



## I. INTRODUCTION

According to Agha in *The New Meaning of Fasting in Our Age* (1992: 2), fasting signifies “either a compulsory or voluntary deprivation of food and drink and even of sexual relationship for even one or two days; often it is undertaken for religious purpose”. This definition though encompassing and far-reaching in our search for a genuine philosophical appraisal of fasting as an aspect of religious experience is defective. One must be earnest in pointing out that other than fasting for one or two days people in certain cases fast for half the day, three days, a month, etc. depending on the situation and purpose. The other way round, restricting the motive behind fasting to religion only even though this religious aspect is the chief focus of this piece is narrowing too much a widely embracing concept. In other words, other than religious motives for fasting, it could also be undertaken for political, social, economic and health reasons as such. Hence,

In a medical context fasting may refer to (1) the metabolic status of a person who has not eaten overnight, and (2) to the metabolic state achieved after complete digestion and absorption of a meal. Several metabolic adjustments occur during fasting, and many medical diagnostic tests are standardized for fasting conditions. For most ordinary diagnostic purposes a person is assumed to be fasting after 8-12 hours. Many of the metabolic shifts of fasting begin as absorption of a meal is complete (typically 3-5 hours after a meal); “post-absorptive state” is synonymous with this usage, in contrast with to the “post-prandial” state of ongoing digestion. A diagnostic fast refers to prolonged fasting (8-72 hours depending on age) conducted under medical observation for investigation of a problem, usually hypoglycemia. Finally, extended has been recommended as therapy for various conditions by physicians of most cultures, throughout history, from ancient to modern. (*Wikipedia*, 2010)

In view of the above a more embracing definition of fasting could be put as all instances of deprivation, compulsory or optional, imposed or otherwise, of some or all the essentials of worldly life such as food, drink, sex or any other appetitive cravings for religious, political, social, economical and health reasons or purposes and for a definite period of time. This is more so since the fasting condition starts when one restricts supply of glucose to the body in any form for a period beyond four hours. When this happens the person’s body functions are sustained from glycogen which is stored around the liver.

## II. ORIGIN OF FASTING

Many resources, in the forms of human and material resources, have been committed into unraveling the origin of fasting. The efforts so far have more or less proved futile because of the mythical nature of stories of its origin. In view of this it was deemed necessary in this write-up that, as it has been variously contended, two of these theories by different schools of thought be briefly represented here. One such school has it that fasting has its origin in the custom of leaving some or all the essentials of worldly life such as food, drink and sex or any other appetitive cravings for religious, political, social, economical and health reasons or purposes and for a definite period of time for the dead so that they can make use of them. However, another school of thought has it that fasting had its origin in the discovery of the ancient man that abstinence from food, drink, sex, etc. could induce a state of susceptibility to states of consciousness, like dreams, in which the realities of the spiritual realm could be directly apprehended (Agha: 1992, 2). It is evident that fasting must have been with man for far longer a time than known but there is no doubt that the second school of thought as above represented holds more water than the other schools, in its position. Evidence from psychology and other relevant studies have represented the deprived organism as having always been

more sensitive and at alert than the overfed ones. Hence, according to Adams (2010, 6),

fasting has been used from Biblical times through the modern world to help purify and heal the body. It can help detox your liver, kidneys and digestive track. It also encourages you to rethink your eating habits. When you fast for just 24 hours and you are really committed to it, you would be shocked to discover how many times you habitually reach for food. (Adams: 2010, Part 6),

No doubt, some negative effects of fasting are on the record. Fasting, depending on the degree has been known to induce negative health conditions such as electrolyte imbalance, thinning of hairs, lanugos, cardiac arrhythmia and renal failure and in very extreme cases mental conditions or disturbances such as Anorexia Nervosa. But, as may have been elsewhere stated, the health values of fasting cannot be over emphasized because of its effectiveness in the reduction of the risk of cancerous infections, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, insulin resistance, immune disorders, slowing of the ageing process and increased life span.

