

The Words of Our Worship

A Study in Prayer Book Meanings

By Carroll E. Simcox

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[Footnotes and acknowledgments moved into places of citation.]

Forward by the Bishop of New York

Education has been defined as “entering into the meaning of a few great words.” If this definition be accepted, the fourth annual Bishop of New York Book, *The Words of Our Worship*, by the Reverend Dr. Carroll E. Simcox, is, in eminent degree an educational book. It takes from the Book of Common Prayer seventy-six familiar words or phrases and enables us to enter more fully into their meaning.

Some of these words are so familiar that we almost fail to hear them anymore, though they are sounded every day in the worship of the Church. Some are well loved; some are obscure and commonly misunderstood. In hodgepodge order, here are a few samples: glory, the beauty of holiness, no health in us, Sabaoth, martyr, a happy issue, sudden death, everlasting damnation, O ye whales, true and lively word, provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us, a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, until His coming again, bold to say, the peace of God.

In exploring the distinctive vocabulary of Christian worship the author makes available to us, in readable form, the results of philological, exegetical, and historical research. His scholarship, however, has but one intent: the building up of the People of God in faith, hope, and love.

The book can be read with advantage at any season. Many people will welcome it especially as Lenten reading. Although it will require a good deal of self-discipline to limit oneself to not more than two sections a day, one for morning devotions and one for evening, the book – with its seventy-six sections – can be made to last almost the whole of Lent! But whether taken sparingly in Lenten doses or consumed at a single feast, the book will nourish.

Horace W. B. Donegan
Bishop of New York

Preface

“Has it ever struck you, Dick, that ecclesiastical language has a most sinister sound? I knew some of the words, though not their meaning, but I knew that my audience would be just as ignorant. So I had a magnificent peroration. ‘Will you, men of Kilclavers,’ I asked, ‘endure to see a chasuble set up in your market place? Will you have your daughters sold into simony? Will you have celibacy in the public streets?’ Gad, I had them all on their feet bellowing ‘Never!’”

John Buchan, *The Three Hostages*

Ecclesiastical language has a most sinister sound indeed, to most people; and the Book of Common Prayer is necessarily full of such language, being a most ecclesiastical book. If “sinister” does not exactly describe the impression which these words of our worship make upon the ordinary hearer, let us say that they strike hi as strange words.

Article XXIV of the Articles of Religion declares this vital principle: “It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the Primitive Church, to have public Prayer in the Church, or to minister the Sacraments, in a tongue not understood of the people.”

The object of this rule is, of course, to provide that the language of worship shall be the language of the people’s own discourse. The Anglican Churches claim that in the Prayer Book they have a people’s liturgy, in language truly understood of the people. The claim is obviously true insofar as it means simply this: that English-speaking Churchmen worship in English, Japanese Churchmen in Japanese, and so forth. But to say that every English-speaking Churchman understands every word and phrase of his Prayer Book liturgy would be to make another claim, and one which it would be considerably harder to prove.

The truth is that Christians must always be learning and relearning the language of their faith. Christianity has its own vocabulary, just as have medicine, aeronautics, law, and art. The world keeps telling the Church to speak to it in language everybody can understand – the language of Main Street, the radio, and the newspaper. But this cannot be. We know better than to ask the nuclear physicist to expound to us the dark riddles of his

science in the language of baseball. We are prepared to learn the technical terms of any other worthwhile area of knowledge; we must be willing to do no less with religion. One of the new wonder drugs is called Adenosine-5-TriPhosphate. It is a label which does not roll trippingly from the tongue. But nobody suggests that we quit calling it that and start calling it, say, "that white milky-looking stuff in the green bottle". By the same token, there is no point in asking that we call the mystery of the Trinity of Persons in Unity of Substance by some cozier name.

The Christian must learn the language of his faith and worship so that he can converse with God and his brethren about the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. He must keep on constantly relearning this language of salvation and growing in his apprehension of its meanings. Only so can he grow in grace and holiness.

This book is written for the Christian whose rule of faith and worship is the Book of Common Prayer. My object in each of these chapters is to take the word or phrase which is the subject of the chapter and to expound it as best I can, with the hope that the reader will henceforth find more spiritual sense and meaning in it. Or to state my object in another way, it is to make each one of these words and phrases ring a bell of comprehension.

The task is not always exactly the same. Sometimes what is called for is little more than a simple explanation or definition. In other cases the task is that of showing the relevance of what the word or phrase expresses to our life in God and in the world. If the reader bears this in mind as he reads along, he will not be puzzled by the great diversity he encounters in my treatment of the various subjects.

All page references are to the American Prayer Book now in official use. [1928 edition.] It will help if you will keep the Prayer Book at hand as you read, and if before reading any chapter you will read the immediate context in the Prayer Book from which the word or phrase under discussion is taken.

If you have not read the amusing passage from John Buchan's *The Three Hostages* quoted above, do so now. My thanks to Margaret Carmichael for calling this passage to my notice.

C.E.S.

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The Order for Morning Prayer

My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. – Psalm 4:3.

Lord, I my vows to Thee renew;
Disperse my sins as morning dew;
Guard my first springs of thought and will,
And with Thyself my spirit fill.
Direct, control, suggest this day
All I design, or do, or say;
That all my powers, with all their might,
In thy sole glory may unite.
— Thomas Ken.

The decisive preparation for prayer lies not in the prayer itself, but in the life prior to the prayer. That is, distractions and dryness indeed even the real fruitlessness in and of our prayer, spring largely from our faulty dispositions, doings and driftings when out of prayer. The effects of such faultinesses pursue us when we come to pray. The cure for such faults committed out of prayer, and for their effects upon and within prayer, lies in the very wise ordering and of the very faithful execution of such ordering, or our active life.

— Baron Friedrich von Hugel.

It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new ever morning: great is thy faithfulness. — Lamentations 3:22–23.

1. *Lost Sheep* – We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. – Page 6.

Somebody has well said that Jesus came to save the sheep from their own sheepishness as well as from the wolfishness of the wolves. We need to be saved from ourselves. When we are lost, it is we who lose ourselves, by drifting and straying from the safe path on which God originally set us.

