as a prayer-partner, financial supporter, befriender, a volunteer transport provider, helper in making computer data entries or simply a promoter of GMB's ministry. Over the years, God has greatly blessed this ministry as our visually-impaired brothers-and-sisters-in-Christ availed themselves and their resources for His use. In the year 2000 alone, as many as twenty new contacts were made. The GMB has been visiting and befriending these new contacts. Some of them have

started coming for Bible lessons, follow-ups and fellowship meetings.

It is common for anyone when confronted with blindness due to an accident or sickness to harbour suicidal thoughts while others are tormented by rejection, depression and fear. Often their problems are so great and there seems to be no solution. So here's where the role of GMB comes in. They get these people connected to the Vine, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who will be able to help them. Just like us, these blind Christians are also chosen by God to be fruitful in spite of their blindness. So let us remember them in our prayers, asking God to give them a greater burden for the lost and the boldness to share the Gospel with their friends and family members.

One thing that impresses me when I last visited them at their premises located at Guilin Building (8 Lorong 27A Geylang #02-06) is their hope and trust in the Lord. And they demonstrated this hope by multiplying prayers through various means - prayer meetings, dissemination of prayer letters, recruitment of prayer partners, etc. The work of the GMB includes the visitation ministry, children's Bible class and student care program. They have financial and transportation needs. Sister Cheng Choo is one of GMB's faithful staff members. She had shared with us the Word of God at JCC before. I take this opportunity to encourage you to join them in spirit and pray for their needs, and provide them whatever practical assistance you can.

You may also reach GMB through email at [gmbld@singnet.com.sg](mailto:gmbld@singnet.com.sg). Although Sia Cheng Choo is blind, she is able to personally read and reply to all your mail (via a voice synthesizer).

**Se Ping**



## 4 How Lutherans Worship

The words and actions through which Lutherans worship God are many and varied. Representing a variety of ethnic groups and patterns of piety, Lutheran congregations are seldom identical in the way they worship. Still, for most Lutherans, certain facts hold true:

1. Lutheran worship is liturgical, following a common order of service adopted by the Church.
2. Lutheran worship is biblical. It has roots in the life of the Old Testament people and of the New Testament Church. It uses the language of Scripture and celebrates the biblical message.
3. Lutheran worship employs the historic heritage of Christian worship common to major branches of the Church, as it has developed over 20 centuries.
4. In the spirit of the Reformation, Lutherans worship in the contemporary language of the people. Lay persons, as well as the clergy, participate actively in appropriate leadership roles.
5. Lutheran worship employs the arts---musical and visual---as gifts from God to be used to God's glory and for the instruction of God's people.

Most Lutherans use the *Lutheran Book of Worship* as their liturgical guide. It provides resources for a rich life of congregational and personal prayer, centered in the Service of Holy Communion. This document will help you understand and participate in this central Service of Word and Sacrament.

### The Preparation

In most churches, an organ prelude begins the worship. This is not just to establish a "mood," but is itself an offering---a creation of artistic talent for God's glory. The music is often related to the liturgical theme of the day or season, such as a chorale prelude on one of the hymns to be sung. During this time, worshippers may listen, offer personal prayers in silence, or meditate on appropriate literature, including the psalms and lessons for the day.

### Confession and Forgiveness

A brief order of spiritual preparation frequently precedes the Service proper so that with "clean hands and a pure heart" we may "stand in the holy place" of the Lord (Psalm 24). We remember our Baptism by invoking the Name of the Triune God, and perhaps by making the sign of the cross, which was first given us in the baptismal rite. In response to a scriptural invitation, we confess our sin and ask for pardon. The presiding minister reminds us of divine mercy and declares us forgiven in the name of God who made us children in Holy Baptism.



## **The Ministry of the Word**

### **The Entrance Rite**

We begin the Service with a Hymn or Psalm while the leaders of worship (and often the choir) go to their places. Then the presiding minister greets the assembled congregation in words similar to those used by the apostles in addressing early Christian churches (see Romans 1:7). Because worship is not a solo performance by the minister, but an activity of the people, here and elsewhere in the liturgy, the congregation responds to the greeting.

In the Kyrie, we greet our Lord as people of old greeted a king when he came to their city. In a series of petitions, a minister asks for peace and salvation for ourselves and the world, the people joining in the response, "Lord, have mercy" (in Greek, *Kyrie eleison*).

