

Essene Science of Fasting



THE  
ESSENE SCIENCE  
OF FASTING  
EDMOND BORDEAUX SZEKELY

THE  
ESSENE SCIENCE  
OF FASTING  
AND  
THE ART OF SOBRIETY  
GUIDE TO REGENERATION IN HEALTH AND  
DISEASE

by

EDMOND BORDEAUX SZEKELY



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**FASTING AND SOBRIETY ACCORDING TO**

**THE ESSENE GOSPEL OF PEACE**



## **I Fasting**

Renew yourselves and fast. For I tell you truly, that Satan and his plagues may only be cast out by fasting and by prayer. Go by yourself and fast alone, and show your fasting to no man. The living God shall see it and great shall be your reward. And fast till all evils depart from you, and all the angels of our Earthly Mother come and serve you. For I tell you truly, except you fast, you shall never be freed from the power of Satan and from all diseases that come from Satan. Fast and pray fervently, seeking the power of the living God for your healing. While you fast, eschew the Sons of Men and seek our Earthly Mother's angels, for he that seeks shall find.

The angels of air and of water and of sunlight are brethren. They were given to the Son of Man that they might serve him, and that he might go always from one to the other. Holy, likewise, is their embrace. They are indivisible children of the Earthly Mother, so do not you put asunder those whom earth and heaven have made one. Let these three brother angels enfold you every day and let them abide with you through all your fasting.

And it was by the bed of a stream, many sick fasted and prayed with God's angels for seven days and seven nights. And great was their reward, because they followed Jesus' words. And with the passing of the seventh day, all their sickness left them.

## **II Sobriety**

So eat always from the table of God: the fruits of the trees, the grain and grasses of the field, the milk of beasts, and the honey of bees. For everything beyond these is of Satan, and leads by the way of sins and of diseases unto death. But the foods which you eat from the abundant table of God give strength and youth to your body, and you will never see disease. For the table of God fed Methuselah of old, and I tell you truly, if you live even as he lived, then will the God of the living give you also long life upon the earth as was his.

For I tell you truly, the God of the living is richer than all the rich of the earth, and his abundant table is richer than the richest table of feasting of all the rich upon the earth. Eat, therefore, all your life at the table of our Earthly Mother, and you will never see want.

And when you eat at her table, eat all things even as they are found on the table of the Earthly Mother.

Take heed, therefore, and defile not with all kinds of abominations the temple of your bodies. Be content with two or three sorts of food, which you will find always upon the table of our Earthly Mother. And desire not to devour all things which you see round about you. For I tell you truly, if you mix together all sorts of food in your body, then the peace of your body will cease, and endless war will rage in you.

And when you eat, never eat unto fullness. Flee the temptations of Satan, and listen to the voice of God's angels. For Satan and his power tempt you always to eat more and more. But live by the spirit, and resist the desires of the body. And your fasting is always pleasing in the eyes of the angels of God. So give heed to how much you have eaten when you are sated, and eat always less by a third.

Let the weight of your daily food be not less than a mina, but mark that it go not beyond two. Then will the angels of God serve you always, and you will never fall into the bondage of Satan and of his diseases. Trouble not the work of the angels in your body by eating often. For I tell you truly, he who eats more than twice in the day does in him the work of Satan. And the angels of God leave his body, and soon Satan will take possession of it. Eat only when the sun is highest in the heavens, and again when it is set. And you will never see disease, for such finds favor in the eyes of the Lord.

From the coming of the month of Ijar, eat barley; from the month of Sivan, eat wheat, the most perfect among all seed-bearing herbs. And let your daily bread be made of wheat, that the Lord may take care of your bodies. From Tammuz, eat the sour grape, that your body may diminish, and that Satan may depart from it. In the month of Elul, gather the grape that the juice may serve you as drink. In the month of Marchesvan, gather the sweet grape, sweetened and dried by the angel of sunshine, that it may increase your bodies, for the angels of the Lord dwell in them. You should eat figs rich in juice in the months of Ab and Shebat, and what remain, let the angel of sunshine keep them for you. Eat them with the meat of almonds in all the months when the trees bear no fruits. And the herbs which come after rain, these eat in the month of Thebet, that your blood may be cleansed of all your sins. And in the same month begin to eat also the milk of your beasts, because for this did the Lord give the herbs of the fields to all the beasts which render milk, that they might with their milk feed man. For I tell you truly, happy are they that eat only at the table of God, and eschew all the abominations of Satan. Eat not unclean foods brought from far countries, but eat always that which your trees bear. For your God knows well what is needful for you, and where and when. And he gives to all peoples of all kingdoms for food that which is best for each. Eat not as the heathen do, who stuff themselves in haste, defiling their bodies with all manner of abominations.

For the power of God's angels enters into you with the living food which the Lord gives you from his 'royal table.

And chew well your food with your teeth, that it become water, and that the angel of water turn it into blood in your body. And eat slowly, as it were a prayer you make to the Lord. For I tell you truly, the power of God enters into you, if you eat after this manner at his table. For the table of the Lord is as an altar, and he who eats at the table of God, is in a temple. For I tell you truly, the body of the Sons of Man is turned into a temple, and their inwards into an altar, if they do the commandments of God. Wherefore, put naught upon the altar of the Lord when your spirit is vexed, neither think upon any one with anger in the temple of God. And enter only into the Lord's sanctuary when you feel in yourselves the call of his angels, for all that you eat in sorrow, or in anger, or without desire, becomes a poison in your body. For the breath of Satan defiles all these. Place with joy your offerings upon the altar of your body, and let all evil thoughts depart from you when you receive into your body the power of God from his table.

Rejoice, therefore, always with God's angels at their royal table, for this is pleasing to the heart of the Lord; and your life will be long upon the earth, for the most precious of the servants of God will serve you all your days: the Angel of joy.

(These are excerpts from The Essene Gospel of Peace, Book One)

## **Part One: The Essene Science of Fasting**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Fasting is the most ancient therapy of humanity. Even our forefathers observed that after some days of fasting, a recrudescence of vitality and vigor shows itself in the organism. Nature turns it to account for the purpose of accelerating the functions of elimination, while the marvelous economy of the organism profits by the rest afforded to the digestive functions and by the vital machine's slackened activity resulting from the fast to cast off the impurities of the organism by every channel. In sickness, nature seeks to eliminate, then to eliminate more, and again more, until the choked-up ducts which are the vehicles of vitality and energy are made free and good health is re-established. And it is only when elimination is complete and all the embarrassing waste products of the organism have been evacuated, that hunger, exquisite and natural, appears.

On several occasions enthusiasts have embarked on a fast without having studied the question sufficiently or without having accurate ideas on the physiology of the body. They

have injured the idea of therapy through fasting in the minds of people by incorrect application of an excellent method.

There are some kinds of fasts which must be wholly condemned: irrational fasts, fasts without preparation, fasts of long duration without an experienced guide, and fasts which are only inspired by the wish to follow a system momentarily in vogue.

The purpose of this book is to give a dialectical guide to all who want to profit by this most ancient therapy of mankind, without making mistakes in its application.

## HOW TO FAST

In general, official medicine looks on fasting as a bad and even dangerous thing for the human organism and regards it as the equivalent of starvation. There is some truth in the official viewpoint, but we cannot accept it in its totality, for as it stands it is extreme. At the other end of the pole, certain naturist systems consider fasting to be the high spot of therapeutics and as the best method of cure. I know some very good and reputable naturopaths who make all their patients fast, and who say that by fasting every disease is curable. This concept has a great deal of truth in it, but we must reject it also as extreme. It is true that very often fasting produces excellent results, but there are many cases when a fast, particularly a long fast, may result in accidents and even in disaster. We must therefore examine carefully the problem of fasting from the point of view of physiology.

What happens in the organism during a fast? We know that a great part of the energy of the organism is absorbed by the work of digestion. When we do not introduce food into the organism, then those forces of the organism which are generally absorbed by the work of digestion are freed. And the forces of the organism which are usually paralyzed by the struggle against waste products introduced into the system, and occupied with the elimination of superfluities and fermentations provoked by an irrational diet, are liberated by the rest which fasting secures.

The organism begins to feed upon its own reserves and the liberated forces begin to eliminate various old local accumulations and deposits of waste products, which the organism when occupied with the daily influx of superfluities has neither the energy nor the time to do. During a fast this eliminative process goes on with accentuated intensity. In view of all these useful physiological processes provoked by a fast, we can consider fasting as an excellent therapeutic method. Both from the point of view of the intensity of the metabolic processes which it occasions and from that of the results which it obtains, I do not know of any therapeutic method which can be so effective as the fast.

It is sad, but none the less true, that generally we eat very much more than is necessary for the organism as regards both quantity and quality. Fasting is a good counterbalancing factor against the various alimentary excesses which by our unnatural mode of life we accumulate in the organism. As a general rule more people die of overeating than from malnutrition. And even where the excess food material does not consist of toxic disease-forming material, there is, at the least, a great mass of starchy and fatty substance deposited in the body. Fasting is a radical cure which counterbalances the evil effects of overeating and unwise choice of food. If people were to feed upon a healthy diet and not to overeat, then I should not advise fasting as a therapeutic method, as it would be unnecessary. But since people do, fasting is a very valuable therapy. The value of fasting must always depend on the concrete case. The value and significance of the fast are relative. Those naturopaths who advocate fasting are right for the reason that people are over-nourished. But if they would eat exactly the right diet in quality and quantity, then these naturopaths would no longer be right. The value and significance of fasting thus depends on present habits of eating.

In the future, when man has a healthy diet in both quantity and quality, we shall perhaps no longer be able to say the same of the value of the fast. But fasting is truly very valuable in cases of overeating and in the case of disease caused by over-nourishment.

Now let us consider how to fast. We must pay attention to certain factors which limit both the duration of the fast and its intensity.

First, we will deal with the question of the duration of the fast. When we fast, there are two chief parallel physiological processes going on in the organism. First, there is the dissolution and elimination of the excesses and superfluities of the organism, and secondly there is the exhaustion of the vital cells and reserves of the organism. These are two parallel processes. The most interesting thing in the physiology of the fast is that the organism first eliminates those parts of the organism which are unhealthy, and only when unhealthy tissues have disappeared, does it begin to consume healthy cells and tissues. This fundamental physiological law of fasting gives us the essential rule to be observed in the fast. We must only fast up to the moment when the elimination of accumulated waste products and diseased cells is complete. We must always stop the fast at this point, before the organism starts to exhaust its healthy cells and tissues, which are necessary for the vital functioning of the organism.

Those who exaggerate in fasting often go beyond this stage in the fast, with the result that progressive starvation and even death may ensue. This extremism is unfortunate, for it only brings prejudice against a method of cure which is really very sound. The number of enemies of fasting is unnecessarily increased.

There are also certain derivative rules which change with the individual case. Sometimes an organism is too intoxicated, and the dissolution and stirring up of waste products

creates too strong and intensive an elimination. if this happens, the various excretive and eliminative organs cannot keep up with the accelerated rhythm of elimination, and it may happen that this very heightened elimination will exercise such an intensive chemical fermentative influence upon the organism that it can paralyze the activity of various important organs and so cause very serious irregularities and even death. Therefore a fast may be justified from one point of view, but not from another. The result of the over-intoxication of the organism may be that the manifested chemical energy of the latent toxins overcomes the power of resistance of the internal organs. In these cases, it is highly recommended, before undertaking a fast, to follow for a few months a well balanced, purifying and detoxifying diet, such as outlined in *The Essene Science of Life*. \* This is the second chief rule of fasting.