## III. FASTING AND/OR ABSTINENCE

According to *The New Grolier Webster International Dictionary of English Language vol. 1* to “to fast means to abstain from food beyond the usual time, to go hungry, to abstain from food, or particular types of food voluntarily, especially for religious reasons or to lose weight”(2006: 236). On the other hand *The Oxford English Dictionary* sees abstinence as “the action or practice of abstaining or refraining; forbearance” (2005: 405). From the foregoing it is obvious, as evident, that the ambiguity imbedded in the word ‘fasting’ would not make one see clearly the difference between the term fasting and its seemingly synonym ‘abstinence’. However this study seriously contends that fasting could be differentiated from abstinence. One can abstain from certain foods, drinks and other things without really fasting even though such abstinence is voluntarily done. A practical example might suffice here. In real life aggrieved persons, bereaved persons and sick persons may abstain from foods, drinks and other things but which has nothing to do with fasting. Hence, “this is done more for loss of appetite and a conventional way of showing how deeply inflicted the one is” Ezeja Ozioko in *An Oral Interview* (2009: 2.30pm 20<sup>th</sup> May).

Take also the case of people, who abstain from eating of things that are regarded as totems. Obviously, one abstains from eating such things because to do so would culminate in a taboo. Thus, abstinence is different from fasting if for instance one has to abstain from the eating of monkey meat because one’s clan does not eat monkey meat or anything that came in contact with monkey meat as such would have been contaminated.

Furthermore, a person who is fasting expectedly takes nothing while the fasting lasted otherwise the fasting would have been violated. On the other hand, one who is abstaining from one thing at a time can make do with another at the same time. I had a friend who does not take any food made of Dawa (wheat). Whenever we had such meals he abstained but at the same time availed himself of any other food in the house.

One thinks that the above would be enough to distinguish fasting from total or partial abstinence. From the above one can safely conclude that all fasting is abstinence but not all abstinence is fasting. At least this is always manifest in African Traditional Religion as well as in Christianity just as one cannot rule out its existence in other major religions of the world. Let us now examine fasting in Christian and African Traditional Religions in turn.

**IV. FASTING IN RELIGIONS**

For the purpose of this study fasting in Christianity and African Traditional Religions would be examined. To the Christian, fasting is concomitant with prayer. This is evident from the New Testament of *The Holy Bible (NIV)*, where Jesus told his disciples that with faith as tiny as the mustard seed, they could tell a mountain to move from this place to another and it shall be done (Mathew 17: 20). He also went further to tell them that they can achieve the seemingly incredulous and incredible but credible feat only with prayer. This prayer I contend to be effective must be complimented with fasting because according to Agha, “the combination of fast, prayer and alms-giving is said to be one of the most effective ways of pleasing God” (1992: 92). This is the only road to faith and is primarily important for with faith in God according to Christian faithful nothing is impossible.

It is true that Christ as the founder of Christianity did not as such institute fasting but he made it a voluntary act as indicated in his answer to the question from the Pharisees as to why it was that his disciples did not fast. To this question he gave the answer that “the guests cannot fast when the bridegroom is still with them and that behold time shall come when the bridegroom is taken away then they shall fast” (Holy Bible (NIV), Mathew 9: 15). But fasting in the Judaic religions before the birth of Christ was not always a voluntary issue. It was sometimes authoritative. This however does not cancel out the voluntary nature of fasting. The instances of fasting willingly and willy-nilly run through the entire gamut of the old testament of the Christian bible hence “on the tenth day of the seventh month you must fast and not do any work” (Holy Bible (NIV), Lev.16: 29). Also Saul commanded his people while he was fighting the Philistines thus, “cursed be any man who eats food before evening comes before I have avenged myself of my enemies” (Holy Bible (NIV), I Sam.14: 24). Other examples abound but this is enough to denote authoritative forms of fasting.

Even though in the New Testament Jesus made fasting private and a voluntary act as when he exhorted the apostles that when one fasted he must not look gloomy and withdrawn but should anoint his head and look cheerful for his father who sees in the secret would reward the one as such, the Old Testament notion of authoritative undertone of fasting is still strongly haunting the modern Christian church. This is evident in the Catholic Church, for instance in declaring authoritatively that all must fast during the Lenten season and any other day chosen as such probably for reasons extra-religious. The papists are extremely dictatorial as they go to the extent of prescribing what should or should not be eaten in periods of fast, the length of time and compulsory committal of savings made from fasting and abstinences to the use of the church or other specified uses. These were what revolutionary Christians like Calvin, Martin Luther King Jr., Cartwright, etc. opposed vehemently.