The Hymn of Praise which follows expresses our joy for the gifts which our Lord brings. "Glory to God in the highest" is an ancient song which begins with the angels' Christmas carol (Luke 2:14) and swells into a profound adoration of the Holy Trinity. An alternative is "This is the feast," a modern song based on phrases from the Book of Revelation.

The Prayer of the Day marks the conclusion of the entrance rite. It is brief, focusing on a central theme for a particular Sunday or holy day. Like several other prayers in the liturgy, it is introduced by a greeting and response in which minister and people ask the Lord's presence upon each other. We make this prayer our own by responding "Amen."

### **The Scripture Readings**

The Word of God in Holy Scripture has always been a major element of Christian worship. Several Christian bodies, Lutherans [and Episcopalians] among them, use a three-year lectionary. Three Scripture lessons are usually read at each service, interspersed with other biblical passages. The First Lesson is usually a selection from the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures. This is followed by a Psalm, one of the hymns of the Old Testament.

The Second Lesson is usually a portion of one of the New Testament epistles or letters to the churches. It is followed by the Verse, a brief poetic excerpt from either Old or New Testament.

The climax of the readings is the Gospel, a section of the books that record the words and deeds of Jesus. Each of the first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) is primarily associated with one year of the three-year cycle of lessons, while the Fourth Gospel (John) is found among the readings during all three years. We stand to hear the

Gospel, for our Lord's own words are spoken. An acclamation of praise to Christ precedes and follows it.

### **Sermon, Hymn, Creed**

The Church's response to and interpretation of the Word of God follows the Scripture readings. The Sermon, usually based on one or more of the lessons, is a living witness of the Gospel, expounding the Word and applying it to our own times and conditions.

The Hymn of the Day, which may be sung before or after the Sermon, fits the theme of the lessons and sermon. It is taken from the Church's rich treasury of poetry and music by which many generations of believers have offered praise to God and witness to their faith.

The Creed embodies the Church's ancient and universal confession of faith in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed may be used, depending upon the season of the church year.

### **The Prayers**

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession for the needs of the Church, of society, and a wide variety of individuals form a fitting conclusion to the Ministry of the Word. These prayers vary from service to service according to circumstances of time and place. The people enter into the petitions through the frequent response: "Hear our prayer," or "Lord, have mercy."

### **The Ministry of the Sacrament**

#### **Peace, Offertory, Offering**

In an upper room in Jerusalem, Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples and instituted the Lord's Supper, saying "Do this for the remembrance of me." (1 Corinthians 11:24) After Easter, the risen Christ "was known to them in the breaking of bread" (Luke 24:35). We are brought together by our obedience to Christ's command and our need for Christ's continuing presence in the Sacrament. As we begin the communion rite, ministers and people share the Peace with one another through words and gestures. The *Book of Worship* notes, "The peace which enables people to live in unity and the spirit of mutual forgiveness comes only from Christ whose Word has been proclaimed. Without the intention to live in such unity, participation in the sacramental celebration is a mockery." The Offering of the people is gathered as the altar table is made ready for the Lord's Supper. Offerings of money are given as an expression of love and gratitude for God's blessings. Along with these gifts, bread and wine for Holy Communion are frequently brought forward and presented. An Offertory

canticle, hymn, or psalm is sung by congregation or choir. Ministers and people join in a brief prayer of offering.

### **The Great Thanksgiving**

Just as Jesus at table with his disciples offered thanks in accordance with Jewish practice, so we embody in our celebration of Christ's Supper a great prayer of thanksgiving. It begins with a Preface in which the presiding minister bids us lift our hearts to God and give thanks. Then a Proper Preface states the particular reason for thanksgiving appropriate to the day or season. This leads to a climax in which we join in the canticle "Holy, holy, holy." Here we unite with the heavenly hosts ([Isaiah 6:3](#)) and with the Church on earth ([Matthew 21:9](#)) to adore God and to welcome the Savior who came for our redemption and who now comes to us in the Sacrament. The Great Thanksgiving may continue with the Eucharistic Prayer in which the history of God's salvation is recounted. The scriptural words which tell of Jesus' institution of the Sacrament are recited, in order to consecrate the Bread and the Cup. We pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit that we might be prepared rightly to receive the Body and Blood of Christ which, according to his promise, are now truly present in Holy Communion. Then we say our distinctive prayer of fellowship in Christ, the Lord's Prayer, which is here also our table prayer.