How do sheep – of the animal or the human kind – lose themselves? They do it either by neglecting to stay with their true guide, or by perverse going after some false guide.

You can go along with Christ as your Good Shepherd, following Him faithfully for years and finding joy, safety, and peace as one of His flock; and then you can grow careless. It requires some effort, some persistent and constant practice, to remain a follower of Christ. One must keep at it without respite: the discipline of prayer, worship, repentance, amendment of life; the high, but hard endeavor to make one's own life conform to the perfect pattern of Christ at all points. How easy it is to cease from the effort

for just a breather! And how disastrous it can be! We hear somebody say: “For years I never missed church on Sunday. Then, somehow, I just lost the habit, and I’ve never got back into it.” What happened? It all began when he thought he would skip church “just this once”. That was the end.

A sheep can get himself into trouble by slackening for a single moment his effort to stay with his shepherd. Or, he can choose to follow some other leader.

He may decide to follow himself as his own best shepherd. If our human sheep has a taste for inspirational verse, he is fond of “To thine own self be true,” and his golden text is the one about the Lord helping those who help themselves. The “devices and desires” of his own heart are bright beacons to him of pure and holy wisdom. No pope, or bishop, or priest, or holy writ, is needed to guide his steps for him; he will make his way without benefit of creed or clergy. When a person decides that he is his own best shepherd, he is on his way to a serious lostness.

Or one can choose to follow some other false guide. In every stockyard there is a trained bellwether sheep whose business is to lure the innocent to their doom. He gets their confidence; they follow him, and they disappear into the great silence as this bland rascal returns for the next lot of simpletons.

Tragic droves of human sheep have followed betrayers to doom, thinking that they were marching to New Jerusalem. We of our generation think at once of Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin. These men were obvious tyrants; obvious to us, at least. But there is another kind of bellwether to beware of – the democratic demagogue. He looks and sounds like a friend. He talks much about our rights and dignities. One of them told us a few years ago, in a moment of uncharacteristic candor, that when the great American dictator arrives, he will come as the champion of democracy.

There is another danger: that we may choose to follow as our shepherd some leader who intends no harm to us but who simply cannot do for us what a shepherd must do. Our shepherd in such a case may be not a person but something that we hail as the cure-all. Consider some of the popular choices in this case: education, culture, science, social planning, the welfare state, world federation. The trouble comes when we look to “some great cause, God’s new messiah,” to be our shepherd to guide us to the haven where we fain would be. But all such new messiahs fail in the work of the true Messiah. No science can heal a broken heart; no sulfa-drug can

cast out sin; no welfare state can legislate happiness; no education can make us holy; no pacifism and give us peace.

The conclusion of the matter is this: unless we have Jesus Christ as our Shepherd, we have no shepherd at all. Our choice is between following Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and following either the devices and desires of our own poor hearts, or of some other mortal, to sure doom.

He is the Drover of the soul; He leads the flock of men
All wistful on that weary track and brings them back again,
The dreaming few, the slaving crew, the motley caste of life –
The wastrel and artificer, the harlot and the wife.

Evelyn Underhill.

[Evelyn Underhill, “Uxbridge Road,” from *Immanence*, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., New York.]

We come to God as lost sheep, and it is most fitting that we acknowledge it in our General Confession. There are degrees of lostness, and each of us is lost to the degree that he has erred and strayed from God’s way. But we bring our lostness to Him knowing that in doing so we are being found of Him again.

Of course, the recitation of this – or any other – confession can become the hollowest kind of vain formality. All of the words and actions of our liturgy must presuppose our sincerity as we use them. Assuming that we know ourselves as lost, through our own most grievous fault, when we make our confession, we may be sure that our Good Shepherd will restore us to His company. So long as we persevere in “daily endeavoring ourselves to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life”; so long as we practice the simple obedience of Jesus; so long as we fill our minds with His precepts, our hearts with His love, and our hands with His service, no man shall be able to pluck us out of His hand.

2. *No Health In Us* – We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. – Page 6.

A Boston lady of a generation ago heard with amazement that a friend had become an Episcopalian. She confronted her friend with this: “Do you

actually kneel down and call yourself a miserable offender? Neither I nor any of my family will ever do that!”

We ought to judge the lady gently. The truth is that we all share her feeling. We want desperately to maintain what we call a healthy self-respect, and it seems to us a most unhealthy procedure to beat our breasts and wail that there is no health in us. Then there is that very real question of honesty, sincerity, of meaning what we say and saying what we mean in our religion. It is honest to call ourselves miserable offenders when we really feel no misery about our sin?

These are the questions which arise as we consider the very grave penitential words of the General Confession. Let us try to answer two questions:

1. What, precisely, do we mean by these words: “no health I us,” “miserable offenders,” and the like?
2. Do we mean what we say?

When we say that we have done some evil things and we have left undone some good things, we are making a simple assertion of fact about our past conduct. There is no theory or principle involved here, there is just the record; our record. The Church in her liturgy assumes that we are, at any given moment, guilty sinners. We have done some things which were wrong, and we knew they were wrong when we did them; and also – and this too is sin – we have left undone things which God set before us to do, which only we could do. We wonder if the Boston lady would be willing to claim that she was completely innocent on both counts: that she had no evil things done, or good things left undone, written against her name. It is hard to believe that any person of normal intelligence and character could make such a claim.

In any case, these words about the things done and the things left undone refer simply to our actual conduct. What follows – the declaration that there is no health in us – refers to the inner condition. It is much easier to argue about this statement than about the preceding one. Does the statement, “there is no health in us,” commit us to the belief that we are altogether bad, with no goodness – not even a capacity for goodness – in us? It may be that some people read such a meaning into the words, but they need not. The statement can mean: “We have done evil, and we have failed to do the good things we ought to have done, and we find ourselves powerless to do anything about it.” The understanding of the words is the

central, traditional Anglican view. It is the Catholic view of man's sin as distinguished from the Calvinistic, which regards man as totally evil in his own nature.