\*by Edmond Bordeaux Szekely, available from the International Biogenic Society.

The first law, as was mentioned above, is the quantitative law that the duration of the fast should depend on the quantity of unhealthy cells and tissues present in the organism, while the second law of fasting is the qualitative law which says that the intensity of the elimination should depend on the force of the latent chemical energies of the accumulated harmful waste products present in the organism.

if we examine those cases where fasting has resulted in accident or death, we shall find that they have invariably occurred from non-observance of these two fundamental laws of fasting.

The manner in which one fasts is also very important. I have seen individuals who have fasted remaining shut up in a room. This is not at all an optimal way of fasting. When the organism fasts, it does not receive its customary source of energy from the body, so it is necessary to utilize other sources of energy: deep inhalations of sun-irradiated air, which refresh the nerves, pulmonary cells and circulation of the blood. A large amount of oxygen introduced into the organism aids the oxidation of harmful waste products and increases the eliminative capacity of the lungs, thus preventing possible local accumulations of gas.

Similarly, frequent washing of the skin also increases the capacity for respiration of the epidermis. When there is a large amount of oxygen flowing through the skin, this has the same effect as oxygen inhaled through the lungs. And various noxious substances are likewise removed through the skin. The internal dynamic forces of the fast and the chemical and metabolic energies released by it drive from within to without the various superfluous and unfavorable substances of the organism. These all flow in the direction of the skin. if, during a fast, we wash the skin two, three or even four times a day, we shall always find that the color of the water is much darker than when we are not fasting.

The external washing of the skin also has a refreshing influence on the organism. Sun-baths alternated with water-baths also very greatly help the process of elimination. The sun's rays have a bactericidal and fermenticidal influence. Its chemical rays traverse the whole organism and, passing through the cells, greatly help the process of elimination. The rays of the sun, provided they are used always in moderation, also represent a source of thermic energy for the organism, which replaces the warmth generally supplied by food. It is very pleasant for the organism to have the sun as a source of warmth, for generally during a fast the person fasting is more inclined to feel the cold.

### **IS THE ENEMA NATURAL?**

Another application during the fast is the washing of the intestines. The question of the enema is a cause of great disputes among naturists and naturopaths. There are those who say that the enema is an entirely unnatural thing. They say that animals living in a state of nature never have such a thing. They also hold that enemas remove certain mucus material from the lining of the intestines and for this reason, too, they disapprove of them. To them I would answer: Is the consumption of refined and processed foods, laden with chemical additives and preservatives, a natural thing? Have we ever seen wild animals eating cooked food, or white sugar and white flour? We have not. It is natural, therefore, that they should not require enemas. Nor would human beings need them if we were to live naturally. But if we have introduced unnatural things into our bodies, then we have to eliminate them. One unnatural custom breeds another.

During a fast, a great quantity of harmful waste products and other superfluous substances enter the intestines and accumulate there. If they are not eliminated, these substances can create an intense fermentation which can exercise such a local pressure on particular organs and general pressure on the nervous system as to give rise to dangerous consequences, having regard to the general weakness of the organism during a fast.

If we take an enema during a fast, we cannot fail to remark the dense color of the liquid discharged, its contents and smell, from which it is easy to see that it would be less advantageous to leave such material in the intestines than to remove it with the help of a little plain water. If we do not take an enema, all this matter is left in the intestines, with the result that the organism must make a great effort to eliminate all these substances by the usual channels of excretion. This unduly taxes the strength of the organism and also immensely extends the duration of the fast. The longer such substances remain in the organism, the slower the metabolism becomes, and no complete elimination of additional poisons is possible for some time. But as soon as we eliminate them by the enema, then the internal forces of the fast immediately produce new eliminatory secretions. The enema may be repeated to advantage every day of the fast.

In view of our unnatural habits, I do not consider an enema at all unnatural. Fasting itself is not natural, for nourishment is a natural process and its suppression is not. But when we

have been unnatural in our eating, then we must counterbalance and repair it by other unnatural applications, by fasting and enemas. Whether a thing is natural or unnatural is relative. If we did not have an unnatural diet, resulting in excess, superfluous matter clogging the organism, then fasting and enemas would both be unnatural. But since there is superfluous matter accumulated in the organism, then fasting and enemas must be regarded as necessary and even natural processes, for we must help nature get rid of the harmful waste products in the organism. Elimination is a natural process which we must always help. Of course we do not see animals in the forest fasting and taking enemas, but neither do they deviate from the laws of nature regarding their diet. For the completely denatured individual living in our present artificial civilization, an enema as an adjunct to successful fasting is a very necessary thing.

The effect of having an unnatural diet for some years is that the intestines are full of unwholesome matter and inferior fermentations. In such an environment, a large number of parasites, both visible and invisible, multiply constantly. In most cases, evacuation of the bowels is not regular or normal and the waste matter is never entirely discharged from the intestines. It is for this reason, particularly in the large intestines, but in the others as well, that inferior stratified layers are formed.

The nutritive juices are absorbed into the organism through the inner surface of the intestines and consequently they always reach the blood infected with this fermented liquid in the intestines. As a result, all the juices of our cellular life are infected in turn and this condition increases our liability to disease.

The microbes of the inferior fermentations multiply by division, and though they are due to a previous flesh diet, they and all their parasites continue to thrive even in the contents of the intestines derived from a vegetarian diet and may remain for several years. They can therefore form the permanent precondition of contagious diseases.

For all these reasons, the enema is necessary at the beginning of our new life. After the fermentations, former parasites and harmful waste products have been eliminated, the intestinal system will regain its vitality and elasticity, particularly if, at the same time as we adopt the new natural diet, we begin the renewal of the body. If we do, normal absorption of the nutritive juices is a certainty. Where reform of life follows on an unnatural diet extending over dozens of years, the intestines should be washed out every day for a week. At the beginning of a fast, the enema may be taken morning or evening, but not less than eight hours after the last meal. After only a few days there will be an improvement in the complexion, indicating the cleansing process within.

### **ESSENTIAL POINTS AND WARNINGS**

The next question is how to know when it is time to end the fast and also what food to eat before and after it. In order to give the answer to both these questions we must examine a

little the physiology of fasting. During the first and second days of a fast we have a very good appetite, which makes fasting somewhat difficult, but usually on about the third day the appetite disappears and a white layer forms on the tongue. Nature is closing the road to foods. When the organism has eliminated all the superfluous substances then the white layer on the tongue disappears and a natural appetite returns. This event indicates the end of the fast. It means that we must start eating again. This is the symptom which marks the time when we should end the fast, but naturally this is only a general rule. There are certain special exceptions to it. In case of great weakness of the organism the fast must sometimes be interrupted earlier on. We must also suspend the fast in the case where the liberated chemical energy of the accumulated toxins necessitates a slackening of the elimination.

We must make certain preparations for the fast. A person eating all the usual "civilized" foods, including meat and other toxic substances, would, if he were to start a fast after such a meal, experience alarming symptoms. He would have intestinal gas, strong intestinal and gastric fermentations and other discomforts. In such a case the sudden commencement of a fast can cause severe irregularities and dangers. It would therefore be advisable to follow a wholesome, natural diet for a few months (as previously mentioned), and then begin the fast only after two or three days upon an exclusive diet of fresh juicy fruit. Nature does not like sudden changes, so between the customary digestive pattern of the stomach and the strong elimination occasioned by fasting, we should interpolate a transitional period of moderate elimination. In this way, alarming symptoms at the beginning of a fast can be avoided. Yet these will only be postponed, for it is very rare to be able to fast for many days without having symptoms, which are the punishment for our past sins. Through them we pay our debts we owe to nature. The person fasting may experience periodic dizziness, and strange black objects may appear in front of the eyes. He may feel extremely weak, or cold, or irritable, or even lose consciousness for a few seconds. Such symptoms very often accompany fasting.

What is the explanation of these phenomena? During a fast the most important role is played by the circulation of the blood. The circulating blood dissolves old accumulations in various parts of the body and in the skin. Its circulation becomes saturated with these chemical accumulations, which from time to time are carried by the blood through certain nerves, thereby occasioning these sensations of blackness, irritability, depression, or momentary loss of consciousness. There is no need to be afraid of these things, for they come and go.

Another symptom during a fast is a change in the color and texture of the urine: it becomes denser and undergoes strange permutations of color, turning yellow, red and sometimes green. And if the urine is left standing for a day, considerable deposits will be found at the bottom of the bottle. This shows the effect of fasting, providing proof that the organism requires a fast, and that elimination is going on within the organism. Similar accumulations form on the lining of the intestines and also on the surface of the skin, for

which reason washing of the skin and of the intestines is recommended. Also, the breath has a bad smell, as there is a considerable elimination of various gases through the lungs. The salivary glands also take part in this elimination, and the person fasting feels compelled to spit. The saliva itself contains eliminative matter. The economy of the human organism does not desire that this should remain within, so it impels the patient to spit it out. All things considered, fasting is not exactly pleasant, but it is extremely useful and necessary, and the temporary inconvenience is more than compensated for by the anticipation of future vibrant health and well-being.

Those who undertake a fast should withdraw into a natural environment and fast in the open air, with sunshine in moderation and plenty of shade. They should get away from the temptations of the outer world, for the sake of both themselves and those around them. It is better to go away and fast by oneself, in order to avoid tempting foods, well-meaning interference, etc., which may cause one to break the fast. "When you are all alone, you are all your own," said Leonardo da Vinci. One should seek the company of fresh air, water and sunshine (in moderation), reading the various volumes of *The Essene Gospel of Peace*,\* in order to be psychologically and spiritually fortified. A fast is an excellent time to open oneself up to the absorption of new sources of energy, harmony and knowledge.

How should the fast be ended? It should end much as it began, but instead of taking juicy fruits for the first meal, simply a glassful of fresh fruit juice eaten with a small teaspoon should be taken. This should be thoroughly mixed with the saliva. The interruption or termination of a fast with meat or even any concentrated or nourishing food can have catastrophic results. It is most important to end the fast with fresh fruit juice, preferably from fruit which is organically grown and ripened in the sun. Such fruit contains the most superior water, rich in organic mineral salts, vitamins, enzymes and the accumulated energies of the sun. After two or three hours, one can take a second glass of juice, and so on. The following day, in addition to the fruit juice, one can add some fresh fruit, and a tender, vegetable salad, composed of *ripe, juicy* vegetables in season, such as cucumbers and tomatoes, in small amounts and chewed extremely well. It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that all the food taken immediately after the fast must be eaten in very small amounts, must be chewed and mixed with the saliva thoroughly, and must, above all, be fresh and raw. Following this pattern, gradually one can eat more nutritive foods until normal weight is reached. It is hoped that one might never return to pre-fast eating habits, but follow instead a diet of fresh, raw fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, sprouts, fresh raw milk and eggs (these last only if available pure and fresh), and so keep the organism healthy.\*

\*Translated by the author, available from the International Biogenic Society.