### **The Communion**

All is now ready for our Holy Communion with Christ and the members of Christ's Body the Church. As the consecrated elements are distributed to the communicants, we sing a hymn, "Lamb of God" ([John 1:29](#)) as a confession of who it is we are receiving and as a prayer for the blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation which Christ has promised to give us. Other hymns may also mark our communion devotion. "The Body of Christ, given for you; the Blood of Christ, shed for you," the ministers say as they give the Sacrament to the people.

### **The Post Communion**

As the Lord's table is cleared, we sing a song of rejoicing. This may be the biblical "Lord, now you let your servant go in peace" ([Luke 2:29-32](#)), in which Simeon rejoiced that he had seen Christ, a joy we share because we have received Christ in the Sacrament. A final Prayer asks that we may carry out in our lives the implications of Holy Communion. The presiding minister pronounces a Blessing using either a formula similar to the one that began the Service or the Aaronic benediction from the Old Testament ([Numbers 6:24-26](#)). A minister speaks words of Dismissal, telling us to "Go in peace. Serve the Lord." in daily life, which is also a worship of God. We respond with a shout: "Thanks be to God."

# GRIK REFLECTIONS

by Patrick Boey



The trip up to Grik in Northern Perak, near the Malaysia-Thailand border was mainly to visit Pastor Sin & his wife, Siew Bee and to help out in some ministry work in their church. The small town of Grik consists of 3 parallel roads, which can be covered within less than half an hour. The Truth Lutheran Church (Chinese Church), which Siew Bee is the pastor, is located at the main road. They have Youth Ministry on Saturday evening, Sunday School on Sunday afternoon and a Worship Service on Sunday evening. I



am impressed with the emphasis of prayer where they would have a half-hour prayer session before each event. A couple of families (children included) would come every night (Monday to Friday) to sing and pray together.

However, God has different plans for us at Grik. We had the unique opportunity to visit four Orang Asli settlements at Temenggor Lake, about an hour drive from Grik and another hour boat ride, deep into the jungle. These visits were not in our original itinerary. These settlements were also 'new' to Pastor Sin & his wife. We were 'rejected' at one settlement, which is Muslim dominated. However, we did have an exciting time of pioneering work at the other three settlements that welcome our presence. We even managed to preach the Gospel through an impromptu program of games, balloon modelling, story telling on Jonah, singing & praying for sick. Those who prayed to accept Christ displayed keen desire to know more about the Christian faith.

I am thankful to God for this tremendous experience of doing pioneering work. However, we leave behind the tedious but important task of follow-up. Perhaps God will, in his unique way, meet the spiritual needs of those lives that we have touched. I am constantly reminded on these verses: - *As the scripture says, "Everyone who calls out to the Lord for help will be saved." But how can they call out to him for help if they have not believed? And how can they believe if they have not heard*



*the message? And how can they hear if the message is not proclaimed? And how can the message be proclaimed if the messengers are not sent out?*

Truly, the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few. We need to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send more labourers.



## Who's Responsible for Conviction?

*Let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way (Romans 14:13).*

I grew up with a good, moral background, and I even went to church, but I wasn't a Christian. In those days I really enjoyed beer, especially on a hot day after mowing the lawn. When I received Christ as a young man, I joined a church, which preached total abstinence from alcoholic beverages. I wasn't a drunk, so I decided to scratch that rule and keep my beer.

My beer-drinking wasn't excessive, but two years later the Lord convicted me about it. With the conviction came the power to obey. So I gave it up. I'm so glad that no one laid a guilt trip on me or made an issue over my drinking an occasional beer.

Sometimes we are tempted to play the role of the Holy Spirit or the conscience in someone else's life on issues where the Scriptures are not crystal clear: "Christians don't drink or smoke"; "You should spend at least 30 minutes a day in prayer and Bible study"; "Buying lottery tickets is not good stewardship." I'm convinced that the Holy Spirit knows exactly when to bring conviction on issues of conscience. It's part of the process of sanctification, which He superintends. When we attempt to play His role, we often do little more than convey criticism and rejection. Our job is to accept people and let the Holy Spirit bring conviction in His time.

God has given us the ministry of reconciliation, not condemnation. Paul wrote, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their passes against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19). There is a time and place to confront Christians about immoral behavior. But when we do so, it is only because we care about their relationship with God and desire to protect others.