In his Epistle to the Romans St. Paul makes a personal confession which, we submit, is every Christian's:

I know that in this flesh of mine there dwells no good thing at all. To be sure, there is in me the *will* to do good; but the *power* to do the good that I want to do – no. [My translation of Romans 7:18. I have paraphrased to the extent of making explicit in English what is clearly implicit in Paul's Greek.]

The pagan poet Ovid, who could never be accused of a morbid preoccupation with piety, makes the same confession in his words: *Video meliora proboque deteriora sequor*. "I see the better things, and I approve them; I go after the worse things."

Why is it that we do not always do the good things and leave the evil thing undone? We *see* the good, with Ovid; we *will* the good, with St. Paul; but we fail to do it. Why? There is no health in us – we haven't the strength to do it.

So we fall down in our self-despair before God and cry, "Have mercy upon us, miserable offenders." God must show His mercy upon us in two ways, if we are to be saved from this living death of impotence against our in. He must forgive us our past offenses and failures, so that we can pick ourselves up from them; and then He must provide that strength, that health, which we lack, so that with *His* health in us, by *His* grace we can do what He wants us to do.

Without God's mercy to forgive us we are doomed by the stark facts of our record. Without God's grace to enable us to amend our lives and to do the good which we are powerless to do by the strength of our own virtue, we are doomed to continuing frustration and impotence. This squares with our real selves as we see ourselves; this is our misery. But as believing and practicing Christians we have found that although there is no health in *us*, there is much health in *God*, and it is ours for the asking. We can do no good thing by ourselves; we can do all things through Christ our Strength.

We set ourselves another question in this chapter: Do we mean what we say, when we kneel down and call ourselves miserable offenders? How miserable are we – if at all?

I think that the difficulty of most objectors lies in the word "miserable". If I say that I have a miserable cold, or that I am miserably

lonely, you assume that my misery is that of conscious wretchedness. But “miserable” means wretched, pitiable, to be pitied, regardless of whether the miserable one is aware of his wretchedness. Whether you *feel* miserable has nothing to do with whether you *are* miserable. At the time you call yourself a miserable offender you may be, in fact, a deplorably happy offender; but the word “miserable” truly describes your condition nonetheless. To charge you with insincerity, hypocrisy, lying to God, simply because you do not *feel* your moral misery with an agony of self-loathing, would be to accuse you much too heavily. At the same time, we must beware of a casual and easy kind of repenting and confessing. We are miserable offenders; we ought to feel our misery.

One more word about meaning what we say in worship. We should always bear in mind that in the words of the liturgy we speak as our *Christian* selves. It is always helpful to recall Oliver Wendell Holmes’ saying that in every John there are three Johns: John as he sees himself, John as his associates and friends see him, and John as God sees him. In the liturgy, the first John tries for a while to be the third John. In his own sight, he may not be miserable. In God’s sight, he is. And let not the first John ever forget that there is only one real John: the third John, John as God sees him.

3. *A Godly, Righteous, and Sober Life* – And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life. To the glory of thy holy Name. – Page 6.

Like so many of the memorable phrases of the Prayer Book, this familiar trio of adjectives – “godly, righteous, and sober” – is taken directly from the Bible in the Authorized Version. The scriptural source should be considered in full, to provide the context for a right understanding. The passage is Titus 2:11–13.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The following are some of the modern translations of the phrase:

The Revised Standard Version – *sober, upright, and godly lives* [This translation is from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyrighted 1946 and 1952

by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches.]; James Moffatt – *a life of self-mastery, of integrity, and of piety* [From *The Bible – A New Translation* by James Moffatt, copyright 1922, 1935, 1950 by Harper & Brothers, New York. Used by permission.]; E. J. Goodspeed – *serious, upright, and godly lives* [From *The Complete Bible – An American Translation*. Used by permission of the University of Chicago Press, Chicago.]; and J. B. Phillips – *responsible, honorable, and God-fearing lives*. [From *Letters to Young Churches*, by J. B. Phillips. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company, New York.] Taking all of these renditions together we get the basic sense of this description of the kind of life which as Christians we aspire, God helping us, to lead.

We pray for *sobriety*. By this we do not mean an unsmiling gravity, a dull and joyless ponderosity such as the word *sober* seems to suggest to modern ears. A *sober* life, as Christians conceive of it, is “a life of self-mastery” (Moffatt), a “responsible” life (Phillips). The original word in the New Testament Greek means generally what we mean by such terms as *prudent, cool and collected, level-headed*. A sober life is, then, the diametrical opposite of an addlebrained, undisciplined, irresponsible life.

We pray for *righteousness*. In the modern translations quoted above we find such synonyms as *upright, a life of integrity* and *honorable*. Other common translations of the original Greek word are *just, fair, lawful, and right*. A righteous man, in the Christian view, is one who makes the moral law of God his rule of action in all things, “though it were to his own hindrance” (Psalms 15:5). We are praying here for the gift of uncompromising moral integrity, of the sort which would make us willing to suffer crucifixion rather than to make a moral compromise with the world. If we desire of God anything other than this or less than this when we pray for the gift of righteousness, we are dissemblers before Him, and we mean not what we say.

We pray for *godliness of life*. A godly life is a God-centered, God-filled life. A biographer of Robert E. Lee declares that Lee was God-intoxicated. Insofar as this judgment is correct, it means that Lee was godly in the sense that God was not to him an object of casual interest and partial devotion, but was the effective Ruler of his will and the constant Joy of his heart. To be godly is to live in God and unto God – at all times, in all places, continuously, and entirely. Common synonyms are *reverent, God-fearing, devout, and pious*. This last-named has suffered in our day the undeserved fate of becoming associated with religious hypocrisy and cant.

“I can’t stand people!” says many a one who wants to be classified as a Christian. Such a degradation of a noble word is always a pity. The strength, worth, and integrity of a Roman in the brave days of old was rightly judged by his *pietas*. We need to restore this to this word its ancient honor. A truly pious man is one whose life is hid with Christ in God, and he becomes to the rest of us as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

So when we ask God that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, we are praying that to us may be given these three gifts and graces of character: level-headedness, absolute moral integrity, and a fervent and devout piety. These are things the Christian must want for himself. Some of them the world around us admires and approves, others not. The world thinks very highly of the virtue of prudence and level-headedness. It endorses absolute moral integrity in principle, although it advises us that it is better not to be righteous overmuch in practice, that there is such a thing as being honest to the point of sheer fanaticism. Piety, godliness, the hunger and thirst for holiness – this is commonly regarded as evidence of immaturity, or of senility.