Fasting in the Christian religion has acquired further connotations in the recent past. It becomes extra-religious especially political when a fast is proclaimed to God in order to achieve political motives. The example of this was when Nigeria was allegedly enlisted into the membership of Organization of Islamic Countries. Fasting was frequently organized to make effective prayers and supplications before God in order to avert what was thought to be a political decision in a religious affair. Also cases of hunger strikes by mainly political prisoners abound which are extended notions of fasting but not exactly for religious purposes.

It is also imperative to note that in Christian religion fasting alone cannot make one attain forgiveness of sins as well as other reasons behind all religious fasting. One must have to fast and pray. Fasting is only a way of tormenting ourselves before God to let him give ear unto our yearnings and prayer. Though this has at various times been questioned by some Christian fundamentalists they need not because “every Christian should not only be a fasting child, but also a praying

child of the living God, because through prayer a progressive relationship with God in Christ is maintained and ultimately control all the believers’ life” (Agha, 1992: 88).

Fasting in the Christian religion should not only be observed in prayer but also in humility, alms giving, scripture reading and strict observance of the laws of fasting as set down in the bible for unto the bible we have been commanded neither to add nor to subtract and that all our answers be yea, yea and nay, nay for anything above this is from evil.

As has been emphasized before, all forms of fasting is a process of humiliating oneself before God in order to attain his mercy and through fervent prayer. But regrettably, as some would have it, fasting in African Traditional Religion is not as manifest as it is in Christianity. According to Ezeja Ozioko in *An Oral Interview* (2009: 2.30pm 20<sup>th</sup> May), fasting in African Traditional Religion is purely religious. All fasting is geared towards restitution, that is, revitalization or restoration of vital forces through the lesser gods and even through the supreme deity. This restoration of vital force could be individual or general. He went further to give me an instance of when the community was plagued with deaths, poor yields and sundry natural disasters like rainstorm, thunder and lightening, flood, etc. At that period according to him people only resorted to constant sacrifices, abstinences and fasting with prayers to the high gods through the divinities and lesser deities like Enyanwu, Abere Mkpukpu and Abere Otobo; later their appeal was extended to higher divinities like Nshi-ona, Ugwu-egu, Idenyi and Odo-Shire. On a personal note he told me a story of a Dibia who was investigating the cause of the illness of one of our brothers who did not take anything from sunrise to sunset but only followed the sun in its course with prayers and incantations. According to him the sun to the Dibia represented the visible aspect of God and as such his representative.

About people who do not eat when they are distressed, angry, over-joyed or bereft of very dear ones, whether these could be referred to as fasting, he was of the opinion that these are no clear cases of fasting hence they are only abstinences that in some cases, more so with the contamination of western religious fasting techniques, have acquired the status of a convention especially in the bereft person’s case. All these instances of people going without food as mentioned above are just clear cases of loss of appetite or dancing to conventions which are no rules as such.

However, he told me that there are cases where one who is visiting a diviner on an important issue is advised to abstain from certain types of foods and even sex. Also there are certain oracles in our community which it is the law that one must have abstained from contact with women for at least five days prior to its worship to enable one part-take. Furthermore, under certain rituals like making of strong charms and worshipping of strong deities one abstains from certain food items such as cocoa-yam, palm oil, etc. because these are believed to be effective in neutralizing forces. More so, some places have serious initiation rites that warrant abstinence and fasting.

What conclusions could one draw from the above? They are many. First, it is evident at least in traditional religions that individuals do not fast as such rather it is the diviner or dibia who is trying to restore the vital force of a stricken person (that is the one that is ill) that fasts to make his work of intervention on behalf of the stricken person effective and make his intervention more powerful. Second, it is evident that when the sacrifice involves the generality of the community no known instance could be recollected in ATR when a fast has been proclaimed. The general trend is that the chief priest to the deities concerned and other elders in the village abstain from things like sex before the ritual. Third, what obtains in ATR is more of abstinence than what could be purely construed as fasting by individuals. Generally, if individuals abstained they do so for special reasons other than that signified by the dictionary meaning of fasting.

ADVANCE RESEARCH JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY DISCOVERIES

The real sense of fasting could be found among diviners, dības, chief priests and his messengers and concerned and involved elders of one oracle or the other.

**V. APPRAISING FASTING IN RELIGIONS**

Fasting is genuinely and glaringly a feature of all religions without any exception. More often than not the distinguishing ground is the mode of fasting and the object of fasting. It is in this and only in this that fasting differs from religion to religion. Most religions have also always separated fasting from abstinence. This was why earlier in this study effort was made, for you to judge whether futile or successful, to define and explain fasting and abstinence because the two appear interwoven and the difference is not always clear.