After fasting, the human organism is like a dry sponge; it has a more intensive capacity for absorption than at other times. It is, therefore, most important to pay great attention to what is eaten in the first days and weeks succeeding the fast. During the fast, the organism

will have lost much superfluous weight. Afterwards it reconstructs, and the person who has been fasting will gain weight very rapidly. The organism absorbs everything for use in the reconstruction of new cells. if, therefore, unhealthy foods are eaten after fasting, the organism will be built of unwholesome material, and much of the benefit of the fast will be lost. On the other hand, if the organism is reconstructed after the fast with wholesome materials, then the new cells will be of the finest quality. In the few weeks succeeding a fast, raw foods rich in vitamins and enzymes should be eaten in preference to cooked, for in that way the organism can construct new cells more perfectly. Once the natural weight has been regained, then one can begin to eat in moderation the various cooked foods which one is accustomed to. I do not generally advise eating cooked foods at all. I am in favor of a raw diet. Those who read my numerous books on health and nutrition will realize the superiority of raw foods, containing all the valuable enzymes, plant hormones, vitamins and other imponderables. But those who are not in the habit of following a raw diet, and who do not have the will power to adhere to a completely raw regime, should at least do so during the week after the fast, in order that the reconstruction of the organism may be completed in the best possible way. After that, the disadvantage of eating cooked foods is less, for once the cells of the organism have been reconstructed, it can more easily eliminate the superfluous by-products of cooked foods. In later weeks, the organism is not using everything for reconstruction, but at the end of the fast it utilizes everything, absorbing like a dry sponge. This is why the new cells should be constructed with only the finest building materials from nature's table of wholesome raw foods.

\*See *The Chemistry of Youth*, by Edmond Bordeaux Szekely, available from the International Biogenic Society

The same foods have a very different effect upon the body before and after fasting. Before a fast, the organism uses a very small part of the food ingested and eliminates the major part, without much increase in weight generally taking place. But after a fast, a meal of juicy fruit will increase considerably the weight of the body. The organism has quite a different capacity for absorption before and after fasting. This increased absorptive capacity continues for some days.

Fasting is good for those who are healthy, provided it is not exaggerated. Extremes of temperature should be avoided. it is not advisable to fast in cold weather, for then it is necessary to stay in a warm room, which lacks fresh air. On the other hand, when it is very hot, excessive thirst is provoked in the organism and that, too, is not very agreeable for the person fasting. A pleasant temperature, neither too hot nor too cold, is best.

## **THE DRINKING OF WATER**

There is another very interesting problem. Should one drink water during a fast, or not? This is another great point of dispute amongst naturists. There are those who advise so-called "dry fasts," during which nothing is drunk at all, while others give the patient as

much as several gallons of water a day. Without knowledge of the individual case, both extremes can be bad. A little water during the fast is very good, for it helps the dissolution of the accumulated toxins and cleanses the internal parts of the organism; but too much can be a mistake.

Those opposed to water drinking say that fasting provokes increased oxidation in the organism, with a resulting consumption of harmful waste products, and that drinking, as it were, puts out the fire. There are arguments for and against this view. Every problem has two sides.

The answer in every case depends on common sense and the particular individual. There are organisms which have an excess of liquid, and in such cases it would be folly to give more liquid during the fast, for the organism has sufficient work to do to get rid of its own liquid. Excess of water during a fast does indeed suppress the process of oxidation in the organism and gives it superfluous work to do. The organism is thereby prevented from using up its own accumulated liquid, which in the majority of cases is not at all a vital or wholesome liquid. In these cases, the effect of the fast is greater if no drinks are taken. The drying-up of the organism in these cases is very useful, for the excess liquid derives from overeating of highly concentrated foods. It is good to replace this surplus liquid of inferior quality with the fresh fruit juice taken after the fast. On the other hand, there are persons with comparatively dry organisms, and in these cases it is quite a good thing to help the organism with a little water. These cases can be allowed about four glasses of water a day, but not the gallons of water prescribed by certain naturopaths. When a small amount of water is permissible, it is important that it be pure, fresh and unchlorinated.

I have often observed a very great regeneration effected in the organisms of quite old people by proper fasting. Various symptoms occur. For instance, the color of the hair may change, becoming darker, while in the case of baldness, new hair may grow. Often in certain cases teeth are renewed. A good fast, properly commenced and properly terminated, followed by a proper reconstruction of the organism with superior new material (fresh, raw fruits and vegetables, whole grains, sprouts, etc.) often effects almost miraculous changes in the organism. I have observed this in a great number of cases of the almost 124,000 patients I treated during a third of a century of "The Great Experiment"\* at the Essene School of Life at Rancho La Puerta, applying the Essene Biogenic principles of nutrition and fasting, without any adverse effect or accident.

\*See *Search for the Ageless, Volume Two: The Great Experiment*, by Edmond Bordeaux Szekely, available from the International Biogenic Society.

The person who fasts does not rely on doctors nor on drugs for a cure; he undertakes his own healing, relying on the powers latent in his own body, having complete faith in the laws of nature. Thus a fast may prove to be not only an ancient and time-tested method of healing, but also a bridge to greater awareness and self-knowledge.

## FASTING AND LONGEVITY

Saint Paul, the anchorite, who died at the age of 113 years, ate only dates and drank nothing but water. Saint Anthony died at the age of 105 and was content to live on bread, water and a few herbs for ninety years.

We may also refer to the cases of Calcas, from Peru, who died in 1761 at the age of 140; of Pari, from Chile, whom Alexander Humboldt relates having seen at the age of 143; of Louise Truxo, who died in 1780 at the age of 175; of Joss Moreira and Sabina of Lemos, both of Brazil, who died at the age of 115, in 1869 and 1872, respectively.

In our present day we have the remarkable example of the Georgian peasants of the Caucasus, a great many of whom have reached the age of 120 years in splendid health.

All the examples of long living, such as Thomas Carn and Jenkins, instinctively followed the laws of nature. They did not eat cooked foods at all, they ate very little, and their foods were simple and wholesome. In their rare falls from grace, their constant abstemiousness made their organisms immune and able to resist and eliminate inferior processes. The results they obtained were not in consequence of a knowledge of the laws of nature; they only partially followed the law according to the promptings of their organisms. Sobriety became their habit. Because they died only through accident, their age at the time of death was not the extreme limit of their possibilities, as Thomas Carn, for instance, lived to be 207. The Countess Desmond Catherine lived to the age of 145; she ate practically nothing but fruit, led a simple life, and kept her beauty till the last years of her life, according to Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World*. Of the books on longevity the most interesting works are *Macrobotics of Hufeland*, and *L'Almanac de la Vieillesse et des Centenaires ou Dur6e de la Vie Humaine, jusqu'd cent ans et au dela, d6montr6 par des exemples sans nombres, tant anciens que modernes*, by Augustin, Marie Lottin, Paris, 1761 to 1772 (12 vols. each of 460 pages). It is here we find the biography of Jenkins who was born in Yorkshire in 1500 and died in 1670 at Bolton. At a very advanced age he was in excellent physical condition. His two sons both lived to be over a hundred. His life was of the simplest. He never ate in the morning, he always lunched between one and two o'clock on milk or butter with honey and fruit. In the evening he had only milk or fruit for supper, and once in a great while cooked corn meal with the milk. He drank river water, he was very abstemious, and he fasted on several occasions.

All the long-livers were vegetarians, eating very little and only once or at the most twice a day. Thomas Carn lived in the same way as Jenkins and exceeded even his age. His diet was milk products, bread and fruits. He was born in London in 1588 and died in 1795, surviving twelve kings of England. Of the opposite sex the oldest was Charlotte Dessen of Temesvar, the wife of Jean Rovin. The former was 164 and the latter 172 when they died.

The marriage lasted 147 years. From childhood they were very frugal eaters and lived almost exclusively on milk and corn bread.

Generally speaking, all those who live long are altruists and optimists. They know neither hatred nor envy. In addition to their practice of periodic fasts, and their fine diet of natural foods, they also know the value of a good diet in thoughts and emotions.

## LONG FASTS

People without the necessary physiological knowledge, or unable to understand the language of their own organism, should not undertake a prolonged fast without the aid of someone skilled in the physiology of fasting. I have met people who, after reading a book on fasting, have embarked on a fast of undue length, without sufficient knowledge of the technique of fasting. Such people get bad rather than good results, and accidents are liable to occur. Experienced advice is very necessary where a long fast is contemplated.

I do not usually recommend long fasts. As a general rule, it is good to fast one day a week, unless there is some particular reason against it. But I do not advise long fasts for inexperienced people; they do much more harm than good, and afterwards raise a prejudice against natural methods and the therapeutics of fasting. There is an old Latin proverb which says: "One careless friend can do more harm than a hundred enemies." Similarly, fanatical naturists very often do far more harm to the reputation of natural methods than do those who openly declare themselves opposed to fasting and other natural therapies.

For instance, there is the type who, after reading a book on fasting, proclaims that he is going to fast for forty days, as Jesus did. When asked if he has already carried out long fasts, he replies that he has not, but that he is certain that he can manage it. Despite warnings, and advice to confine the fast to three days, he goes away and starts his fast. He fasts one day, perhaps two, three, four, five, or even six days; but on the seventh day a terrific hunger comes upon him and he begins to eat everything in enormous quantities. He practically eats the walls of the house-cooked foods, meat, etc., forgetting all his fine resolutions. The organism absorbs everything after a fast, so he reconstructs his organism with the same bad things as before. Then, after barely escaping serious illness from his post-fast eating binge, he declares that prolonged fasting is only for certain individuals, but not for him, and he never fasts again.

Then there is another type. This type comes along and says: "I am used to prolonged fasts of one or two weeks. Tomorrow I will start my two weeks' fast. I have done this

two or three times already." But if by chance you pay an unexpected call on him, you will either find him eating or else in the act of disposing of some half-eaten food. Such people only make a game of fasting, but they like to assume the role of being great fasters.

Then there are those who for religious and metaphysical reasons wish to fast. They imagine that the longer one fasts, the more perfect the organism will be. They think that their organisms will become more etheric and refined, and that finally they will become like the angels. As to this angelic transformation I cannot comment, but if they continue to follow such a program they will certainly become disembodied. This type can be really dangerous, for those numbered in it are very obstinate and refuse all food. They adopt the attitude that since Jesus fasted for forty days they also must fast for forty days. Besides the obvious fact that the individual capacities of these people are generally much lower than those of Jesus, they seem to ignore the fact that human beings were designed to partake of the wholesome and delicious foods from the table of nature, and while eating is a natural and joyous daily necessity, prolonged fasting is a radical therapy to be used only when absolutely necessary, and then only under expert supervision. I am reminded of a little slogan I saw during the second World War, at the time of gasoline rationing: "Is this trip necessary?" The medical term for this pathological loss of appetite is *anorexia*, and very often these people can continue to refuse food until they starve and die. In a world where famine is a stark reality for millions, such intentional starvation is not only tragic, but somewhat tragicomic. But these are the people who bring much prejudice to fasting. The allopathic physicians who are opposed to fasting catch hold of these cases and write articles attacking natural methods, which they make responsible for the antics of these illogical and senseless creatures. There are always fanatical and dogmatic individuals who exaggerate every good thing, thereby robbing it of its value.