It should be needless to say that what the world around us advises us to want for ourselves cannot be for us the last word on the subject. If we are Christians, we take our instruction from the Lord. His word is the last word.

4. *Absolution and Remission* – Almighty God ... hath given power, and commandment, to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins. – Page 7.

It will be helpful to keep in front of us throughout the chapter the whole text of *The Declaration of Absolution, or Remission of Sins* as it is found on page 7 of the Prayer Book. For a right understanding of it we must see it as a whole.

This is a declaration, by God’s priest, of *absolution and remission*, and what we need primarily to do here is to fix in mind the meanings of these two terms.

We may begin by disposing of one familiar confusion. There is no pretense here, or anywhere in the Church’s doctrine and practice, that a priest has power to forgive sins. All forgiveness is of God. Only God can forgive. That is first, and final.

Absolution is rather the formal declaration and assurance of God's forgiveness to the penitent, spoken by one who has been ordained and authorized by God to bring from God to man the Gospel word, the Good News, of God's forgiveness. The priest in pronouncing absolution speaks to us as God's ambassador – and mouthpiece. The absolution is the human word which expresses the divine forgiveness.

What is specifically offered to the penitent is the absolution and remission of their sins. To *absolve* means to set free from; to *remit* means (at least in the New Testament and Christian usage) to strike the sin from the record against the sinner. We may consider a purely human analogy. Occasionally we hear about some man who escaped from prison many years ago and has since lived a law-abiding and useful life. But his conscience keeps him unhappily aware that he is a fugitive from justice, so at last he gives himself up to the police and discloses his identity. This is his *penitence*. His case goes into court, and the judge who must make the decision takes note of the man's fine record since his escape from prison and decides finally to give the man full freedom, a clean slate, and the dismissal of all the old charges. The judge, acting for society, thereby gives him *absolution* and *remission*. The *absolution* – which is the judge's pronouncement of society's forgiveness – sets the man free from his original offense, now and forever; and the *remission* strikes his crime from the record against him.

The priest speaks for God just as that judge speaks for society. The forgiveness of the criminal is not the judge's, but society's; so likewise the forgiveness of the penitent sinner is not the priest's, but God's. Just as society chooses to act through certain accredited agents, such as the judge, so God chooses to communicate his forgiveness to us through the ministry of His Church.

Let us consider now this Prayer Book declaration of absolution as a whole. As you read it through, you see that it includes four distinct elements: (1) a reminder of the basic fact that it is God's gracious will to forgive us, that it is His property to show mercy upon us rather than to execute vindictive justice; (2) a reminder that Christ has empowered and commanded His priestly ministers to declare God's forgiveness to the penitent – that is, to pronounce absolution and remission in God's name; (3) a warning that only the penitent can be forgiven; and (4) a call to prayer for the grace and help of God which we must have to enable us to meet the

necessary conditions of true repentance and amendment of life, so that the pardon now given to us will be a step toward our final end, the attainment of eternal salvation.

The only one of these four particulars which meets with serious questioning by some Christians is the second one – the assertion that Christ has authorized the Church’s ministry to absolve from sin. The objector is referred to the words and action of the Lord as recorded in the Fourth Gospel (St. John 20:23): “*And heaving said this he breathed upon them and saith to them, Receive holy spirit (or breath). If of any ye forgive the sins, they are forgiven them; if of any ye hold them fast, they are held.*” [This translation is that of William Temple, in *Readings from St. John’s Gospel, First and Second Series*. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company, New York.]

These tremendous, almost terrifying words are spoken by the risen Christ to His apostles. The original apostles clearly considered [The evidence is scattered abundantly throughout the Acts of the Apostles and the New Testament epistles.] that the Lord had given to them the power and commandment to remit the sins of the penitent and to retain the sins of the impenitent in the Lord’s name. They transmitted this commission to those whom they ordained to succeed them, the bishops. In the early Church the bishop was the sole minister of absolution, as of the Eucharist, but it was found desirable for practical reasons to delegate these sacramental powers to the presbyters (priests), to be exercised by these ministers under the direction of the bishops. This is how it comes about that priests in the Church perform these offices which were originally the functions delegated directly by our Lord to His apostles.

The absolution of penitent sinners is a vital part of the continuing ministry of the Gospel, which is the Good News of God’s forgiveness and love given to all of us who are of good will to receive it.

Such is the Catholic view of the apostolic ministry in the Church from the beginning until now. Not all Christians share it. Anglicans do. For better for worse, it is the idea and the functioning of the ministry “as this Church hath received the same,” and our Prayer Book liturgy expresses it and takes it for granted throughout.

There is no magic in absolution. The priest’s word of absolution brings God’s forgiveness *only* to those who sincerely repent. No ecclesiastical ceremony can be a substitute for repentance. As we hear this Prayer Book declaration, we are deliberately reminded of this. Whether we

shall receive God's forgiveness is determined, not by what the priest says or does, but by what we do with ourselves; whether we truly repent, or not.

5. *Open Thou Our Lips – Minister.* O Lord, open thou our lips. *Answer.* And our mouth shall show forth thy praise. – Page 7.

One of the most ancient fixtures in the daily morning service of the Church is this odd little prayer: *Open thou our lips.*

Odd it is to us, because we naturally suppose that we open our own lips when we speak to God – that we can do at least that much strictly on our own initiative, without any help from Him; if I want to say something to God, all that I need to do is to open my lips and to speak up.

So it seems. But the great masters of prayer tell us that it is not so. They teach us that we cannot even pray aright except as God enables us to pray aright.