Fasting, in religions, has always been and will always remain, for the religious, a way of humbling oneself before God or gods. It is the belief that fasting is done before a greater deity before whom one must bring oneself so low. Man sometimes needs the pity and compassion of this great deity which cannot be achieved without a humble approach which only fasting can bestow on man. In this the example of a person like Ahab in the old testament of the Christian religion readily comes to mind. Also the case of a son humbling himself before his father and the way his father would be readily moved to pity is one sure way of letting us know that by fasting we make our yearnings clear and distinct to God.

It is also common in religions that fasting alone is not effective. In most religions fasting is always to be combined with alms-giving, incantations and/or prayer. Most religions emphasize the voluntary nature of fasting. Irrespective of the fact that fasting in religions is voluntary the ideas of its voluntary but necessary conventions have made fasting appear to some people as if it were obligatory and/or compulsory.

In the Christian religion as in some other religions the generality of the people can fast at a time. This does not as such deny individual fasting but at some times in most religions representatives fast on behalf of individuals and even the generality of the people if the need arises where those being represented may have to contribute in kind or are believed to have given their assent or are not disposed.

In most religions there are specific times for fasting but the dictate of circumstance might necessitate the proclamation of fasting at any time. That is to say that even though Christians, have specific times of fasting like the Lenten period, good Friday, holy Thursday, and other such periods individuals and communities or groups may just as and at required periods proclaim a fast and fasting period.

It is also worthy of note that almsgiving is an integral part of fasting in most religions. However, because of differences in the economic systems almsgiving vary in importance from religion to religion. Because of the economic factor too in some religions all cases of abstinence amount to fasting but not so in some other religions. No doubt, abstinence could be for some other reasons other than religious, for instance when I abstain from any dish prepared with monkey meat I cannot be said to be fasting as such but only responding to taboos imposed customarily by totemism. Even Christian religion, popular for its many cases of conventional fasting have instances of abstinences which cannot be called fasting but which the modern churches are only too lukewarm to accept as such.

But, one must take Chukwulozie seriously when he writes,

So it will be the duty of the philosopher to explain the human aspects and the rational foundations on which religion is founded.... Among the revealed religions it is the duty of the philosopher to examine critically the claims of each religion as to the validity of its Revelation. ....The third duty which the philosopher has to discharge with respect to Religion is to dig into the content of

Religious doctrines in order to expose their nature and subdivisions clearly and show their application to daily life(1981: 31-32).

Therefore, in deeper philosophical reflection, the meaning and significance of fasting in the religious experience of man could be critically questioned on the grounds of meaningfulness of the religious experience and the relegation or nearly nil emphasis on the other forms of fasting that in the main underwrite fasting. Let us turn our attention to these since a closer look at these would bear out their relevance to the meaningfulness or otherwise of fasting.

Other Types of Fasting

There is medical fasting. In medical fasting, people for operation and other forms of surgery have always been restricted from eating for a period that would amount to fasting and or abstinence (usually overnight) to enable the anesthetics work well. Even after such surgery fasting and or abstinence is continued to enable faster recovery. It is also the case that in medics that people for cholesterol test are required to have fasted in order to establish a baseline.

There is also the therapeutic type of fasting. In therapeutic fasting, fasting is for healing purposes. Hence, people have fasted in order to get healed or cured of certain debilitating ailments for which there is no known direct cure. Fasting is a known treatment for obesity. Fasting is also used in blood sugar and insulin control. It is also the case that people have been advised medically to fast in order to detoxify their bodies while fasting is also regarded as a therapy for prolonging life span.

There is also political fasting. In political fasting, fasting is embarked on fasting for mainly political reasons. Such reasons could range from making the world aware of a situation that requires urgent attention. Two forms name of political fasting are hunger strike and sex strike. The efficacy of political fasting derives from its non-violent nature. People on political strike normally attract sympathy enjoy support of the people.

There is also the type of fasting known as spiritual fasting. This type of fasting is used to express what are most likely a very personal or small group spiritual beliefs and/or principles. This type of fasting more often than not has no political undertone. It is essentially not the same with religious fasting because spiritual fasting does not proclaim any form of religious experience on the public.