Neil Anderson

# "Does Falun Gong Concern You?"



The title question is the caption of a leaflet I found in my letterbox. The leaflet was in an envelope addressed "To Resident" together with "An open letter to the public from Falun Gong practitioners" appealing for "justice" with a touching picture of a woman allegedly to be the victim of cruel action.

Apparently, the Falun Gong movement is feeling the heat of the crackdown on it in China. It is now seeking Singaporean support to:

- Call or write letters to the Chinese Embassy
- Call or write letters for action or attention from local media, government or human rights organization, etc.
- Help to tell the truth about Falun Gong to people around.
- "Sponsor us to present Falun Gong to your organization or community"

As a Christian, I have observed significant contradictions between Falun Gong and the Christian faith. This concerns me enough to contemplate my response to the pertinent question the Falun Gong practitioners ask: "Does Falun Gong Concern You?"

At the onset of the Chinese ban on Falun Gong, I shared some brief thoughts about it in the August 99 issue of The Vine. I posed a few questions seeking to know the truth:


- Is Falun Dafa just a form of exercise as its adherents say or its it a cult?

**Kind-hearted People, Give Us Your Hand of Justice**


*An open letter to the public from Falun Gong practitioners*

*Dear Friends*

Falun Dafa (also known as Falun Gong) is an ancient practice of exercise and meditation that is found upon the eternal characteristics of the universe: Truth, Compassion and Harmony. Doing so is the foundation to long life, spiritual growth, well-being as well as to peaceful principles. Falun Gong has saved over 100 million of people in over 60 countries worldwide since its introduction to the public in 1992 by its founder, Mr. Li Hongzhi. With the universal love and the saved people have been including teachers, Falun Gong brings to people peace and help to them build a more peaceful and better world.



In July 1999, the United King, Taiwan, and a number of groups of people in the United States and other countries have organized Falun Gong and several practicing an individual. As a result practitioners world. China, in the face of intense international pressure against Falun Gong, officials at present to force through their measures on the Appeal Office in Beijing to order to prevent the truth on the Chinese government. Lastly, they were refused the right to file an appeal. Some of them were forcibly taken into custody. Thousands of ordinary Chinese citizens who were in Falun Gong have been arrested, pulled to their local government, forced to kneel several hours, and were banned to speak with the police control. Police officers at some of the country have been given objectives to use violence against Falun Gong practitioners. In some cases they were physically tortured for such Falun Gong practitioners they have imprisoned. According to media reports, 40 Falun Gong practitioners have been sentenced to death.



The pictures on the left are those of Mr. Zhou, who is 32-year-old lecturer in Psychology at the Beijing Technical and Business University, (October 19, 1999) who was sentenced to the life of public the Asian Falun Gong practice. Three days later the public is at the in the hospital of his location and turned to his head and back. These pictures are the public had been recorded referring to the multiple in death, maybe go into being up again alone.

*As the suppression continues, more and more of*

- Do people practise Falungong just to keep fit or do they ... believe in the *gong* (and meditation) as providing a bonding with their master Mr Li Hongzhi who had been reported as having compared himself with Buddha and Jesus?
- Is Falungong as innocuous and beneficial as its leader claims, or is it an evil superstition as the Chinese government lambasts?

I left the questions open and the months passed by quickly. Unexpectedly, a full-page advertisement taken out by the movement in the *Streets* newspaper on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2000 gave me some fresh understanding of what the Falun Dafa is or isn't. According to the advertisement,

- *"Practitioners transcend national, racial, cultural and religious boundaries."*
- *"Falun Dafa emphasizes above all the development of one's mind-nature (Xinxing). The cultivation of Xinxing has many aspects: ... [including] letting go of unhealthy attachments and ultimately, aligning oneself with the essence of the universe - Truthfulness, Compassion and Forbearance... A tranquil, sitting meditation ends the exercise session."*
- *"It [Falun Gong] teaches one to be a good person. There is no religious ritual or worship. People are free to come and go. Hence, it is not a religion. Everything about Falun Gong is open ... Whereas cults are secretive and mysterious, Falun Gong is righteous."*
- *"Falun Gong is a powerful cultivation system ... It is only through studying the essential teachings of Falun Gong compiled in the book 'Zhuan Falun' [Turning the Law Wheel] and doing the exercises, then will you be able to experience the benefits for yourself."*
- *"... the teachings of Falun Gong expressly state that practitioners should at all times concentrate on the cultivation of their heart and never get involved in politics. If they do so, then they will not be considered as followers of Falun Gong and they will have to bear all consequences themselves."*

If we go by the definition of *religion* as a belief in a god, then Falun Dafa is not a religion. However, another definition of *religion* from Webster's Dictionary is "a personal awareness or conviction of the existence of a supreme being or of supernatural powers or influences controlling one's own, humanity's or all nature's destiny." I think of Buddhism as a religion, but it does not teach about the existence of a god.

