

tianity was first promulgated. That which was spared by their abstinence on these days, was applied to the support of the poorer brethren."

Some have objected to fasting as savouring of Popery. That it has been grossly abused by the devotees of Rome, is unquestionable. The sentiments of the Reformers are nevertheless decided in approbation of the practice. This fact is clearly established by public confessions and private opinion. *The Latter Confession of Helvetia* says, "Fasting is either public or private. In old times they celebrated public fasts in troublesome times, and in the affliction of the Church, wherein they abstained altogether from meat unto the evening, and bestowed all that time in holy prayers, the worship of God, and repentance. Private fasts are used of every one of us, according as every one feeleth the spirit weakened in him. For so far forth he withdraweth that which might cherish and strengthen the flesh. All fasts ought to proceed from a free and willing spirit, and such a one as is truly humbled, and not framed to win applause and liking of men, much less to the end that a man might merit righteousness by them. But let every one fast to this end, that he may deprive the flesh of that which might cherish it, and that he may the more zealously serve God." Also the *Confession of Bohemia* says, "Touching true and Christian fasting, we teach that it is an outward work of faith, comprehending in it worship, which is done by exercising the body to abstinence, joining therewith all prayers, and giving of alms, and that it is due to God alone; and that among Christians, according as their strength will suffer and their affairs and business desire and permit, at what time soever they use it, in any society, either general or particular, it must be done without hypocrisy or superstition, as the holy scriptures do witness; and Paul, among other things, doth thus write of it: '*Let us approve ourselves as the ministers of God, by fasting;*' and Christ saith, '*Then shall they fast;*' and again, Paul, in another place, '*that ye may give yourselves to prayer and fasting.*'" Calvin says: "Holy and true fasting hath three ends; for we use it either to make lean and subdue the flesh, that it should not wax wanton; or, that we may be better disposed to prayer and holy meditation; or, that it should be a testimony of our humbling ourselves before God, when we are willing to confess our guilt before him." (Instit., book iv. cap. 12.) This may suffice to meet the objection that the practice is Popish in its character, while the opinions of preëminently great and good men since the era of the Reformation may further show that it was not from the lingering shadows of superstition that they thus felt. Archbishop Usher, in *Summe and Substance of Christian Religion*, says: "Fasting is a religious abstinence, commanded of God, whereby we forbear the use not only of meat and drink, but also of all other earthly comforts and commodities of this life, so far as necessity and comeliness will suffer; to the end that we, being humbled and afflicted in our souls by the due consideration of our sins and punishments, may, grounded upon the promises of God, either for the obtaining of some singular benefit or special favour we have need of, or for avoiding of some special punishment or notable judgment hanging over our heads, or already pressed upon us. * * * The Apostles themselves had need of this help of fasting, for their further humiliation; and that even after the ascension of our Saviour Christ, when the graces of God were most abundant upon them. Wherefore it is a shameful thing for men to say that fasting is Jewish or