The Religious Phenomenon

In *Man and Moral* (Bittle: 1950:330) one reads “Religion is the sum of duties which obligate man to render homage to God as the Supreme Being and creator of man”. In *A Modern Introduction to Ethics* (O’Connor in Munitz 1958:46) one also reads that “Religion is a social institution that embodies a code, a cult and a creed”. Also in Chukwulozie’s *The Philosopher and Religion* (1981) “Religion may be defined as the totality of truths, laws and rites by which man subjects himself to the Supreme Being”. In Ekpunobi and Ezeaku edited *Socio-Philosophical Perspective of African Traditional Religions* (1990:2) one reads the following compilation: Religion is the worship of higher powers from the sense of need, (Allan Menzies). Religion is a mental faculty or disposition which independent of sense or reason enables man to apprehend the infinite under different names and under varying guises (Max Muller). Religion is the consciousness of the highest social values (Edward Ames). Religion (is)... the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they call divine (William James).

ADVANCE RESEARCH JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY DISCOVERIES

The above are some definitions of religion. There is something essential in all of them—that religion is a social institution, an aspect of culture and an evolutionary trend. Yet there is another essential. Religion emphasizes a relationship between a higher and divine presence and a lower presence. The lower presence recognizes certain set of duties he owes to the higher divine presence. These summarize the religious phenomenon. Man in time has developed forms of interaction with his environment of which the religious experience is one as the special experience called religion, which could be true or false.

Hence, some approached the religious phenomenon negatively. The sociologists negate the religious phenomenon. The sociologists of our times and before us such as Emile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer and Karl Marx had an interpretation of God, (religion) that was too natural and mundane to be acceptable to a theist. The foundation of the sociologists' view of religion is the fact that society as an aggregate entity has a life of its own and wields a sort of control over the individual components that are not real; they are lacking but the society which is not tangible is real—not lacking. What the theory therefore holds is that religious feeling in man means being before a higher power which impresses its will on man as a moral imperative which signifies the presence of a greater enviroing reality. This greater enviroing reality is not super-natural being but natural facts of society (Hick: 1973:32). Therefore religion is reduced to the concept of social ritual that is natural in which man expresses his utmost regard for the society, which in turn offers him succor. Thus, the society becomes colossal in estimation and individuals are compelled in humility to be in obedience to it always. "The tribal customs, beliefs, requirements, and taboos are sovereign and bear collectively the awesome aspect of the holy" (Hick: 1973:32).

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) negated the religious phenomenon. He was a psychologist, father of psycho-analysis. However, he is of immense import to any meaningful study of religion because of his contribution, which could not be reasonably ignored. Man was helpless in his view before nature's ambivalence or dynamism. The most threatening were aspects of nature such as earth-quakes, floods, landslide, drought, diseases and death. Man desired to triumph over these. Freud then "regarded religious beliefs as illusions fulfillment of the oldest, strongest and most insistent wishes of mankind" (Hick: 1973:34). Thus man had to make mental impressions of these forces of nature which were trying to freeze and fizzle him out of existence. He personalized these forces by creating equivalent passions in his soul. These passions he could contend with—even appease if not subdueable. Thus, "if impersonal forces and destinies cannot be approached, they remain eternally remote... we can try to adjure them, to appease them, to bribe them, and, by so influencing them, we may rob them of part of their powers" (Strachey: 1961: xx1, 16).

Freud also accounted for the strength of the so-called religious feeling, the guilt feeling and obligation of obedience to the deity through the concept of Oedipus complex in *Totem and Taboo* (Hick: 1973:35). Therefore strength in the religious feeling becomes a product of sublimation of the primordial domestic struggle emanating from man's natural passion for incest in the "primal horde". In this way he related also birth of Totemism as a religion-based on fear of domination and deprivation. Totemism in his view as a religion originated from the ritual by Oedipus in memory of his crime, repentance bid, and an attempt at peace making, submission and reconciliation. This, though, has not been able to clear up the ambiguity of man-son (Oedipus and his father's) relationship. The son though afraid of his father now cares less for him but as a symbol. The ritual indicated a kind of remorse, repentance and submission by the son but also marks victory of the son over the father—still a way of pacifying or accommodative seeming insurmountable forces. Thus, religion as art, morality and politics is a kind of sublimation of the libido by the super-ego. It is "nothing but obsessional universal neurosis of humanity...a collective crime" (Strachey: 1961: Xxi, 44).