The practice of meditation as an essential finale to Falun Gong exercises gives me a hint that Falun Dafa may reasonably be recognised as a religion. Besides, it involves a faith in something or some being or some esoteric existence and followers of the movement are advised to conscientiously follow the teachings in the book 'Zhuan Falun' [Turn the Law Wheel] in order to "align oneself with the essence of the universe".

While practitioners claim that Falun Gong is not as secretive and mysterious as cults are, I do find a mystifying element in the idea of a *Falun* (or Law Wheel), the wheel concept that bears some resemblance to Buddhist belief. In fact, the Falun Emblem is described by Mr. Li Hongzhi in *Zhuan Falun*:



*"The Law Wheel of the Buddha School, the Yin-Yang of the Tao School, and the ten-directional world are all reflected in the Falun -the Law-Wheel."*

*"The configuration of Falun is a miniature of the universe and has its own form of existence and process of evolution in each of the other spaces. Therefore, I call it a world."*

"In his book, Zhuan Falun, and in a series of lectures around the country and abroad, he described the importance of cultivating what he called one's 'Inner Nature' by upholding the three principles of Truth, Benevolence and Forbearance. By doing so, the practitioner could move to a higher level of what he saw as a multi-layered cosmos. He explained that Buddha and Jesus, as well as himself, were beings from higher levels who had come to help humankind from the destruction it could face as a result of rampant evil."

(BBC News, April 28, 1999 [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/asia-pacific/newsid\\_330000/330367.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/asia-pacific/newsid_330000/330367.stm))

Indeed, I see in Falun Dafa a transcendental nature and a conflict with my Christian faith when I read the following urging for a response to the question "Does Falun Gong Concern You?" in the leaflet placed in my letterbox:

"Some of you might be searching for your destiny throughout your life. Some of you may have wondered about the meaning of life. Why do we experience birth, aging, sickness, and death? Why did Sakyamuni abandon his kingdom to cultivate in the forest? Why was Jesus crucified after years of painstaking salvation of the people? Why did people believe that he is a 'god' after he resurrected three days later ... In the book 'Zhuan Falun', we have found the answers to these questions. It has pointed out the passage for us to return to where we belong, to return to our purest self ... We feel the need to tell you the truth of Falun Gong as we feel that it is extremely important to your eternal life." (Emphasis mine)

If adherents of Falun Gong do not consider Falun Dafa a religion and they do not consider it a cult either, then might they call it a certain form of belief beyond what a person commonly experiences or perceives by ordinary reasoning? Whatever it is, it certainly is not just a form of physical exercise with nothing more beneath its surface.

I find it difficult to accept the claim in the advertisement in *Streets* that "Practitioners of Falun Gong transcend national, racial, cultural and religious boundaries." What is the pathway to one's perfect eternal destiny? Different religions have their own answers. However, there is only one truth that Christians know from the infallible Word of God in the Bible. In John 14:6, Jesus unequivocally proclaimed, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Can a Christian who upholds the Word of God ever cross his/her boundary of faith to embrace Falun Gong? Can people of different religious persuasions embrace Falun Gong, feel free to come and go, without turning their backs on the teachings of their own religions? The practitioners of Falun Gong want us to believe that this is possible, that people have no trouble crossing religious boundaries doing so!

Another problem I have with Falun Gong is its rejection of politicians because "politics and fame come hand in hand which goes against the principles of Falun Gong." This is a very narrow-minded principle to uphold. If Falun Gong is indeed good, shouldn't it be propagated to each and every person in the world? If each and every person embraces Falun Gong for its goodness and assurance of a perfect eternal destiny, would it not mean the absence of politicians and governments? This not a practical principle of virtue. Surely, not all politicians are/were famous or seek/sought to be famous. It is a sign of illogic for Falun Gong practitioners to issue a sweeping denunciation of all politicians as unworthy characters to be deprived of a good passage by the Falun Dafa to eternal destiny.



With regards to the bold advertising claim that "Falun Gong does not accept any donations," I am rather amazed at the movement's resources to fund its ongoing operations throughout the world - Internet presence, media advertisements, etc.