These words of our liturgy are drawn from the 54th Psalm: *Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall show thy praise.* A careful study of this Psalm as a whole helps us toward a full understanding of the matter. Its author is a profoundly godly soul, who pours out his soul in such expressions as these: *Create in me a clean heart, O God . . . Take not thy holy spirit from me . . . Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts — purge me. . . .* The point of these petitions is that he wants God to make of him a man capable of praying rightly. His prayer, in substance, is this:

Create in me a clean heart, renew in me a right spirit; *then*, open thou my lips, and my tongue shall declare thy praise rightly and truly.

In this manner, with the understanding, we too must pray. We need to begin – rather, to preface – all our praying by asking God to make us capable of praying as He wants us to pray. We want His will to be done in our praying, as in all things. The man whose prayer is something like this –

Bless me and my wife,
My son and his wife,
Us four: no more. Amen!

needs to ask God to teach him to pray before he plunges into a prayer which is folly and iniquity: as all of our prayers are sure to be, unless God has opened our lips.

Why do we pray? Different people have different reasons and motives. Henry Ward Beecher accounted for his own praying thus: "I pray on the principle that the wine knocks the cork out of the bottle. There is an

inward fermentation and there must be a vent.” That is a valid and convincing reason for praying – for some people: for those who are spiritually constituted as Beecher was. For them, prayer is a safety valve, giving great relief from the inward pressure of pent-up emotions and longings. Others find prayer much more like hard work. Beecher testifies, however, to one universal truth: that wherever the Holy Spirit is at work in a human soul, He is moving that soul from within itself to look up to God. The “inward fermentation” is the working of the divine energy and impulse within us.

We pray, then because God within us lifts up our hearts to God above us. Hence our prayer, if it be true prayer, is never really our own, but God’s. The prompting, the initial impulse, the energy for the continuing work and perseverance in prayer, are supplied by God. Our only private contribution to our own prayers is whatever we inject to our own egotism, opportunism, and worldliness.

Let us repeat the essential point here, for emphasis: we ought never to ask anything of God, either in the corporate liturgical praying of the Church or in our own private petitions, without first asking God to teach us what we ought to ask of Him. How much foolish nonsense, and worse, we speak to God in our unexamined, unexpurgated praying! How much harm we do to our own souls by careless praying for things which can only be monstrous in God’s sight! [This is true of both conscious and unconscious praying. After all, every desire, every daydream, is essentially a prayer; it is something we wish God would cause to come true. To examine our prayers is to examine our desires. They can be a shocking spectacle to the candid eye of conscience.]

In a published sermon on prayer, Luther Weigle recalls the following incident of his boyhood:

It was in the days when progressive euchre occupied the place in social life that bridge does now; and this parishioner, an attractive, vivacious young woman, was devoted to it. She came to my father to confess that recently, at a euchre party, she had become so eager to win the prize that, she said, “I found myself actually praying that I might win.” “I’m afraid that it is wrong to pray for things like that,” she went on; “Dr. Weigle, do you think it is right?” My father paused, then answered slowly, “Yes, I suppose it is all right. If winning a euchre prize means as much as that to you, that is one of the things which God

most wants you to tell him.” [From *We Are Able*, by Luther A. Weigle, page 45. Used by permission of Harper & Brothers, New York.]

The pastor’s answer was entirely Christian. The God whom Jesus Christ reveals to us wants us to be entirely simple, honest, and childlike in bringing our wants to Him. If your heart is set upon any prize, great or trivial, by all means bring that desire to the Father – offer it to Him.

Yet this cannot be all that there is in our rule of praying. The full rule needs to be something like this:

Always ask God for whatever you want. Never ask God for anything without asking Him to show you what He wants you to want.

Our rule must contain this second element, because it is true of us, as St. Paul confessed (Romans 8:26), that “we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us.”

6. *Glory* – Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. – Page 8.

A small boy in a hospital for crippled children was preparing to leave for home, after a long, painful, but successful course of treatment. He was telling a visitor of his plans for a homecoming party, and he spoke with special zest of the festal cake which was to be. There would be, he said, a most appropriate inscription written in pink icing across the top of the cake. “And what is that inscription going to be?” asked the visitor. The child seemed surprised that anybody could ask so needless a question. “Why, GLORY BE TO GOD – of course!” he replied.

Many times in our liturgy, and many times in our lives if we love God, we say, sing, shout, or sob *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost*. Always, this ascription of glory to God, welling up from a faithful heart, means just what it meant to the crippled child: sheer praise, and inexpressible love. It is the heart’s simple expostulation of its joy of life, touched off by gratitude. One can rejoice in life with no regard to the Giver of the life, or one can rejoice in life as a creature aglow with gratitude to his Creator for his “creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life.”

This consciousness of dependence upon God’s love for all that one has is the very life of the soul. The soul lives by glorifying God. To be poor in praise is to be poor in life itself.

“But is it necessary to be talking and shouting and singing about it all the time? If our hearts give glory to God, He already knows it; why then these incessant and innumerable Glory-bes with our lips?”

This objection is the old, familiar contention that true love speaks for itself and needs no words to express it. The principle seems sensible, and a sure bulwark against cant and hypocrisy; but it is in fact wrong. It is not true that love needs no expression in words or other outlets if it is genuine. The truth is that love craves expression and must have it if it is to grow and thrive. A great spiritual counselor, Baron von Hugel, reminds us that a loving husband kisses his wife not simply because he loves her but *in order to* love her: the love feeds upon the kiss. If we do not agree, it is because we do not understand love in its nature and its workings.