Freidreich Nietzsche also negated the religious experience. The Nietzschean "God is dead" is almost regarded as a leitmotif in discussions of his views on religion but stopping at that had always not allowed many to glimpse his reason for negation of religion. Further he wrote "and we killed Him" (Nietzsche: *The Joyful Wisdom*). In his view man eliminated God as epitome of perfection and never pretended about that. Then as an arch-existentialist and (probably) atheist he proceeded: "How shall we be consoled for this? We murderers of murderers? He whom the world held to be most sacred and most powerful has bled on our knives. Who shall wash the stain of this blood from us? In what can we be purified? Is not the very greatness of this act too great for us? Must not we ourselves become Gods to seem worthy of it?" (Nietzsche: *Joyful Wisdom*). Man in his view has to exist for himself or chose for himself what his essence should be since he had existence therefore hinging man's hopes on an ideal which we stifled out of meaning is to say the least an aberration of thought. He stressed his non-interest in religious experience-God, immortality of the soul, etc. never interested him hence they in his view never deserved his attention.

Religion for him is a human invention but an invention of the weak against the super man. It is a slave morality. This in his view is particularly true of Christianity. In Christianity the weak, humiliated and oppressed project their ideals-weakness, poverty, resignation as that of all and as such oblige the strong, powerful and super-man into submission to this slave ideal. Christianity in his view equates all misery with goodness, poverty, weakness, sickness and need. Cursed, condemned. Internally unhappy, enemies of God, perverse, unsociable, etc are the powerful, the aristocrats, and the superman. By the way though, one really needs not doubt the effectiveness of this Neitzschean analysis of religion from the position of the supermen in the contemporary world of ours where supermen are heads, foundation members and front seat liners of most churches.

Then, to the Neo-positivists one must turn for further negation of the religious phenomenon. Negative approach to the issue of religious phenomenon owes much in its perpetuation to the schools of positivism and neo-positivism but to the later in the main. In the view of the neo-positivists, the beyond is a farce, moral and theological teachings are a kind nonsense and no respect for the transcendental (metaphysics). Philosophy in their conception is essentially linguistic analysis. Truth and falsehood consisted in linguistic analysis. Therefore logical demonstration and experimental verifiability become criteria for truth and falsehood, meaningful and nonsense propositions. Logical analysis or demonstration determines logical truths or falsehood. experimental verification determines factual truths and falsehood. Accordingly proposition are meaningless which could not scale this test. Accordingly proposition are meaningless which could not scale this test.

The neo-positivists have ultimately dismissed as nonsense and meaningless concepts such as religion, religious experience, language, statements, etc. concepts such as ethical concepts, esthetic concepts and metaphysical statements are not left out. These are not empirically verifiable or logically analyzable, say noting and have no objective value. "God exist" as a metaphysical and religious statement say nothing; it is neither true nor false. Propositions as regards religion, the religious phenomenon have no meaning and as such are snot worth the while.

This way, then a daring critic would bring to bear on fasting all he holds against the idea and the experience called religion. He can argue that fasting is a material or physical exercise limited to finite beings and since God is infinite he is not material and would obviously not even appreciate the thoughtful material mortifications in the same way.

It could also be argued that fasting is to those who indulge in it what drugs, opiates and barbiturates like cocaine, morphine, heroine, LCD, marijuana and even alcoholic beverages. These have been argued to have the wherewithal to produce the same effect that fasting can have on the person indulging in them. This is because fasting may just like the above be another way of forcing a person to fly from reality, or subdue it by accepting fantasy, imagination, illusions, utopia, and dream worlds as real. The inwardly fasting person is obviously deprived and at a certain point when the deprivation begins to get hold of the person such a person begins to get distorted sensations and distorted reality; such begins to see visions and visions obviously painted by distortions imposed on the senses and reason distorted by marred sensation and/or perception. This is made more obvious if one understands what happens when one is fasting:

Glucose is the body's primary fuel source and is essential for the brain's functioning. When denied glucose for more than 4–8 hours, the body will turn to the liver for glycogen, a storage form of glucose, to be used for fuel. A process called glycogenolysis converts glycogen into a usable form of fuel. At this point, the body will also use small amounts of protein to supplement this fuel. This fuel will last for up to 12 hours before the body needs to turn to muscle stores of glycogen, lasting for a few more days. If glucose is still denied at this point, muscle wasting is prevented by temporarily switching to fat as the fuel source, meaning fat is converted into ketone through catabolism. Ketones, while not sugars, are able to be used by the brain as a fuel source as long as glucose is denied. ( Wikipedia: 2008)

The fasting person would likely shout that he is seeing God when his dog appears by the corner of his bed accidentally. For instance, I watched a film in which this scenario was played out. A young man who always felt molested, challenged and inferior decided to fast to death but death was not on hand. He lapsed into comatose and in that state he was replayed as seeing himself as a macho man who prided himself in bullying everybody around him. He thought that this state was real until he was revived. He however never stopped regretting being rescued from that imaginary world where his dreams and hopes were lived and where illusions are glorified as beatific visions.