My answer to the Falun Gong practitioners' question is: "Definitely YES, Falun Gong concerns me, a Christian, very much!"

It is a concern regarding truth vs. evil. I am aptly reminded to be on guard by these words as contained in the Falun Gong leaflet:

*"Dearest friend, open up your faculty and exercise prudence in this great good-versus-evil struggle. Do not believe in fabrications too easily. The truth will shine. Evil will be eradicated."*

I have indeed opened up my faculty and exercised prudence in contemplating what the Falun Gong movement wants me to believe and in determining for myself that the movement's claims are fraught with inconsistencies as I have enumerated above. I do not restrict myself to the leaflets in my letterbox and the full-page advertisement in *Streets*. I am also mindful of what the Bible says to me:

*"But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough." (2 Corinthians 11:3,4)*

Finally, I ought to heed this advice from the Word of God:

*"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong." (1 Corinthians 16:13)*

John Lee



God's  
**Word**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word  
was with God, and the Word was God.*

John 1:1

# **BIBLICAL FASTING**

## **-- WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO DO IT**

Let's begin with a little quiz on the subject of fasting:

1. Who was the first person who fasted in the Bible?
2. What was the longest length of time of a fast?
3. Who were the people who fasted for this length of time?
4. Do you fast on a periodic basis?

Now you probably knew that Moses was the first recorded faster in the Bible. And you also knew that the longest time of fasting was for 40 twenty-four hour days, right? You may have even guessed all three of the men who fasted for that length of time. But the last question is a bit different from the first three. It may even be a little threatening, because it involves an evaluation of our life -- not just head knowledge of Biblical facts. If you are like me, I would try and squirm out of it by asking what you mean by "a periodic basis." But we should not avoid the question. This fourth question is very important. Even more important than the other three.

Fasting has been out of vogue for at least 150 years. In the twentieth century church, the idea seems alien to us. God's Word assumes that fasting will be a regular part of a Christian's life. Yet for most of us, it's not. If we were to make a study of fasting in the Bible most of us would find ourselves challenged about this much neglected area of Christian discipline. I'd like to encourage you to do something about that problem. But before I make that challenge I want to talk to you about what fasting really is, some Biblical principles on fasting, and some of the appropriate occasions for fasting according to the Scripture.

### **A Word About God's Provision of Food**

I don't know if you ever thought much about a Biblical perspective on food. 'Why did God give us food?' 'How are we to think about food?' 'Can we enjoy eating?' The Bible gives us answers to these questions. According to the Scripture, food is given to us as a gift from God for four reasons. Food is given to us for:

**Enjoyment** -- The variety of tastes found in creation is not an accident. God gave us such a wide variety of eatable types of food and a highly developed taste system, so that man would find pleasure in eating. Sometimes Christians, especially when we have been raised in more legalistic churches, have a hard time believing that we are allowed to enjoy anything! But we are! Food is meant to be a source of joy (Ecclesiastes 2:24-25; 5:18). And so are a *lot* of other things in God's creation. We are allowed to enjoy our food.

**Sustenance** -- Even in the garden of Eden, God gave the plants to man to sustain his life and give him power to do the tasks God had assigned him: Genesis 1:30. Later on animals were also given for the same purpose: Genesis 9:3. Both plants and animals are God's provision for our nourishment.

**Fellowship** -- Genesis 18:1-8 gives us one of the first examples of fellowship and food. All through the Old Testament the people of God came together for fellowship over food. God made food for fellowship. He even commanded that some of the sacrifices offered to Him at the temple were to be shared with others. These were communal meals -- meals in which the whole community sat down and ate together (see Deuteronomy 12:6,7,18). Families still find a resource of love, fellowship, discussion, and understanding when they come together to eat.

In fact, in my childhood home, the dining table was one of the few times that we were all together as a family. The meal became a focal point for conversation, communication, discussion and teaching in our household. That's the way God intended it.

The Family of Christ still breaks bread together in the Lord's Supper and one of the purposes of the Eucharist is for fellowship (1 Corinthians 10:17). In Revelation 3:20 Jesus Christ's fellowship with believers is described as a meal. And at Christ's second coming we all get invited to a banquet (Revelation 19:9)! Food was made by God for fellowship.