## CONCLUSION

There is one last point on the physiology of fasting. Generally speaking, the more intoxicated the organism is, the harder it is for a person to fast, while the more detoxicated and more perfect the organism is, then the easier it is for that organism to fast. If a person has already fasted many times in the past, he can fast much more easily than one who has not fasted before. The more one fasts, the easier ' it is to fast, for each new renewal of the cells of the organism results in a greater capacity for fasting. On the whole, as I have already mentioned, I do not advise prolonged fasts for the majority of individuals, since they are not able to realize the right conditions for carrying them out. I therefore usually advise only periodic short fasts of two or three days' duration, and only in those cases where no special factors make them undesirable. In the majority of cases one day's fasting a week is quite feasible. it is best done on a day when the person is free and can seek out some sun, fresh air and fresh water, not so easy if one lives in a city (which is why cities are not ideal dwelling-places for human beings). Those who find it difficult to fast one day a week can begin by undertaking a half-day's fast. They can fast for lunch and eat only in the evening. Even a short fast helps the organism very greatly, and little by little they will become able to fast for a whole day. This is the most sensible and practical way of fasting in the circumstances of ordinary life, particularly when at work, or where it is impossible to have fresh air, sun and water.

In conclusion, I hope that I have made one thing above all very clear: that fasting must be adapted to the individual case, and each person is totally unlike another, each with a different background, a different medical history, different health conditions, heredity, etc., all having a bearing on how and when to fast, and for how long. But if common sense and reason are applied, it will be seen that every question can be answered.

## *Part Two: The Art of Sobriety*

### THE REVALUATION OF CORNARO

There have been very few people in history so misunderstood and consequently misinterpreted by their contemporaries, as well as by posterity, as Luigi Cornaro.

His contemporaries looked with great astonishment on this vigorous, creative centenarian with his permanently benevolent, smiling face and countenance, so radically unlike themselves, at least those who were still alive when Cornaro celebrated his one-hundredth birthday, for the average life-span in the latter part of the 16th century was only forty to fifty years. The few who remained to wonder at Cornaro's well-being were vegetating in agonizing pains, chained to their beds, waiting only for death to release them from their sufferings. And this generally one-sided (though accurate) image survived all the centuries (he lived from 1464 to 1566). To many of his contemporaries, he was the respectable and highly esteemed administrator of the Bishopric of Padua and the intimate friend of the highly revered Cardinal Pisani. Several of his friends regarded him with even greater awe, knowing that two other long-lived celebrities, Pope Paul Farnese and Cardinal Bembo, both had become followers of Cornaro's way of living and eating. To the less knowledgeable citizens and neighbors of Cornaro, he was simply the wealthy and eccentric nobleman who lived in a pleasant house in the most beautiful quarter of the city of Venice, the grounds of which were enhanced by several beautiful gardens, intersected by running streams, "in which he always found pleasure of exercising, surrounded by pure air, water, sunshine, and beautiful trees and vegetation."

His niche of fame in the annals of posterity is also limited and not less one-sided. He was considered by many as a 16th century author of several classic treatises, most of which are still gathering dust in the ancient archives and libraries of Italy, holding no special interest for modern times. Regarding his literary form, the most fastidious critics extolled his beautiful style in both Latin and Italian. But concerning the rather "eccentric content" of his letters and treatises, very few comments were written.

Then, in the 19th and 20th centuries, something much worse happened to his image: he was suddenly acclaimed as the forerunner of Naturopathy and diet therapy, hailed as a fanatical, one-sided opponent of "orthodox medical science" of his age as well as the present one. "Selected" texts of his were atrociously translated in several languages and used as vulgar arguments for many one-sided medical sects and their representatives.

But the historical figure, the mind and personality of the great Luigi Cornaro cannot be evaluated from such one-sided interpretations. In the words of Lucretius, *cognoscere est cognoscere causas*. To know, we must know the origins. Therefore, let us analyze not only the character, the mind and the extraordinary erudition of Luigi Cornaro, but also the origin and sources of his remarkable philosophy of life.

The influences on the formation of his philosophy and way of living and eating were several. When I did my research in the archives of the Vatican and in the Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino, I found very interesting material by and referring to Cornaro, as well as numerous letters and marginal notes on books and manuscripts in his own hand.

He was well acquainted with the writings of Hippocrates, the father of western medicine, who said, "let food be your medicine, and medicine be your food." After reading his marginal notes on the Treatises of Hippocrates on the airs, waters and nature, he does not seem so eccentric for spending so much time in his gardens. He also seemed to follow the advice of his favorite poet, Horatius, who said *bene vixit qui bene latuit*. He who hides well, lives well.

In one of his letters to Cardinal Bembo, he quotes Hippocrates several times, especially in these immortal words: "Life is short, and Art is long; opportunity fleeting, experiment dangerous, and judgment difficult." And again: "I will impart the Art of Healing by precept, by lecture and by every mode of teaching to all my disciples."

In another letter, criticizing the deviations of contemporary physicians from the basic principles of Hippocrates, he quotes the following words of the Father of Medicine, in order to keep his illustrious follower on the narrow path: "The regimen I adopt shall be for the benefit of my patients, according to my ability and judgment, and not for any wrong. I will give no drug to any, though it be asked of me, nor will I counsel such. Whatsoever house I enter, there will I go for the benefit of the sick, refraining from all wrongdoing. Whatsoever things I see or hear, concerning the life of men, in my attendance on the sick or even apart therefrom which ought not to be noised abroad, I will keep in silence thereon, counting such things to be as sacred secrets."

He also made very interesting annotations on the texts of Galenus, the greatest follower of Hippocrates. Among them: "So long as we follow these two rules: not to take of more than our stomach can easily digest, and to use only those things which agree with us, we shall not suffer from disease."

He also quotes Socrates in one of his letters to Pope Paul Fa.rnese: "Whenever we follow the path of reason, everything will be satisfactory; but, as soon as we deviate from the path of reason, everything in our lives will go wrong." In another letter, this time to Cardinal Bembol he quotes extensively from Zeno, the classic Greek founder of the Stoic

school of philosophy: "See that you live in harmony with your own reasonable nature, instead of acting unreasonably according to your own caprice. There lies your part and your happiness, for in that way you can avoid every collision with Nature and with the order of the Universe. Thus you can be assured of a pleasant and quiet life. We shall strive to achieve *ataraxia*, the undisturbed peace of mind before the turmoil of this world."

He also underlined in a manuscript this beautiful statement of Epicurus: "We shall seek temperance and a simple life."

Real wealth and freedom consists in a minimum of needs." But his favorite statement of Epicurus, which he quotes in a letter to Cardinal Pisani is this: "We shall avoid pain, always, and seek for pleasure. But of pleasures there are two kinds: for the first, and false, pleasures, we must pay too high a price: the sacrifice of our physical health and peace of mind. And without our health and peace of mind we are unable to enjoy any pleasures. The second kind of pleasures are our eternal companions, the right kind of pleasures. These noble pleasures are the enjoyment of all beautiful things in Nature: the mountains, the forests, the oceans, the colors of the sunrise and sunset. . . all that is beautiful in man's creation: great books, great music, great works of art, friendship and love. . . The wise man shall have as his program of living, the gradual replacement of the false pleasures with our eternal companions, the noble pleasures of life."

He also knew very well the two disciples of Zeno, founder of the Stoic philosophy: Epictetus, the slave, and Marcus Aurelius, the emperor. One of his notes from Epictetus: "Do not be concerned by anything independent of our will, but strive to improve all things which depend on your mind." A beautiful quotation of his from Marcus Aurelius may explain his serenity in the face of all his acquaintances and relatives, who lived their lives in violation of every rule of wisdom: "You cannot make people happy in your way; you must let them be happy, or unhappy, in their own way."

Now we arrive to the analysis of that crucial moment in Cornaro's life, his crossroads of decision, when he became deathly ill in the fifth decade of his "life of ignorance and dissipation." All of Cornaro's biographers, without exception, mention simply that it was "a physician" who led him to a new way of living, and thus to restored health, and never mention him again, leaving this most important influence on his life entirely in darkness. His notes and manuscripts published by his great-grandson, Antonio Cornaro, shed light on this most important person, who completely and radically changed the way of thinking, living and eating of Luigi Cornaro. The anonymous "physician" of Cornaro's biographers was the most respected member of the surviving brotherhood of the Salerno Medical School, and a renowned physician: Father Benedict, professor of natural regime and Cornaro's savior. He was sent to Cornaro's sick-bed by his superior, Cardinal Bembo, to save the life of the most efficient administrator of his Bishopric. It was Father Benedict, from the Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino, who visited Cornaro at the height of his misery and converted him "from Saulus to Paulus." What happened then is common

knowledge from the well-known treatises of Cornaro. The disciple outshone the master, who, according to the Benedictine ethic, intended to remain anonymous.

Let us now mention the greatest scholar of the famed medical school of Salerno: Constantin the African, who, after years of wandering in the eastern deserts, sought refuge in Salerno and then retired to Monte Cassino, the monastery founded by St. Benedict in the sixth century, *there to translate many of St. Jerome's still surviving texts about the Therapeutae, an Essene Brotherhood from Lake Mareotis, Of enormous renown in their use of simple, natural nutrition in the greatest moderation.* His best known work, a condensation of the regime and methods of fasting and eating in moderation of the ancient Essenes (the "Desert Way") was the *Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum*, a handbook of domestic medicine, the most quoted couplet of which is the following: "Use three physicians still: first, Doctor Quiet, next Doctor Merryman, and Doctor Diet."

The medical school of Salerno, mentioned several times, was the earliest and most famous in Europe, and to it flocked students from Europe, Asia and Africa, to study and qualify as doctors of medicine. Father Benedict, the anonymous physician of Cornaro, was one of the most illustrious lights of this famous school, in the 16th century.

The most fascinating discovery I made concerning the life and teachings of Cornaro is this chain of transmission of knowledge: the ancient Essene Brotherhoods and the Essene Gospel of Peace, St. Jerome's translation of the Essene Gospel of Peace, the Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino, Constantin the African, the remnants of the texts of St. Jerome, the Salerno School of Medicine, Doctor Father Benedict, and Luigi Cornaro, the prophet of moderation in all things and of Sobriety, the last echo of the ancient Essene teachings and traditions.

I think it will be appropriate to end this revaluation with a quotation of a great intellectual giant, Francis Bacon, confirming the ideas of Cornaro: "To preserve long life, the body of Man must be considered. Age is nothing of itself, being only the measure of time. A sober diet according to strict rules and always exactly equal [as that of Cornaro] seemeth to be very effectual for long life. Certainly this is without all question: diet, well-ordered, bears the greatest part in the prolongation of life."

"Hope is the most beneficial of all the affections, as it doth much for the prolongation of life, if it be not too often frustrated, but entertaineth the fancy with an expectation of good; therefore, they who will fix and propound to themselves some end-as the mark and scope of the inner life-and continually and by degrees go forward in the same, are, for the most part, long-lived."