It has also been argued that fasting has far more, psychological, social, and economic than religious roles. Psychologically, it has been established that deprivations enhances refined thoughts and that attention is achieved when the organism is deprived. On the other hand too much supply numbs the senses and lulls perception, attention, and refined thoughts. The sharpness of the senses of the deprived person enables the one to maintain alert state in order to locate means of satisfying his needs quickly. But, persons have always transferred this vigorous consciousness to other areas of commitments in life such as its use in the collective illusions called religion.

The social side of fasting is implicative of the fact that being an obese, being over-sized has too many disadvantages and cannot be cherished hence the average body size is always rated high. The well-sized person fits well into the society and enjoys far reaching social acceptability within groups. The good size has never been better achieved elsewhere as in fasting. It is imperative that to avoid a lot of social sicknesses like hypertension, reduction of the risk of cancerous infections, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, insulin resistance, immune disorders, slowing of the ageing process and increased life span etc. one has to fast regularly. Thus there is ample evidence that most fasting done in pretended religious piety in actual reason are for social reasons.

On the other hand it has also been argued that people fast as a veritable means of economic adjustment. Most church leaders know this and would advise that for fasting in religious sense to be effective one must turn in proceeds saved in the process of fasting. It is also obvious that to meet up with certain of one's needs one must deprive oneself of certain other of his cherished needs. This in economic terms translates as the real cost, real cost that is the alternative forgone.

**VI. CONCLUSION**

The best and obvious way to conclude this appraisal is to restate what is obvious from the study. Fasting is remarkably just an illusion borne out of illusion (the religious phenomenon). Hence, the study reaches a further conclusion that no fasting yields in any beatific and that any attempt at establishing that fasting yields beatific vision is just illusion's marriage to illusions. The study on the other hand established that fasting is mostly useful in resolving health, psychological, social, political and economic issues then hitherto thought.

**REFERENCES**

[1]. **Adams, Mike (Monday, February, 8, 2010)** "Heal Yourself in 15 days by fasting for 24 hours (Part 6, Mon. Feb. 8, 2010)" The Health Ranger. www.National News. Com.

[2]. **Agha, A. U. (1992)** The New Meaning of Fasting in Our Age: Assemblies of God Church. Actually he quoted Hastings' definition of fasting as his own definition of fasting on page 105 of the book has it as "Fasting signifies either compulsory or voluntary deprivation either for religious, political or economic purposes".

[3]. **Chukwulozie, V. C.**"The Philosopher and Religion" Uche: Journal of the Department of Philosophy University of Nigeria Nsukka vol.5(1981) Enugu: Thompson and Group Printers.

[4]. **Ekpunobi, Emma and Ezeaku, Ifeanyi ed. (1990)** Socio-Philosophical Perspective of African Traditional Religion Enugu: NEW AGE PUBLISHERS.

[5]. **Hastings, James (1920)** Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics vol.V (New York, Edingburgh: Charles Scribner's Sons and T & T Clark).

[6]. **Hick, John (1973)** Philosophy of Religion England: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

[7]. **Holy Bible (NIV, 1984)** USA: International Bible Society

[8]. **Levi-Strauss, Claude (1966)** The Savage Mind, George Weidenfeld and Nicolson trans. United States of America: The University of Chicago Press Ltd.

[9]. **Ozioko, E (2009)** An Oral Interview (Ovoko-Nsukka, 2.30pm 20th May 2009).

[10]. **Wehmeier, Sally ed., (2000)** Oxford English Dictionary, sixth edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press Limited).

\*\*\*\*\*

**Corresponding author :**

**Christopher Ikechukwu Asogwa (PhD) \***  
 Department of Philosophy, University of Nigeria Nsukka  
 Enugu State, Nigeria

Publishing Copyright @ International Journal Foundation