The fervent ascription of glory to the Blessed Trinity is never an acceptable substitute for doing the will of God. No Christian has ever seriously argued that it is. Neither, however, is any work of love an acceptable substitute for the word of love. God wants the service of our hands, the adoration of our hearts, and the praise of our lips. If we give Him the adoration of the heart and the praise of the lips, there is no reason why we shall find it harder to give Him the service of our hands in the doing of His will. There is every reason to believe that we shall find it *easier* to serve Him in deed as well as in word, because we are so constructed. We know that soldiers find it easier to march singing. So do the soldiers of God.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. This Trinitarian doxology developed back in the fourth century, under stress of controversy, as an assertion of orthodoxy. The heretics would not give equal glory to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; very well then, the orthodox would. Yet there was much more than partisan perversity in this development. There was that divinely-given insight which makes the orthodox, after all, right: the insight that in every work of God for which we wish to give Him thanks and glory, the Three in One – Father, Son, and Holy Ghost – are perfectly One and together in it. The Father does no good thing for you except as the Son and the Holy Ghost loving collaborate. Hence whenever you give glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, you are lifting up your heart to the One who is creating Father, redeeming Son, and sanctifying Holy Ghost. To do this, with loving heart and understanding

mind, is to assert and deepen your place in the great Family of God in both heaven and earth – the Family of souls who live by their glad Glorias.

7. *As It Was, Is, and Ever Shall Be* – As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. – Page 8.

“Always change – always the same old thing!” So runs one of the most solidly established of proverbs. It expresses a universal conviction – and a universal pain. In the various religions and world-views of man it takes various forms, but the abiding central principle is this: that Reality itself is One and changeless in Itself, but that in Its works and manifestations It is forever shifting and moving. These shifting phenomena of Reality are what we call changes. Man, poor creature, is himself one of these changing phenomena.

Philosophy, science, and religion have each their own ways of dealing with this Fact which is the ground of all facts: the changeless Reality with Its ever changing works and manifestations. In our religion of the biblical inheritance, [The God of our faith is not identical with the Ultimate Reality of which (rather than of *whom*) philosophy and science speak. Our God stands above the Ultimate Reality as its Maker, Ruler, and Master.] the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and of Jesus Christ is He who changeth not. Yet His creatures live in a world of constant changes and are themselves constantly changing. And man is miserable in this plight. Uniquely among the creatures, he longs for deliverance from change and decay. [This explains why in all popular polls of “favorite hymns” the almost invariable winner is *Abide with me*, testifying as simply and warmly as it does to our deliverance, by God’s grace, from that “change and decay” which “in all around I see.”] This is why, in his religions, man seeks such a fellowship with the Eternal One as will give him stabilization, abidingness, and peace.

We are enabled, through Jesus Christ our Lord, so to anchor our lives in God that we are made partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), hence partakers of the divine fixedness and abidingness now and forever. “Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Hebrews 13:14). In living communion with God, we are raised to a sharing in the joy, life, and eternal victory over change and decay which characterize that continuing city: and even now we have that sublime experience of heaven in some way and degree. This is given to us through our union of faith and love with Jesus Christ. He who does the will of God, declares St. John, *abideth forever*. The central Christian conviction, born of all authentic experience

with God in Christ, is that the faithful doer of the will of God is made an actual sharer in the very eternity of God.

Christians find great and endless comfort in their assurance that God *is now* what He *was in the beginning* and *evermore shall be*. Why should this be of such comfort to us? We were not around in “the beginning”. We are here, in the now, for only the minutest flick of time. Throughout the aeons ahead, while the eternal ages run, God will abide, changeless in His eternal being; but what of us – where shall we be? Our dust will be mixing forever with the elements, tossed, in dust even as in life, in the tormenting whirlpool of change.

So it seems, upon rational reflection. But, answers our faith, it is not really so. Does it seem that we were not in the beginning? But we *were*: we were with God. He held each one of us in potential being at that time when “the stars threw down their spears, and watered heaven with their tears.” [William Blake, *Tiger*.] He held us there in the secret place of His heart of love until a moment only a few years ago in time. Then, in what we call our birth, God had converted our potential being into actual being, and here we are. Our next stage, still to come, will be the stage of our fulfilled, completed being. “Man partly is, and wholly hopes to be.” [Robert Browning, *A Death in the Desert*.] We are divine projects not being hammered out on the anvils of God.

It is within this framework of divine purpose for us that our present ordeal of “always change” makes sense – and thus becomes tolerable. These painful changes, in us and around us, which make up our daily lot, correspond to the changes in a piece of rock as the sculptor chips and chisels it along toward its end. And what is our end? “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2).

Our end is to be made fully Christlike. To this God will bring us at last, if we accept our destiny. In the process of our being prepared for this glorious end, drastic changes must be made in us, some of them painful. Yet even now there is for us repose and peace on the bosom of the divine changelessness, if we will fall back upon it in simple trust and living self-commitment, if we will relax in God’s hands. As you were in the beginning, in the mind and heart of God, so are you now, so shall you ever be. To anyone who knows this, every change is from glory to glory. Let us

hear once again the Christian poet who understands this high matter so well:

Fool; All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay
endure.
He fixed thee 'mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, would fain arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent;
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.
[*Robert Browning, Rabbi ben Ezra.*]

8. *The Lord's Name Be Praised – Minister.* Praise ye the Lord. *Answer.*
The Lord's Name be praised. – Page 8.

Throughout the Bible, and throughout the Prayer Book, the Name of God is invoked, and prayers are offered to God in the Name of Jesus Christ. So common and traditional is this use of the divine Name in religious language that we readily take it for granted as a venerable conventionality and let it stand as such. Let it be granted that the biblical and liturgical way of using the holy Name is an ancient Semitism: the truth is – as the Roman Pontiff put it a few years ago when anti-Semitism was raging in Europe – that we Christians are Semites ourselves, by the grace of God. This means that to understand our faith, to hear and speak its idiom with any comprehension of it, we must learn to think biblically and semitically.

So it is, then, with this way of using the Name of God.

In the biblical way of thinking and speaking, the name of a person is much more than a mere label put on that person for the purpose of practical identification – John being called John so that he will not be confused with William. The name is the nature, the character, of the person made articulate and manifest to others. To know a man's true name is to know the man's true self. If a person's name by which he is known does not square with that person's character, then the name should be changed into

something appropriate. Thus the words of Ruth's mother-in-law in her bereavement: "Call me not Naomi [Pleasant], call me Mara [Bitter]: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." (Ruth 1:20.) Naomi felt that her name ought to do the proper work of a name and tell you what her true life and being was.

With this in mind – that the name of the person should express the nature, character, life, and destiny of the person – we consider next the Name of God. The following strange passage will serve our purpose:

And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you – Exodus 3:13–14.