**Worship** -- Food also is a source of worship. We should be very conscious of the fact that food is a gift from God (Matthew 6:11 & 1 Timothy 4:3b-4). In fact, Paul says that every bit of food "*should be received with thanksgiving*" (1 Timothy 4:3). Hence, every meal becomes an occasion for thanksgiving. When we put food to our mouths at the beginning of the meal (Acts 27:35) and when we sit back in our chair with satisfaction (Deuteronomy 8:10), our natural reaction should be Godward gratitude. According to the Bible food was created to be a source of thanksgiving and worship.

The Bible tells us that food was given for four reasons. God has created food for the purpose of enjoyment, sustenance, fellowship, and worship. Yet God also has a place for fasting in our lives. But before we find out where that place is, let's see exactly what the Bible means when it talks about "fasting".

## What Biblical Fasting is Not

Some people take even the most pure of religious exercises and twist it to their own ends. Fasting is one of those religious acts which people have often misunderstood and misused. So let's be sure that we are clear on what Biblical fasting is not:

**(1) A Physical or Psychological Discipline** -- God never tells people to fast as a purely physical discipline, i.e. dieting for the purpose of making the body beautiful or for some other physical benefit. I'm not saying that dieting is wrong -- only that this is not found in the Bible. Dieting may or may not be helpful to you personally, but the Bible never encourages "fasting" for that reason alone. When the Bible uses the term "fasting" it has spiritual goals in mind -- something very different than Weight Watchers.

As an side comment, let me add that you need to be careful of using Biblical fasting as a spiritual smoke screen for problems such as anorexia nervosa or bulimia. In the case of bulimia, fasting was never meant as a preparation (or a penance) for gluttony. Anorexia nervosa and bulimia are usually evidences of deeper emotional needs which can be met through the help of a competent Christian counselor. Don't "spiritualize" what is really a need for

emotional healing. Seek help from those who care.

Of course, I am not denying that fasting can have physical and psychological benefits. At age 34 I began putting on weight around the middle. I grew 20 pounds in one year. Since I have been fasting on a regular basis the weight gain has stopped and I feel and look better. But I don't fast to keep my weight down. I fast to seek God.

Additionally, many Christians testify to possessing a greater amount of discipline in their lives once they began fasting on a regular basis. The discipline of conquering the desire to eat transfers over to other areas. This is a helpful by-product of fasting, but should not be an end in itself. God never encourages fasting for solely discipline or self-denial reasons. Many of the monks and spiritual hermits of days gone by used fasting in this manner. But that is not a Biblical reason for fasting. God has a higher purpose in mind for fasting.

**(2) A Manipulative Tool** -- Sometimes fasting is viewed as an attempt to twist God's arm or to win His approval. But God doesn't respond to pressure. One group of people in the book of Acts tried to get God on their

side by manipulative fasting: *"In the morning some of the Jews made a plan to kill Paul, and they took an oath not to eat or drink anything until they had killed him. They went to the leading priests and the older Jewish leaders and said, 'We have taken an oath not to eat or drink until we have killed Paul'"* (Acts 23:12,14). But God did not hear their prayer and their plan did not work.

Using fasting in a manipulative way was done by the people in Jeremiah's day too. God said, *"Although they fast, I will not listen to their cry; though they offer burn offerings and grain offering, I will not accept them. I will destroy them with the sword, famine, and plague"* (Jeremiah 14:12). Fasting didn't move God one iota.

We must never think of fasting as a hunger strike designed to force God's hand and get our own way! We don't need to strong arm God. God is good (Psalm 119:8) and eager to answer our prayers. He is generous (James 1:5) and eager to give us 'good things' (Matthew 7:11). Don't use fasting to try to push God into a corner. Maybe God would rather let you starve and join Him in heaven!

**(3) A Hypocritical Religious Exercise**  
-- By Jesus' time fasting had become a very important part of the Jewish life.

Perhaps *overly* important would be a better way of saying it. Based on Luke 18:12a, we know the Pharisees fasted twice a week. The Talmud tells us that this was on the 2nd and 5th day (Monday and Thursday). Why those days? According to the Pharisees it was because Moses went up on Mt. Sinai to get the Law on the 5th day and returned on the 2nd. At least that's what they said.

But if you look closely into Jewish history, you find another possible reason for the Pharisees fasting on Monday and Thursday. Market day in the city of Jerusalem was on the 2nd and 5th day! Everyone from the countryside came to town on those days. It was on these two days that the Pharisees chose to hold their fasts. They would walk through the streets with their hair disheveled; they would put on old clothes and cover themselves with dirt; they would cover their faces with white chalk in order to look pale; and they would dump ashes over their head as a sign of their humility!! Fasting had become a "look at how spiritual I am" exercise. It was a hypocrisy.