In conclusion, I want to emphasize my irresistible urge to overcome the prevalent one-sided image of Luigi Cornaro, who had one of the most all-sided, classic, eclectic minds of all time, with an encyclopedic erudition in all the available knowledge of his era. Most

of all, he was a *civilized* human being, in the truest and finest sense of the word. Perhaps the feature which distinguishes him most markedly from 20th century man is his devotion to *reason* as the guiding force behind man's decisions, as opposed to our modern indulgence of feelings and emotions. Present-day man finds it extremely difficult to give up even the least of his bad habits, no matter how impressive the scientific arguments against it. Yet Cornaro wholeheartedly adopted a regime so strict that even today no physician would hope to keep a patient on it for more than a few weeks, adhering to it with a serenity and cheerfulness more akin to the ancient Greek ideal than to modern western man. ". . . when I had once resolved to live soberly, and according to the dictates of reason, feeling it was my duty as a man to do so, I entered with so much resolution upon this new course of life, that nothing since has been able to divert me from it." This may be what I admire most about Luigi Cornaro: he may have been the "man" whom Diogenes was looking for with a lamp in the marketplace of Athens in broad daylight, and was unable to find.

## CORNARO'S IDEAS

### ON A TEMPERATE AND HEALTHFUL LIFE

It is universally agreed, that custom, in time, becomes a second nature, forcing men to use that, whether good or bad, to which they have been habituated; in fact, we see habit, in many instances, gain the ascendancy over reason. This is so undeniably true, that virtuous men, by keeping company with wicked, often fall into the same vicious course of life. Seeing and considering all this, I have decided to write on the vice of intemperance in eating and drinking.

Now, though all are agreed that intemperance is the parent of gluttony, and sober living the offspring of abstemiousness; yet, owing to the power of custom, the former is considered a virtue, and the latter as mean and avaricious; and so many men are blinded and besotted to such a degree, that they come to the age of forty or fifty, burdened with strange and painful infirmities, which render them decrepit and useless; whereas, had they lived temperately and soberly, they would in all probability have been sound and hearty, to the age of eighty and upward. To remedy this state of things, it is requisite that men should live up to the *simplicity dictated by nature*, which teaches us to be content with little, and accustom ourselves to eat no more than is absolutely necessary to support life, remembering that all excess causes disease and leads to death. Many young men of the best understanding have recognized the necessity of following this way of life, because many of their parents have died in middle life, while I remain so sound and hearty at the age of one hundred and one.

The heavy train of infirmities which had made great inroads on my constitution, were my motives for renouncing intemperance, in the matter of too freely eating and drinking, to which I had been addicted, so that, in consequence of it, my stomach became disordered, and I suffered much pain from colic and gout, attended by that which was still worse, an almost continual slow fever, a stomach generally out of order, and a perpetual thirst. From these disorders, the best delivery I had to hope was death. Finding myself, therefore, between my thirty-fifth and fortieth year in such unhappy circumstances, and having tried everything that could be thought of to relieve me, but to no purpose, my physician gave me to understand that there was one method left to get the better of my complaints, provided I would resolve to use it, and patiently persevere. This was to live a strictly sober and regular life, which would be of the greatest efficacy. He further added that, if I did not at once adopt this method of strict living, I should in a few months receive no benefit from it, and that in a few more I must resign myself to death.

These arguments made such an impression on me, that, mortified as I was, besides, by the thought of dying in the prime of life, though at the same time perpetually tormented by various diseases, I immediately resolved, in order to avoid at once both disease and death, to betake myself to a regular course of life. Having upon this inquired of him what rules I should follow, he told me that I must only use food, solid or liquid, such as is generally prescribed to sick persons; and both sparingly. These directions, to say the truth, I had been given before, but I had been impatient of such restraint, and had eaten and drunk freely of those things I had desired. But, when I had once resolved to live soberly, and according to the dictates of reason, feeling it was my duty as a man so to do, I entered with so much resolution upon this new course of life, that nothing since has been able to divert me from it. The consequence was, that in a few days I began to perceive that such a course agreed well with me; and, by pursuing it, I found myself in less than a year (some people, perhaps, will not believe it), entirely freed from all my complaints.

### **EATING LITTLE MAKES LIFE LONG**

Having thus recovered my health, I began to seriously consider the power of temperance: *if it had efficacy enough to subdue such grievous disorders as mine, it must also have power to preserve me in health* and strengthen my bad constitution. I gave over the use of such meats and wines as did not suit me, and chose those which by experience I found agreed well with me, taking *only as much as I could easily digest, having strict regard to quantity as well as quality*; and contrived matters so as never to cloy my stomach with eating or drinking, and always rose from the table with a disposition to eat and drink more. In consequence, therefore, of my taking such methods, I have always enjoyed, and, God be praised, still enjoy, the best of health. It is true that, besides the two most important rules relative to eating and drinking, which I have ever been very scrupulous to observe (that is, *not to take of either, more than my stomach could easily digest, and to use only those things which agree with me*), I have carefully avoided, as far as possible, all

extreme heat, Cold, extraordinary fatigue, interruption of my usual hours of rest, or staying long in bad air. I likewise did all that lay in my power, to avoid those evils, which we do not find it so easy to remove: melancholy, hatred, and other violent passions, which appear to have the most -profound influence on our bodies. I am a living witness, and so are many others who know me, and have seen me, how often I have been exposed to heats and colds, and disagreeable changes of weather, without taking harm. He who leads a sober and regular life, and commits no excess in his diet, can suffer but little from mental disorders or external accidents.

I conclude, especially from the late trial I have had, that *excesses in eating and drinking are often fatal*. Four years ago, I consented to increase the quantity of my food by two ounces, my friends and relations having, for some time past, urged upon me the necessity of such increase, that the quantity I took was too little for one so advanced in years; against this, I urged that nature was content with little, and that with this small quantity I had preserved myself for many years in health and activity, that I believed as a man

advanced in years, his stomach grew weaker, and therefore the tendency should be to lessen the amount of food rather than to increase. I further reminded them of the two proverbs, which say: *He who has a mind to eat a great deal, must eat but little; eating little makes life long, and, living long, he must eat much*; and the other proverb was: *That which we leave after making a hearty meal does us more good than what we have eaten*. But my arguments and proverbs were not able to prevent them teasing me upon the subject; therefore, not to appear obstinate, or affecting to know more than the physicians themselves, but above all, to please my family, I consented to the increase before mentioned; so that, whereas previous, what with bread, the yolk of an egg, and soup@ I ate as much as twelve ounces, neither more nor less, I now increased it to fourteen; and whereas before I drank but fourteen ounces of liquid, I now increased it to sixteen. This increase had, in eight day' s time, such an effect upon me that, from being cheerful and brisk, I began to be peevish and melancholy, so that nothing could please me. On the twelfth day, I was attacked with a violent pain in my side, which lasted twenty-two hours and was followed by a fever, which continued thirty-five days without any respite, insomuch that all looked upon me as a dead man; but, God be praised, I recovered, and I am positive that it was the great regularity I had observed for so many years, and that only, which rescued me from the jaws of death.

## **GUIDE TO HEALTH THROUGH SOBRIETY**

Orderly living is doubtless a most certain cause and foundation of health and long life; nay, I say it is the *only true* medicine, and whoever weighs the matter weU, will come to this conclusion. Hence it is, that when the physician comes to visit a patient, the first thing he prescribes is regular living, and certainly to avoid excess. Now, if the patient after recovery should continue so to live, he could not be sick again, and if a very small quantity of food is sufficient to restore his health, then but a slight addition is necessary

for the continuance of the same; and so, for the future, he would want neither physician nor physic; he would become his own physician, and indeed, the best he could have, since, in fact, no man should be a perfect physician to any but himself. The reason is, that any man, by repeated trials, may acquire *a perfect knowledge of his own constitution, the kinds of food and drink which agree with him best*. A man cannot have a better guide than himself, nor any physic better than a regular life. *We should consider this regular life as our physician*, since it preserves men, even those of a weak constitution, in health; makes them live sound and hearty, to the age of one hundred and upward, and prevents their dying of sickness. These things, however, are discovered but by few, for men, for the most part, are sensual and intemperate, and love to satisfy their appetites, and to commit every excess; and, by way of apology, say that they prefer a short and self-indulgent life, to a long and selfdenying one, not knowing that those men are most truly happy who keep their appetites in subjection. Thus have I found it, and I prefer to live temperately, so that I may live long and be useful. He who thus lives cannot be sick, or but seldom, and for a short time, because, by regular living, he destroys every seed of sickness, and thus, by *removing the cause, prevents the effect*; so that he who pursues a regular and strictly moderate life, need not fear illness, for *his blood having become pure*, and free from all bad humors, it is not possible that he can fall sick. A regular life is so profitable and virtuous, it ought to be universally followed. If men have a mind to live long and in health, and die without sickness of body or mind, but by mere dissolution, they must submit to a regular and abstemious life, for such a life keeps the blood clean and pure.

## THE PRAISE OF LONG LIFE

Some sensual unthinking persons affirm, that a long life is no great blessing, and that the state of a man, who has passed his seventy-fifth year, cannot really be called life; but this is wrong, as I shall fully prove; and it is my sincere wish, that all men would endeavor to attain my age, that they might enjoy that period of life which of all others is most desirable.

I will therefore give an account of my recreations, and the relish which I find at this stage of life. There are many who can give testimony as to the happiness of my life. in the first place, they see with astonishment the good state of my health and spirits; how I mount my horse without assistance, how I not only ascend a flight of stairs, but can climb a hill with greatest ease. Then, how gay and good-humored I am; my mind ever undisturbed, in fact, joy and peace having fixed their abode in my breast. Moreover, they know in what manner I spend my time, so as never to find life weary: I pass my hours in great delight and pleasure, in converse with men of good sense and intellectual culture; then, when I cannot enjoy their company, I betake myself to the reading of some good book. When I have read as much as I like, I write, endeavoring in this, as in other things, to be of service to others; and these things I do with the greatest ease to myself. Nor are my recreations rendered less agreeable by the failing of any of my senses, for they are all, thank God,

perfect, particularly my palate, which now *relishes better the simple fare I have, than it formerly did the most delicate dishes*, when I led an irregular life. I can sleep everywhere soundly and quietly, and my dreams are pleasant and delightful. *Strict sobriety, in eating and drinking, renders the senses and understanding clear, the memory tenacious, the body lively and strong*, the movements regular and easy; and the soul, feeling so little of her earthly burden, experiences much of her natural liberty. The man thus enjoys a pleasing and agreeable harmony, there being nothing in his system to disturb; for his blood is pure, and runs freely through his veins, and the heat of his body is mild and temperate.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF MODERATION

Sobriety is reduced to two things: quality and quantity. The first consists in avoiding food or drinks, which are found to disagree with the stomach. The second, to avoid taking more than the stomach can easily digest.

Regarding young men, I am in no way surprised at their refusal to live such a life, for their passions are strong and usually their guide. Neither have they much experience; but, when a man has arrived at the age of forty or fifty, surely he should in all things be governed by reason. And this would teach men that gratifying the appetite and palate, is not, as many affirm, natural and right, but is the cause of disease and premature death. Were this pleasure of the palate lasting, it would be some excuse; but it is momentary, compared with the duration of the disease which its excess engenders. But it is a great comfort to a man of sober life to reflect, that what he eats will keep him in good health, and be productive of no disease or infirmity.