Moses will not be able to persuade his countrymen that the God of their fathers has sent him to them, unless he can tell them the Name of God. There were in that world gods many and lords many; some good, some bad. Which one of the, the people wondered, had laid hold upon Moses? They could not know until they knew his Name, and this would be *His manifest nature*. God answers Moses' request for His Name with the mysterious words: I AM THAT I AM.

Sir Thomas Browne is substantially right in his comment:

I am that I am was his own definition unto Moses; and it was a short one, to confound morality, that durst question God, or ask him what he was. Indeed he only is; all others have been and shall be. [*Religio Medici*, I, xi.]

But to call God's cryptic answer God *definition* of Himself is incorrect. It would be correct to say rather that in this mysterious word God is disclosing one part of His Name, that is, one element of His nature. I AM THAT I AM suggests that God is pure, perfect, and eternal Being.

This is one truth which the children of Israel in their Egyptian bondage needed to have brought home to them: that their God is no illusion, or no mere god among the gods: He is the everlasting I AM who is alone true Being. If people and things have any real existence at all, it is only because the I AM gives being to them. So there is here, in God's word to Moses, a very real disclosure of the divine Name – but of only one part of it.

The Name of God, considered as a whole, is the whole nature and being of God as it is manifested to us. His Name is Pure Being; it is Power; it is Wisdom; it is Everlastingness; it is Love. Jesus Christ is the Name of God spelled out for us in the flesh.

To praise the Name of the Lord is, then, to praise God as He has made Himself known to us – “Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend.” [The Hymnal 1940, Hymn 288, with permission of The Church Pension Fund, New York.] At the last, we shall receive the Name of the Lord in its fullness. At present, we can know it only in part. But what He has shown us of His Name is enough for our eternal salvation, and we praise His Name for all that we know of it.

9. *The Beauty of Holiness* – O Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; let the whole earth stand in awe of him. – Page 9.

This canticle known as the *Venite*, which we always use at Morning Prayer, consists of most of Psalm 95, with some verses added from other Psalms. It contains some unusually memorable and ponderable phrases, among them this one: *the beauty of holiness*.

Unfortunately, the phrase as we have it is not an accurate translation of the Hebrew original. The verse as a whole (Psalm 96:9) is better translated: Worship the Lord in holy array; Tremble before him all the earth. [From *The Complete Bible – An American Translation*. Used by permission of The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.] Monsignor Knox’s translation is attractive, and sound: Worship the Lord in holy beauty. Before the Lord’s presence let the whole earth bow in reverence. [From *The Old Testament in English*, Vol. 11, in the translation of Monsignor Ronald Knox, copyright 1950 by Sheed and Ward, Inc., New York. In the body of his translation, Knox has “worship the Lord in his holy temple,” but this is to make his translation conform to the official Latin Bible of the Roman Catholic communion. In a footnote he points out that the Hebrew text has “in holy beauty,” and he notes that some scholars take this to mean “in holy vestments”.]

Thus, in its original and true form, the verse calls us to worship God with the beauty and splendor which befits the worship of our King in His perfect beauty. Our familiar and misleading phrase, *the beauty of holiness*, has been used by the puritan and the anti-ritualist in disparagement of beauty in worship. Their argument follows this line: “God does not require us to worship Him amid our manmade trimmings and trappings, gorgeous vestments, incense, stained glass, splendid music. He commands us rather

to worship Him in the beauty of *holiness* – meaning with sincere hearts and unfeigned love.”

The only trouble with this argument is that it springs out of a mistranslation. It is true that God commands us, through many words of Scripture, to worship Him with sincere hearts and unfeigned love; but in this particular word of the Lord we are specifically commanded to offer our worship to Him “in holy array” – “in holy beauty”.

There is a widespread feeling among English-speaking Christians that beautiful external accompaniments of worship are a danger to spiritual integrity. It is a healthy feeling to have, so long as we do not let it so dominate our thinking that we strip all raiments of beauty from our sanctuaries. The whole question of “sincerity” in worship must be faced and dealt with quite separately from the question of whether our worship is to be very ornate or very plain. Is the Quaker in his plain meetinghouse more sincere in his worship than the Russian Orthodox attending the liturgy of his Church amid surrounding of unearthly splendor? The only sound answer must be: that depends on each one. Either may be a saint or a hypocrite. The trappings of his worship, or lack thereof, have nothing whatever to do with that.

We are to worship God with all the beauty we can offer up to Him. Our beauty may be simple in form, or complex; plain, or elaborate; formal, or informal. Our tastes and traditions of beauty differ, hence the “holy array” of our worship will differ in detail. But our guiding rule is to be this: nothing we can offer to Him is nearly beautiful enough, but we will give Him the best we have.

Never fear beauty in your worship. Fear only insincerity, self-seeking, and an honoring of God with your lips while your heart is far from Him.

10. *Lord God of Sabaoth* – Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. – Page 10.

Sabaoth means “hosts” or “armies”. *Lord God of Sabaoth* is exactly equivalent to the commoner phrase, *Lord God of hosts*. This Hebrew word is left untranslated in the *Te Deum* for poetic effect.

Behind the phrase is the ancient biblical conception of God as the Commander of mighty armies of beings, both visible and invisible, which obey His orders and execute His sovereign will. We need not dismiss this

as one of those naive bits of primitive theology which are no longer of any value or validity. It represents an everlasting truth about God and His relation to the universe and to ourselves. That truth, barely and baldly stated, is that God has myriad agents and servants of His will, through whom He carries on the government of His world. One of the several practical conclusions we may draw from this is that we are never alone when we fight for God: we are surrounded and aided by a mighty host of men and of angels in heaven and on earth.

These hosts of God, the *sabaoth*, are by no means exclusively spiritual beings such as the angels. They may be our own brethren in the flesh. In the story of young David's battle with Goliath, we hear David's stirring words to the giant foe: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts ["*sabaoth*"], the God of the armies of Israel, whom that hast defied" (1 Samuel 17:45). David sees the armies of Israel as being among the hosts of the Lord. There is no reason why we must disagree with him, for God does use human soldiers in His armies. In this historical situation, the men of Israel were fighting the Lord's battle; hence they were among the hosts of the Lord God of hosts.