Biblical fasting is not hypocrisy. It is not a manipulative tool. It is not a physical discipline.

## What Biblical Fasting Is

First of all, let's look at the root word which is used for "fasting." The Greek word for fasting is *nesteta* -- a compound of *ne* (a negative prefix) and *esthio* which means "to eat." So the basic root meaning of the word simply means "not to eat."

But what does this "not eating" food mean? Why did people in the Bible "not eat?" We find a clue in Leviticus 16:29. This verse says that fasting is synonymous with "*afflicting one's soul.*" We gain some insight here about how the Hebrews viewed fasting. Fasting is more than just "afflicting one's body". It is "afflicting one's soul." In other words, fasting in the Hebrew mind is something my soul participates in. Fasting is denying my self. It is denying not only my own body, but also my own wants. It is a way of saying that food and my desires are secondary to something else. Fasting is "afflicting one's soul" -- an act of self-denial. But it is not only an act of self-denial and here is where the monks and hermits went wrong.

*Biblical fasting is "not eating" with a spiritual goal in mind.* How do we know this? Because Biblical fasting always occurs together with prayer in the Bible -- ALWAYS. You can pray without fasting, but you cannot fast

(Biblically speaking) without praying. Biblical fasting is deliberately abstaining from food for a spiritual reason, goal, or purpose.

## Types of Fasting

Let's take a look at the different types of fasting in the Bible, because I don't want you to feel overwhelmed by the thought of going without food for days and days. There are types of fasting that don't involve such a radical commitment. The Bible mentions three different varieties of fasting:

**The Normal Fast:** In this type of fast the person abstained from food but not water. The duration can be that which the individual or group feels led to set. Jesus fasted for 40 days (Matthew 4:2). However, the more common practice of a normal fast appears to be from one to three days.

**The Partial Fast:** In this type of fast, the emphasis is placed on restriction of diet, rather than abstaining completely from eating. Examples are: Daniel, Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego eating only vegetables and drinking only water (Daniel 1:15) and later on when Daniel alone practiced a partial fast for three weeks (Daniel 10:3).

**The Absolute Fast:** An absolute fast is one in which the person refrains from both food and water. This type of fast

is not to exceed three days. Exceptions to this three day limit (1 Kings 19:8; Deuteronomy 9:9-18 and Exodus 34:28) were based upon direct, divine guidance and care. Examples of the absolute fast are: Moses (Deuteronomy 9:9-18 and Exodus 34:28); Elijah (1 Kings 19:8); Ezra (Ezra 10:6); Esther and her household (Esther 4:16); and Paul (Acts 9:9).

### Why Fast?

God said, *"When you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you"* (Jeremiah 29:13,14). When a man or woman is willing to set aside the legitimate appetites of the body to concentrate on the work of praying, they are demonstrating that they mean business, that they are seeking God with all their heart.

Fasting is an expression of whole-heartedness. This is clear from Joel's call to the nation of Israel: *"Yet even now,"* says the Lord, *"return to me with all your heart, with fasting. ..."* (Joel 2:12).

Andrew Murray said, "Fasting helps to express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything -- to sacrifice ourselves -- to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God."

How do you know when to pray and

fast and when to just pray? That is not a question that someone else can always answer for you. But here is a principle: In God's word we always find fasting connected with a very troubled spirit or a very anxious heart before the Lord. So a reason for fasting is not something you choose on the spur of the moment. Rather the reason is a consuming one. In a sense, it's not something you choose, so much as something that chooses you, because it's that important.

So why fast? To demonstrate that we are seeking God *"with all our heart."* Fasting puts things in proper focus. It is a physical way of saying, "Food and the things of this life are not as important to me now as (fill in the blank)."

Of course, denying yourself food to focus on God and His program shows humility. That is why fasting is also the equivalent of the phrase *"to humble oneself before the Lord"* (Psalm 35:13; 1 Kings 21:29; Ezra 8:21). When a person is really concerned about the things of God, he will humble himself. There will be times when he will abstain from the enjoyment of food to continue concentration and focus on that which is important to God.

*In the next issue of The Vine, we will conclude this Internet extract by looking at Some Biblical Principles on Fasting and Occasions for Fasting*