Now, if this sober and moderate manner of living brings so much happiness; if the blessings that attend it are so stable and permanent, then I beseech every man of sound judgment to embrace this valuable treasure, that of a long and healthful life, a treasure which exceeds all other worldly blessings, and, therefore, should be sought after; for what is wealth and abundance to a man who is possessed with a feeble and sickly body? This is that divine sobriety, agreeable to God, the friend of nature, the daughter of reason, the sister of all the virtues, the companion of temperate living, modest, courteous, content with little, regular, and perfect mistress of all her operations. From her, as from their proper root, spring life, health, cheerfulness, industry, learning and all those actions and employments worthy of noble and generous minds. The laws of God are all in her favor. Repletion, excess, intemperance, superfluous humors, diseases, fevers, pains, and dangers of death, vanish in her presence, as mists before the sun. Her comeliness ravishes every well-disposed mind. Her influence is so sure, as to promise to all a long and agreeable life. And, lastly, she promises to be a mild and pleasant guardian of life, teaching how to ward off the attacks of death. O thrice holy sobriety, so useful to man, by reason of the service thou dost render him! Thou prolongest his days, by which means he greatly improves his understanding and, by such knowledge, he can avoid the bitter fruits of sensuality, which is an enemy to man's reason. Thou, moreover, freest him from dreadful

thoughts of death. How greatly ought we to be indebted to thee, since by thee, we enjoy this beautiful world, which is really beautiful to all whose sensibilities have not been deadened by repletion, and whose minds have not been blighted by sensuality! I really never knew till I grew old, that the world was so beautiful; for, in my younger years I was debauched by irregularities, and therefore could not perceive and enjoy, as I do now, its beauties. O truly happy life, which, over and above all these favors conferred on me, hast so improved and perfected my body, that now I have a better relish for plain bread, than formerly I had for the most exquisite dainties! Pure bread is, above all things, man's best food, and while he leads a sober life, he may be sure of never wanting that natural sauce—a good appetite.

I am not so simple as not to know that, as I was born, so I must die. But the natural death that I speak of does not overtake one until after a long course of years; and even then, I do not expect the pain and agony which most men suffer when they die. But I, by God's blessing, reckon that I have still a long time to live in health and spirits, and enjoy this beautiful world, which is, indeed, beautiful to those who know how to make it so; but its beauty can only be realized by those who, by reason of temperance and virtue, enjoy sound health of body and mind.

### **HEAVEN ON EARTH AND ETERNITY: THE ESSENE INFLUENCE**

At the age of ninety-one, I am more sound and hearty than ever, much to the amazement of those who know me. I, who can account for it, am bound to show that a man can enjoy a terrestrial paradise after eighty; but it is not to be obtained, except by strict temperance in food and drink, virtues acceptable to God and friends to reason. During the past few days I have been visited by many learned doctors of this university, as well as physicians and philosophers who were well acquainted with my age, life and manners, also, that I was stout, hearty and lively, my senses perfect, also my voice and teeth, likewise my memory and judgment. They knew, besides, that I constantly employed eight hours every day in writing treatises, with my own hand, on subjects useful to mankind, and spent many more in walking and singing.

These doctors and philosophers told me that it was next to a miracle, that at my age, I should be able to write upon subjects which required both judgment and spirit, and added that I ought not to be looked upon as a person advanced in years, since all my occupations were those of a young man, and that I was altogether unlike aged people of seventy and eighty, who are subject to various ailments and diseases, which render life a weariness; or, if even by chance any escape these things, yet their senses are impaired, sight, or hearing, or memory is defective, and all their faculties much decayed; they are not strong, nor cheerful, as I am. And they moreover said, that they looked upon me as having special grace conferred upon me, and said a great many eloquent and fine things, in endeavoring to prove this, which, however, they could not do; for their arguments were not based on good and sufficient reasons, but merely on their opinions. I therefore endeavored to

undeceive and set them right, and convince them that the happiness I enjoyed was not confined to me, but might be common to all mankind, since I was but a mere mortal, and different in no respect from other men, save in this, that I was born more weakly than some, and had not what is called a strong constitution. Man, however, in his youthful days, is more prone to be led by sensuality than reason; yet, when he arrives at the age of forty, or earlier, he should remember that he has about reached the summit of the hill, and must now think of going down, carrying the weight of years with him; and that old age is the reverse of youth, as much as order is the reverse of disorder; hence, it is requisite that he should alter his mode of life, in regard to the quality and quantity of his food and drink. For it is impossible in the nature of things, that the man who is bent on indulging his appetite, should be healthy and free from ailments. Hence it was to avoid this vice and its evil effects, that I embraced a regular and sober life. I endeavored gradually to relinquish a disorderly life, and to suit myself to strict temperate rules, and thus it came to pass, that a sober and moderate life no longer became disagreeable, though, on account of the weakness of my constitution, I tied myself down to very strict rules in regard to the quantity and quality of what I ate and drank. I had found it no easy task, but it did not become a man to shrink from a glorious and practical task, on account of its difficulties; the greater the obstacles to overcome, the greater the honor and benefit. Our beneficent Creator is desirous, that, as He originally favored human nature with longevity, we should all enjoy the full advantage of His intentions, knowing that when a man has passed the age of seventy, he may be exempt from the sensual strivings, and govern himself entirely by the dictates of reason. Vice and immorality then leave him, and God is willing that he should live to the full maturity of his years, and has ordained that all who reach their natural term should end their days without sickness, but by mere dissolution, the natural way; the wheels of life quietly stopping, and man peacefully leaving this world, to enter upon immortality, as will be my case; for I am sure to die thus, perhaps while chanting my prayers. Nor do the thoughts of death give me the least concern; nor does any other thought connected with death.

Thus, how beautiful my life! How happy my end! But none can be sure of these blessings except such as adhere to the rules of temperance. This security of life is built on good and truly natural reasons, which can never fail; it being impossible that he who leads a perfectly sober and temperate life, should breed any sickness, or die before his time. Sooner, he cannot through ill-health die, as his sober life has the virtue to remove the cause of sickness, and sickness cannot happen without a cause; which cause being removed, sickness is also removed, and untimely and painful death is prevented.

And there is no doubt, that temperance in food and drink, taking only as much as nature really requires, and thus being guided by reason, instead of appetite, has efficacy to remove all cause of disease; for since health and sickness, life and death, depend on the good or bad condition of a man's blood, and the quality of his humors, such a life as I speak of purifies the blood, and corrects all vicious humors, rendering all perfect and

harmonious. It is true, and cannot be denied, that man must at last die, however careful with himself he may have been, but yet, I maintain, without sickness and great pain; for in my case I expect to pass away quietly and peacefully, and my present condition insures this to me, for, though I have attained this great age, I am hearty and content, eating with a good appetite, and sleeping soundly. Moreover, all my senses are as good as ever, and in the highest perfection; my understanding clear and bright, my judgment sound, my memory tenacious, my spirits good, and my voice (one of the first things which is apt to fail us) has grown so strong and sonorous, that I cannot help chanting aloud my prayers, morning and night, instead of whispering and muttering them to myself as was formerly my custom. [Reference to the morning and evening Essene Communion which he learned of from the translations of St. Jerome.]

Oh, how glorious is this life of mine, replete with all the felicities which man can enjoy on this side of the grave! It is entirely exempt from that sensual brutality, which age has enabled my reason to banish; thus I am not troubled with passions, and my mind is calm, and free from all perturbations and doubtful apprehensions. Nor can the thought of death find room in my mind, at least, not in any way to disturb me. And all this has been brought about, by God's mercy, through my careful habit of living. How different from the life of most old men, full of aches and pains and forebodings, whilst mine is a life of real pleasure, and I seem to spend my days in a perpetual round of happiness, as I shall presently show.

And first, I am of service to my country, and what a joy is this. Another great comfort to me is to think that my treatise on temperance is really useful, as many assure me by word of mouth, and others by letter, where they say, that, under God they are indebted to me for their life. I have also much joy in being able to write, and am thus of service to myself and others; and the satisfaction I have in conversing with men of ability and superior understanding is very great, from whom I always learn something fresh. Now, what a comfort is this, that old as I am, I am able, without fatigue of mind or body thus to be fully engaged, and to study the most important, difficult, and sublime subjects. [Here is a visible influence of St. Jerome's texts in the monastery of Mone Cassino, concerning the Sevenfold Peace of the ancient Essenes.] I must further add, that at this age, I appear to enjoy two lives: one terrestrial, which in fact I possess, the other celestial, which I possess in thought; [here is a strong influence of St. Jerome's translation of the Essene Gospel of Peace, referring to the Kingdoms of the Earthly Mother and Heavenly Father] and this thought is actual enjoyment, when founded upon things we are sure to attain, and I, through the infinite goodness of the Heavenly Father, am sure of eternal life. Thus, I enjoy the terrestrial life in consequence of my sobriety and temperance [here again the influence of the writings of Jerome on the Essenes of the desert], and I enjoy the celestial, which He makes me anticipate in thought; a thought so lively, as to fix me entirely on this subject, the fruition of which I hold to be of the utmost certainty. And I further maintain, that, dying in the manner I expect, is not really death, but a passage of the soul from this

earthly life to a celestial, immortal, and infinitely perfect existence. Whence it is that I enjoy two lives; and the thought of terminating this earthly life gives me no concern, for I know that I have a glorious and immortal life before me.

**"Health is so necessary to all the duties, as well as to all the pleasures of life, that the crime of squandering it is greater than the folly."**

-*Dr. Johnson* Luigi Cornaro was a Venetian nobleman who was born in 1464. He died in 1566, having attained the venerable age of 102. This achievement was all the more remarkable considering that at the age of forty he was told by his doctors that he had not long to live. But he outlived his physicians and maintained himself in a state of excellent health and vigor for more than sixty additional years.

Up to his fortieth year, Cornaro lived a careless and dissipated life, like the majority of the young men of his day. The fact that he completely broke down as a result, and was given up by his physicians to die, is not surprising. What is surprising, and indeed, what makes the name of Cornaro synonymous with the virtues of moderation, sobriety and perseverance, is that he cured himself, and having done so, continued to practice his theories of sobriety and moderation for the rest of his life, never deviating from the path he had chosen for himself.

"A word to the wise is sufficient," and once he had heard the wise word of his physician, Cornaro reformed his life. He simplified his diet and cut down on the quantity of food to the very minimum. He limited himself to twelve ounces of solid food daily, and fourteen ounces of liquid. Soon he began to see the difference, and at the end of a year found himself completely restored to health. He continued this simple and austere way of living for the rest of his life, which was a very long one, indeed.

To quote Cornaro: ". . . and there is no doubt that if the one so advised were to act accordingly, he would avoid all sickness in the future; because a well-regulated life removes the *causes* of disease. Thus, for the remainder of his days, he would have no further need either of doctors or of medicines."

"Should a man, when ill, continue to eat the same amount as when in health, he would surely die; while, were he to eat more, he would die all the sooner. For his natural powers, already oppressed with sickness, would thereby be burdened beyond endurance, having had forced upon them a quantity of food greater than they could support under the circumstances. A reduced quantity is, in my opinion, all that is required to sustain the individual. Therefore, I accustomed myself to the habit of never fully satisfying my appetite, either with eating or drinking, and always leaving the table when able to take more. In this I acted according to the proverb: Not to satiate one's self with food is the science of health."

According to Cornaro, mere prolongation of life is in itself useless unless that life is healthy and happy. A long life full of disease and misery is worse than no life at all. The object of health should be, rather, to enable us to forget the body, and to carry on our interests and life activities without impediment or interference, because of sickness or debility, thus permitting the free and full use of our faculties and talents. Through his sober diet, Cornaro regained and maintained his health, which shows us how important is the restriction of quantity of foods, as the most important single factor in the preservation of health and longevity.

