

ters, where they are redistributed to areas of greatest need.

Special fasts are occasionally proclaimed by the FIRST PRESIDENCY when urgent needs arise. Such was the case on May 15, 1845, when “enough was contributed to supply the wants of the poor until harvest” (HC 7:411). In 1985, Church members observed two special fast days and donated \$10,465,000 to hunger relief and community development projects in Africa, South America, and elsewhere (see HUMANITARIAN SERVICES).

Historically, fast offerings have seldom been sufficient to provide for all the welfare needs of the Church, and shortages have been met from general Church funds. The counsel of Church President Spencer W. KIMBALL remains in effect: “I think that when we are affluent, as many of us are, that we ought to be very, very generous. . . . I think we should . . . give, instead of the amount we saved by our two meals of fasting, perhaps much, much more—ten times more where we are in a position to do it” (CR [Apr. 1974], p. 184).

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ISAAC C. FERGUSON

FAST AND TESTIMONY MEETING

An LDS fast and testimony meeting is normally held on the first Sunday of each month, where faithful members of the Church are invited to bear a verbal witness of their feelings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The meeting usually follows a fast by the members, usually from at least two consecutive meals and from liquids also. The fast is officially broken by partaking of the SACRAMENT of the Lord’s Supper. In modern scripture, fasting is described as “rejoicing and prayer” (D&C 59:14), which implies that it is more than just abstaining from food. That tone of devotion is also the feeling associated with contributing fast offerings, giving the equivalent cost of the meals, or more, to be used for the poor. The fast and testimony meeting becomes the locus of spiritual sensitivity and contrition, of concentration on the things of God.

A member of the BISHOPRIC or branch presidency conducts the fast and testimony meeting. Usually it begins with an opening hymn and an invocation or prayer, which may be followed by the naming and blessing of newborn children and the confirming of recently baptized members of the Church.

After the sacrament has been administered, the person conducting the meeting expresses his testimony, then invites the members of the congregation of all ages to do likewise. Sometimes they stand in place to speak; at other times they come forward to the pulpit. Each one arises, as prompted by the Spirit, and addresses the congregation extemporaneously. In this setting feelings of profoundest concern are often expressed: appreciation of good family relationships, thanksgiving for the blessings of the gospel, recognition of significant changes in lives, and the fruits of obedience. A faith-promoting experience may be shared or a witness given regarding a point of doctrine or attesting divine inspiration. Such expressions are usually concluded by a prayer or petition in the name of the Lord. The experience is at once enlightening, sobering, and moving. Tears are not uncommon amid acknowledgment of weaknesses and efforts to improve, along with gratitude for divine goodness.

Rarely are such individual expressions longer than five or six minutes. Thus a number of children and adults generally participate in a meeting, which usually lasts a little more than an hour, but may be extended or shortened at the discretion of the presiding officer. In any given year a majority of the membership of the Church, young and old, will have participated in this earnest form of witness on fast Sunday.

One precedent for formal testimony bearing was set at the dedication of the KIRTLAND TEMPLE. On that occasion several stood and, under the outpouring of the Spirit, spoke of things they had seen and felt. In Kirtland it was customary to hold fast meetings on Thursday afternoons. Since 1896 these meetings have usually been held on Sunday.

MARY JOLLEY

FATE

Fate, as usually interpreted, is the antithesis of self-determination and responsibility. Latter-day Saints reject on scriptural grounds all appeals to

precausation whether as “fate,” “the stars,” “blind chance,” or even the PREDESTINATION of man by God. Fate in these forms implies a pre-caused outcome of one’s life. Instead, man is seen as having innate autonomies and capacities—the gift of AGENCY—that the divine will guarantees all men: “I the Lord God make you free, therefore ye are free indeed: and the law also maketh you free” (D&C 98:8; cf. 2 Ne. 2:25–27; Alma 12:31; Moses 4:3). People are free to choose obedience or disobedience, good or evil, and most other aspects of their lives, and they are accountable for their choices. The belief that all is fated, stifles, discourages, and hinders the progress and growth possible for the children of God. Fate is considered a negative term in the gospel. Even one’s own momentous decisions influence one’s so-called fate or destiny only as long as the decisions are maintained. The GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST opens to all mankind the opportunity to rise above chance fate in this life and choose eternal life with God.

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GERALD E. JONES

FATHERHOOD

LDS fathers have primary responsibility for providing spiritual and physical support for all other family members (D&C 68:25, 28; 75:28). Giving Christlike service as a husband and father is the most important work a man can perform during mortality. Far more than mere procreation, fatherhood entails the lifelong care of children and loving support of their mother. Elder Theodore Tuttle wrote that for husbands to be effective fathers they should strive to learn and express those attributes they understand Heavenly Father to possess (pp. 66–68).

Latter-day Saints view parenthood as the highest and most sacred calling from God to his children on earth. Mothers and fathers are taught to labor together in faith and love to bring children into the world, to care for them, and to teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ so that they may receive eternal life, thus as parents following the example of their Father and Mother in Heaven (D&C 93:40). Through sacred covenants with God and with each other, men and women establish in this

life families that have the potential to endure forever.

Fatherhood is best represented in men who unselfishly cherish and befriend their wives and promote their children’s happiness and righteousness. This includes nurturing and expressing love, establishing obedience of their children through firmness and warmth, and teaching the gospel in home and Church settings. Fathers are also encouraged to lead by example (Benson, 1985).

Boys and men are taught the characteristics that exemplify loving and responsible fathers. As part of the Primary organization curricula, songs and lessons teach children to admire their fathers and to associate manhood and fatherhood with the characteristics of Christ. As members of a PRIESTHOOD QUORUM, young men are taught self-reliance, self-mastery, achievement, honor and respect for women, and chastity. Youth activities, Church sermons, and family programs also emphasize the importance of service to and sacrifice for others as part of fatherhood. Adult men are exposed to continuing emphasis on fatherhood. Formal instruction in Melchizedek Priesthood quorums is often aimed at motivating and inspiring men to esteem women as fellow children of the Father of all human beings, to observe strict marital fidelity, to give appropriate emphasis to the needs of children, and to learn skills that promote happy and successful lives for all family members.

Men in leadership positions are admonished not to neglect their family duties. When necessary,



LDS fathers lead, teach, play with, and counsel their children as part of their indispensable participation in family life. For Latter-day Saints, no calling or role surpasses a father’s personal obligation to guide his children in righteousness. Courtesy Floyd Holdman (Tokyo, 1986).