Now, there are some men who embrace a spiritual and contemplative life, and this is holy and commendable, their chief employment being to celebrate the praises of God, and to teach men how to serve Him. Now, if while these men set themselves apart for this life, they would also betake themselves to sober and temperate living, how much more agreeable would they render themselves in the sight of God and men. What a much greater honor and ornament would they be to the world! They would likewise enjoy constant health and happiness, would attain a great age, and thus become eminently wise and useful; whereas, now, they are mostly infirm, irritable, and dissatisfied, and think that their various trials and ailments are sent them by Almighty God, with a view of promoting their salvation; that they may do penance in this life for their past errors. In my opinion, they are greatly mistaken; for I cannot believe that God desires that man, his favorite creature, should be infirm and melancholy, but rather, that he should enjoy good health and be happy. Man, however, brings sickness and disease upon himself, by reason, either of his ignorance or wilful self-indulgence. Now, if those who profess to be our teachers in divine matters would also set the example, and thus teach men how to preserve their bodies in health, they would do much to make the road to heaven easier; men need to be taught that a well-ordered life and strict temperance is the path to health of the body and health of the mind, and that only when the body and mind are healthy, can God's purpose in our lives be fulfilled. [In this last beautiful paragraph, Cornaro professes his knowledge of the Essene Way, learned from the writings of St. Jerome, a way of life completely contrary to the life-style of 15th century Italy, yet embraced by Cornaro with unprecedented courage, perseverance, and joy.

## **CORNARO'S IDEAS**

### **ON A TEMPERATE AND HEALTHFUL LIFE**

It is universally agreed, that custom, in time, becomes a second nature, forcing men to use that, whether good or bad, to which they have been habituated; in fact, we see habit, in many instances, gain the ascendancy over reason. This is so undeniably true, that virtuous men, by keeping company with wicked, often fall into the same vicious course of life. Seeing and considering all this, I have decided to write on the vice of intemperance in eating and drinking.

Now, though all are agreed that intemperance is the parent of gluttony, and sober living the offspring of abstemiousness; yet, owing to the power of custom, the former is considered a virtue, and the latter as mean and avaricious; and so many men are blinded and besotted to such a degree, that they come to the age of forty or fifty, burdened with strange and painful infirmities, which render them decrepit and useless; whereas, had they lived temperately and soberly, they would in all probability have been sound and hearty, to the age of eighty and upward. To remedy this state of things, it is requisite that men should live up to the *simplicity dictated by nature*, which teaches us to be content with little, and accustom ourselves to eat no more than is absolutely necessary to support life, remembering that all excess causes disease and leads to death. Many young men of the best understanding have recognized the necessity of following this way of life, because many of their parents have died in middle life, while I remain so sound and hearty at the age of one hundred and one.

The heavy train of infirmities which had made great inroads on my constitution, were my motives for renouncing intemperance, in the matter of too freely eating and drinking, to which I had been addicted, so that, in consequence of it, my stomach became disordered, and I suffered much pain from colic and gout, attended by that which was still worse, an almost continual slow fever, a stomach generally out of order, and a perpetual thirst. From these disorders, the best delivery I had to hope was death. Finding myself, therefore, between my thirty-fifth and fortieth year in such unhappy circumstances, and having tried everything that could be thought of to relieve me, but to no purpose, my physician gave me to understand that there was one method left to get the better of my complaints, provided I would resolve to use it, and patiently persevere. This was to live a strictly sober and regular life, which would be of the greatest efficacy. He further added that, if I did not at once adopt this method of strict living, I should in a few months receive no benefit from it, and that in a few more I must resign myself to death.

These arguments made such an impression on me, that, mortified as I was, besides, by the thought of dying in the prime of life, though at the same time perpetually tormented by various diseases, I immediately resolved, in order to avoid at once both disease and death, to betake myself to a regular course of life. Having upon this inquired of him what rules I should follow, he told me that I must only use food, solid or liquid, such as is generally prescribed to sick persons; and both sparingly. These directions, to say the truth, I had been given before, but I had been impatient of such restraint, and had eaten and drunk freely of those things I had desired. But, when I had once resolved to live soberly, and according to the dictates of reason, feeling it was my duty as a man so to do, I entered with so much resolution upon this new course of life, that nothing since has been able to divert me from it. The consequence was, that in a few days I began to perceive that such a course agreed well with me; and, by pursuing it, I found myself in less than a year (some people, perhaps, will not believe it), entirely freed from all my complaints.

## EATING LITTLE MAKES LIFE LONG

Having thus recovered my health, I began to seriously consider the power of temperance: *if it had efficacy enough to subdue such grievous disorders as mine, it must also have power to preserve me in health* and strengthen my bad constitution. I gave over the use of such meats and wines as did not suit me, and chose those which by experience I found agreed well with me, taking *only as much as I could easily digest, having strict regard to quantity as well as quality*; and contrived matters so as never to cloy my stomach with eating or drinking, and always rose from the table with a disposition to eat and drink more. In consequence, therefore, of my taking such methods, I have always enjoyed, and, God be praised, still enjoy, the best of health. It is true that, besides the two most important rules relative to eating and drinking, which I have ever been very scrupulous to observe (that is, *not to take of either, more than my stomach could easily digest, and to use only those things which agree with me*), I have carefully avoided, as far as possible, all extreme heat, Cold, extraordinary fatigue, interruption of my usual hours of rest, or staying long in bad air. I likewise did all that lay in my power, to avoid those evils, which we do not find it so easy to remove: melancholy, hatred, and other violent passions, which appear to have the most -profound influence on our bodies. I am a living witness, and so are many others who know me, and have seen me, how often I have been exposed to heats and colds, and disagreeable changes of weather, without taking harm. He who leads a sober and regular life, and commits no excess in his diet, can suffer but little from mental disorders or external accidents.

I conclude, especially from the late trial I have had, that *excesses in eating and drinking are often fatal*. Four years ago, I consented to increase the quantity of my food by two ounces, my friends and relations having, for some time past, urged upon me the necessity of such increase, that the quantity I took was too little for one so advanced in years; against this, I urged that nature was content with little, and that with this small quantity I had preserved myself for many years in health and activity, that I believed as a man

advanced in years, his stomach grew weaker, and therefore the tendency should be to lessen the amount of food rather than to increase. I further reminded them of the two proverbs, which say: *He who has a mind to eat a great deal, must eat but little; eating little makes life long, and, living long, he must eat much*; and the other proverb was: *That which we leave after making a hearty meal does us more good than what we have eaten*. But my arguments and proverbs were not able to prevent them teasing me upon the subject; therefore, not to appear obstinate, or affecting to know more than the physicians themselves, but above all, to please my family, I consented to the increase before mentioned; so that, whereas previous, what with bread, the yolk of an egg, and soup@ I ate as much as twelve ounces, neither more nor less, I now increased it to fourteen; and whereas before I drank but fourteen ounces of liquid, I now increased it to sixteen. This increase had, in eight day' s time, such an effect upon me that, from being cheerful and

brisk, I began to be peevish and melancholy, so that nothing could please me. On the twelfth day, I was attacked with a violent pain in my side, which lasted twenty-two hours and was followed by a fever, which continued thirty-five days without any respite, insomuch that all looked upon me as a dead man; but, God be praised, I recovered, and I am positive that it was the great regularity I had observed for so many years, and that only, which rescued me from the jaws of death.

## GUIDE TO HEALTH THROUGH SOBRIETY

Orderly living is doubtless a most certain cause and foundation of health and long life; nay, I say it is the *only true* medicine, and whoever weighs the matter weU, will come to this conclusion. Hence it is, that when the physician comes to visit a patient, the first thing he prescribes is regular living, and certainly to avoid excess. Now, if the patient after recovery should continue so to live, he could not be sick again, and if a very small quantity of food is sufficient to restore his health, then but a slight addition is necessary for the continuance of the same; and so, for the future, he would want neither physician nor physic; he would become his own physician, and indeed, the best he could have, since, in fact, no man should be a perfect physician to any but himself. The reason is, that any man, by repeated trials, may acquire *a perfect knowledge of his own constitution, the kinds of food and drink which agree with him best*. A man cannot have a better guide than himself, nor any physic better than a regular life. *We should consider this regular life as our physician*, since it preserves men, even those of a weak constitution, in health; makes them live sound and hearty, to the age of one hundred and upward, and prevents their dying of sickness. These things, however, are discovered but by few, for men, for the most part, are sensual and intemperate, and love to satisfy their appetites, and to commit every excess; and, by way of apology, say that they prefer a short and self-indulgent life, to a long and selfdenying one, not knowing that those men are most truly happy who keep their appetites in subjection. Thus have I found it, and I prefer to live temperately, so that I may live long and be useful. He who thus lives cannot be sick, or but seldom, and for a short time, because, by regular living, he destroys ever-y seed of sickness, and thus, by *removing the cause, prevents the effect*; so that he who pursues a regular and strictly moderate life, need not fear illness, for *his blood having become pure*, and free from all bad humors, it is not possible that he can fall sick. A regular life is so profitable and virtuous, it ought to be universally followed. If men have a mind to live long and in health, and die without sickness of body or mind, but by mere dissolution, they must submit to a regular and abstemious life, for such a life keeps the blood clean and pure.

## THE PRAISE OF LONG LIFE

Some sensual unthinking persons affirm, that a long life is no great blessing, and that the state of a man, who has passed his seventy-fifth year, cannot really be called life; but this

is wrong, as I shall fully prove; and it is my sincere wish, that all men would endeavor to attain my age, that they might enjoy that period of life which of all others is most desirable.

I will therefore give an account of my recreations, and the relish which I find at this stage of life. There are many who can give testimony as to the happiness of my life. In the first place, they see with astonishment the good state of my health and spirits; how I mount my horse without assistance, how I not only ascend a flight of stairs, but can climb a hill with greatest ease. Then, how gay and good-humored I am; my mind ever undisturbed, in fact, joy and peace having fixed their abode in my breast. Moreover, they know in what manner I spend my time, so as never to find life weary: I pass my hours in great delight and pleasure, in converse with men of good sense and intellectual culture; then, when I cannot enjoy their company, I betake myself to the reading of some good book. When I have read as much as I like, I write, endeavoring in this, as in other things, to be of service to others; and these things I do with the greatest ease to myself. Nor are my recreations rendered less agreeable by the failing of any of my senses, for they are all, thank God, perfect, particularly my palate, which now *relishes better the simple fare I have, than it formerly did the most delicate dishes*, when I led an irregular life. I can sleep everywhere soundly and quietly, and my dreams are pleasant and delightful. *Strict sobriety, in eating and drinking, renders the senses and understanding clear, the memory tenacious, the body lively and strong*, the movements regular and easy; and the soul, feeling so little of her earthly burden, experiences much of her natural liberty. The man thus enjoys a pleasing and agreeable harmony, there being nothing in his system to disturb; for his blood is pure, and runs freely through his veins, and the heat of his body is mild and temperate.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF MODERATION

Sobriety is reduced to two things: quality and quantity. The first consists in avoiding food or drinks, which are found to disagree with the stomach. The second, to avoid taking more than the stomach can easily digest.

Regarding young men, I am in no way surprised at their refusal to live such a life, for their passions are strong and usually their guide. Neither have they much experience; but, when a man has arrived at the age of forty or fifty, surely he should in all things be governed by reason. And this would teach men that gratifying the appetite and palate, is not, as many affirm, natural and right, but is the cause of disease and premature death. Were this pleasure of the palate lasting, it would be some excuse; but it is momentary, compared with the duration of the disease which its excess engenders. But it is a great comfort to a man of sober life to reflect, that what he eats will keep him in good health, and be productive of no disease or infirmity.

Now, if this sober and moderate manner of living brings so much happiness; if the blessings that attend it are so stable and permanent, then I beseech every man of sound judgment to embrace this valuable treasure, that of a long and healthful life, a treasure which exceeds all other worldly blessings, and, therefore, should be sought after; for what is wealth and abundance to a man who is possessed with a feeble and sickly body? This is that divine sobriety, agreeable to God, the friend of nature, the daughter of reason, the sister of all the virtues, the companion of temperate living, modest, courteous, content with little, regular, and perfect mistress of all her operations. From her, as from their proper root, spring life, health, cheerfulness, industry, learning and all those actions and employments worthy of noble and generous minds. The laws of God are all in her favor. Repletion, excess, intemperance, superfluous humors, diseases, fevers, pains, and dangers of death, vanish in her presence, as mists before the sun. Her comeliness ravishes every well-disposed mind. Her influence is so sure, as to promise to all a long and agreeable life. And, lastly, she promises to be a mild and pleasant guardian of life, teaching how to ward off the attacks of death. O thrice holy sobriety, so useful to man, by reason of the service thou dost render him! Thou prolongest his days, by which means he greatly improves his understanding and, by such knowledge, he can avoid the bitter fruits of sensuality, which is an enemy to man's reason. Thou, moreover, freest him from dreadful thoughts of death. How greatly ought we to be indebted to thee, since by thee, we enjoy this beautiful world, which is really beautiful to all whose sensibilities have not been deadened by repletion, and whose minds have not been blighted by sensuality! I really never knew till I grew old, that the world was so beautiful; for, in my younger years I was debauched by irregularities, and therefore could not perceive and enjoy, as I do now, its beauties. O truly happy life, which, over and above all these favors conferred on me, hast so improved and perfected my body, that now I have a better relish for plain bread, than formerly I had for the most exquisite dainties! Pure bread is, above all things, man's best food, and while he leads a sober life, he may be sure of never wanting that natural sauce—a good appetite.

I am not so simple as not to know that, as I was born, so I must die. But the natural death that I speak of does not overtake one until after a long course of years; and even then, I do not expect the pain and agony which most men suffer when they die. But I, by God's blessing, reckon that I have still a long time to live in health and spirits, and enjoy this beautiful world, which is, indeed, beautiful to those who know how to make it so; but its beauty can only be realized by those who, by reason of temperance and virtue, enjoy sound health of body and mind.

## **HEAVEN ON EARTH AND ETERNITY: THE ESSENE INFLUENCE**

At the age of ninety-one, I am more sound and hearty than ever, much to the amazement of those who know me. I, who can account for it, am bound to show that a man can enjoy a terrestrial paradise after eighty; but it is not to be obtained, except by strict temperance

in food and drink, virtues acceptable to God and friends to reason. During the past few days I have been visited by many learned doctors of this university, as well as physicians and philosophers who were well acquainted with my age, life and manners, also, that I was stout, hearty and lively, my senses perfect, also my voice and teeth, likewise my memory and judgment. They knew, besides, that I constantly employed eight hours every day in writing treatises, with my own hand, on subjects useful to mankind, and spent many more in walking and singing.

These doctors and philosophers told me that it was next to a miracle, that at my age, I should be able to write upon subjects which required both judgment and spirit, and added that I ought not to be looked upon as a person advanced in years, since all my occupations were those of a young man, and that I was altogether unlike aged people of seventy and eighty, who are subject to various ailments and diseases, which render life a weariness; or, if even by chance any escape these things, yet their senses are impaired, sight, or hearing, or memory is defective, and all their faculties much decayed; they are not strong, nor cheerful, as I am. And they moreover said, that they looked upon me as having special grace conferred upon me, and said a great many eloquent and fine things, in endeavoring to prove this, which, however, they could not do; for their arguments were not based on good and sufficient reasons, but merely on their opinions. I therefore endeavored to undeceive and set them right, and convince them that the happiness I enjoyed was not confined to me, but might be common to all mankind, since I was but a mere mortal, and different in no respect from other men, save in this, that I was born more weakly than some, and had not what is called a strong constitution. Man, however, in his youthful days, is more prone to be led by sensuality than reason; yet, when he arrives at the age of forty, or earlier, he should remember that he has about reached the summit of the hill, and must now think of going down, carrying the weight of years with him; and that old age is the reverse of youth, as much as order is the reverse of disorder; hence, it is requisite that he should alter his mode of life, in regard to the quality and quantity of his food and drink. For it is impossible in the nature of things, that the man who is bent on indulging his appetite, should be healthy and free from ailments. Hence it was to avoid this vice and its evil effects, that I embraced a regular and sober life. I endeavored gradually to relinquish a disorderly life, and to suit myself to strict temperate rules, and thus it came to pass, that a sober and moderate life no longer became disagreeable, though, on account of the weakness of my constitution, I tied myself down to very strict rules in regard to the quantity and quality of what I ate and drank. I had found it no easy task, but it did not become a man to shrink from a glorious and practical task, on account of its difficulties; the greater the obstacles to overcome, the greater the honor and benefit. Our beneficent Creator is desirous, that, as He originally favored human nature with longevity, we should all enjoy the full advantage of His intentions, knowing that when a man has passed the age of seventy, he may be exempt from the sensual strivings, and govern himself entirely by the dictates of reason. Vice and immorality then leave him, and God is willing that he should live to the full maturity of his years, and has ordained that all who reach their

natural term should end their days without sickness, but by mere dissolution, the natural way; the wheels of life quietly stopping, and man peacefully leaving this world, to enter upon immortality, as will be my case; for I am sure to die thus, perhaps while chanting my prayers. Nor do the thoughts of death give me the least concern; nor does any other thought connected with death.

Thus, how beautiful my life! How happy my end! But none can be sure of these blessings except such as adhere to the rules of temperance. This security of life is built on good and truly natural reasons, which can never fail; it being impossible that he who leads a perfectly sober and temperate life, should breed any sickness, or die before his time. Sooner, he cannot through ill-health die, as his sober life has the virtue to remove the cause of sickness, and sickness cannot happen without a cause; which cause being removed, sickness is also removed, and untimely and painful death is prevented.

And there is no doubt, that temperance in food and drink, taking only as much as nature really requires, and thus being guided by reason, instead of appetite, has efficacy to remove all cause of disease; for since health and sickness, life and death, depend on the good or bad condition of a man's blood, and the quality of his humors, such a life as I speak of purifies the blood, and corrects all vicious humors, rendering all perfect and harmonious. It is true, and cannot be denied, that man must at last die, however careful with himself he may have been, but yet, I maintain, without sickness and great pain; for in my case I expect to pass away quietly and peacefully, and my present condition insures this to me, for, though I have attained this great age, I am hearty and content, eating with a good appetite, and sleeping soundly. Moreover, all my senses are as good as ever, and in the highest perfection; my understanding clear and bright, my judgment sound, my memory tenacious, my spirits good, and my voice (one of the first things which is apt to fail us) has grown so strong and sonorous, that I cannot help chanting aloud my prayers, morning and night, instead of whispering and muttering them to myself as was formerly my custom. [Reference to the morning and evening Essene Communion which he learned of from the translations of St. Jerome.]

oh, how glorious is this life of mine, replete with all the felicities which man can enjoy on this side of the grave! It is entirely exempt from that sensual brutality, which age has enabled my reason to banish; thus I am not troubled with passions, and my mind is calm, and free from all perturbations and doubtful apprehensions. Nor can the thought of death find room in my mind, at least, not in any way to disturb me. And all this has been brought about, by God's mercy, through

my careful habit of living. How different from the life of most old men, full of aches and pains and forebodings, whilst mine is a life of real pleasure, and I seem to spend my days in a perpetual round of happiness, as I shall presently show.

And first, I am of service to my country, and what a joy is this. Another great comfort to me is to think that my treatise on temperance is really useful, as many assure me by word of mouth, and others by letter, where they say, that, under God they are indebted to me for their life. I have also much joy in being able to write, and am thus of service to myself and others; and the satisfaction I have in conversing with men of ability and superior understanding is very great, from whom I always learn something fresh. Now, what a comfort is this, that old as I am, I am able, without fatigue of mind or body thus to be fully engaged, and to study the most important, difficult, and sublime subjects. [Here is a visible influence of St. Jerome's texts in the monastery of Mone Cassino, concerning the Sevenfold Peace of the ancient Essenes.] I must further add, that at this age, I appear to enjoy two lives: one terrestrial, which in fact I possess, the other celestial, which I possess in thought; [here is a strong influence of St. Jerome's translation of the Essene Gospel of Peace, referring to the Kingdoms of the Earthly Mother and Heavenly Father] and this thought is actual enjoyment, when founded upon things we are sure to attain, and I, through the infinite goodness of the Heavenly Father, am sure of eternal life. Thus, I enjoy the terrestrial life in consequence of my sobriety and temperance [here again the influence of the writings of Jerome on the Essenes of the desert], and I enjoy the celestial, which He makes me anticipate in thought; a thought so lively, as to fix me entirely on this subject, the fruition of which I hold to be of the utmost certainty. And I further maintain, that, dying in the manner I expect, is not really death, but a passage of the soul from this earthly life to a celestial, immortal, and infinitely perfect existence. Whence it is that I enjoy two lives; and the thought of terminating this earthly life gives me no concern, for I know that I have a glorious and immortal life before me.

Now, there are some men who embrace a spiritual and contemplative life, and this is holy and commendable, their chief employment being to celebrate the praises of God, and to teach men how to serve Him. Now, if while these men set themselves apart for this life, they would also betake themselves to sober and temperate living, how much more agreeable would they render themselves in the sight of God and men. What a much greater honor and ornament would they be to the world! They would likewise enjoy constant health and happiness, would attain a great age, and thus become eminently wise and useful; whereas, now, they are mostly infirm, irritable, and dissatisfied, and think that their various trials and ailments are sent them by Almighty God, with a view of promoting their salvation; that they may do penance in this life for their past errors. In my opinion, they are greatly mistaken; for I cannot believe that God desires that man, his favorite creature, should be infirm and melancholy, but rather, that he should enjoy good health and be happy. Man, however, brings sickness and disease upon himself, by reason, either of his ignorance or wilful self-indulgence. Now, if those who profess to be our teachers in divine matters would also set the example, and thus teach men how to preserve their bodies in health, they would do much to make the road to heaven easier; men need to be taught that a well-ordered life and strict temperance is the path to health of the body and health of the mind, and that only when the body and mind are healthy, can God's purpose

in our lives be fulfilled. [In this last beautiful paragraph, Cornaro professes his knowledge of the Essene Way, learned from the writings of St. Jerome, a way of life completely contrary to the life-style of 15th century Italy, yet embraced by Cornaro with unprecedented courage, perseverance, and joy.

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