We have every right to humanize and modernize this conception to fit our own spiritual need. Every living creature, whether of angels or men, who in any way carries on any work which is of the divine will and commandment is rightly numbered among the heavenly host. Are you among them? When you are doing what God wants you to do, you are. And you are entitled to that bracing awareness, which evidently did so much for young David as he stood "alone" against his mighty and cruel foreman, that you are never really alone when you work and fight for God.

The Lord God of *sabaoth* is the invincible Commander of myriads of hosts who share in His invincibility as they share in His holy war against the darkness. People who plow fields, sail ships, teach children, sweep streets, govern nations, preach sermons, wash dishes, or do anything else as loving servants of God – glad to do their humble share of the work of running His world as He wants it run – are among the *sabaoth*, the heavenly hosts of the Most High God. The meanest chore has the divinest dignity if it is done out of love for Him. And no servant of God should ever suppose that he is ever alone. He has God with him, and all of the *sabaoth*, in heaven and in earth. The highest archangels are with the tired housewife as

she does the dishes at the end of a long day, and they behold her with deferential awe as she goes about a work so solemnly splendid.

This is how to think about the *sabaoth* of God.

11. *The Noble Army of Martyrs* – The Noble army of martyrs praise thee. – Page 10.

Our English text of the *Te Deum laudamus* is Archbishop Cranmer's translation of a great fourth-century Latin hymn. The line which Cranmer renders "The noble army of martyrs praise thee" stands in the original as *Te Martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus*, which literally translated would be "The white-robed arm of martyrs praises thee." In both the Jewish-Christian and the Roman traditions, the white robe is the garment of honor due to the hero. In St. John's vision of the souls in heaven who have given their lives for Christ's sake, he sees them "clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands: (Revelation 7:9). In the Roman imperial tradition the elite guard of the emperor was *candidatus* – "clothed in white".

The martyrs of Christ constitute the elite guard of our heavenly King. From the beginning, the Church has held the martyr in most eminent regard. Gladstone echoes the deepest Christian sentiment in saying that "the three highest titles that can be given to man are those of martyr, hero, saint."

But who is the martyr? The valiant ones who have suffered and died rather than to renounce Christ come to mind at once. There is no question about their claim to the title. There are other martyrs, however, who have not been called upon to die for their King but who are true martyrs and members of that white-robed army. Jeremy Taylor rightly defines martyrdom as "a readiness of mind rather to suffer any evil than to do any." It is this readiness of mind which makes the martyr.

It is a pity that present-day popular psychology has coined the phrase "martyr complex" to label the vice of self-pity. What is meant to label a vice manages also, in the general confusion, to libel the world's noblest souls. There are indeed some souls who morbidly enjoy being thought of as martyrs, and for this pathological vice there ought to be a label; but the use of "martyr complex" for this purpose besmirches the word *martyr* in such a way that even genuine martyrs are commonly supposed to be victims of that unhealthy complex. As Christians, we must insist that the true martyr is the most admirable of men – more to be revered than pitied.

Christ's elite guard in any age is made up of those who would rather suffer any evil than do any. The glory of the martyr is his uncompromising spirit, his uninhibited zeal, his selfless devotion to the service of his Lord. When a religion loses this martyr spirit, it sinks into futility.

Our King warns us to beware when men speak well of us. How flatly and flagrantly this contradicts the modern glorification of the super-salesman who knows how to "put himself across," to "win friends and influence people"! The world warns the Christian that he will accomplish nothing with his religion if he carries it to extremes. One must be moderate: reasonable; down-to-earth; in agreeable *rapport* with the common life around one; liberal; broad-minded. Such is the world's counsel. Christ's warning is to beware when men speak well of us. It is most probable that Judas wanted to get the New Movement into more harmonious step with the life around it. Why antagonize the important people?

Ultimately it comes to this: every Christian has either the martyr spirit or the Judas spirit. We have either the readiness of mind to suffer any evil for Christ's sake or the readiness of mind to sell Him for thirty pieces or so of popularity.

12. *O Ye Whales* – O ye Whales, and all that move in the waters, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him forever. – Page 13.

Many a churchman who is most resolutely opposed to the invocation of saints practices the invocation of whales with no qualms at all! If you glance through the canticle *Benedicite, omnia opera Domini*, which begins at the bottom of page 11, you see the point of this observation. In this song we call upon all works of the Lord to join us in praising our common Maker.

This canticle comes from one of the apocryphal books of the Old Testament which is now included in the Apocrypha under the title *Song of the Three Holy Children*. This was originally an addition to the Book of Daniel, at Daniel 3:23, in the Greek version of the Old Testament. It is quite clearly an elaboration of Psalm 148. Eventually it found its way into the liturgy of the Christian Church.

The author of the *Benedicite* is impressed by the sublime unity of God's creation, from its uttermost height to its nethermost depth and including all creatures in between. Angels and heavens, powers of the

Lord, sun and moon – these praise God from the heights. Wells, whales, and all that move in the waters, beasts and cattle – these praise God from the depths. And from their station halfway between the angels and the whales, the children of men raise their voices in the cosmic chorus of praise.

The *Benedicite*, which is optional, is seldom used in our churches. It is longer than the two alternative canticles, very repetitious to the modern taste, and the *Te Deum laudamus* which is normally used at this place in the service enjoys a traditional priority which it deserves in its own right. Yet the *Benedicite* is not without its own merits of beauty, fitness, and power to edify. We need its reminder that *all* things created are God's, and therefore nothing is to be despised, abused, wasted, or wantonly destroyed.

The more exalted creatures of God – the angels, the heavens, and sun and moon – show forth the goodness and glory of their Maker in their obvious splendor. So also do the worthier representatives of our own human kind: the servants of the Lord, the spirits and souls of the righteous, the holy and humble men of heart. But we need to open our eyes to see that humbler and lowlier creatures – dew and frosts, fowls of the air, and even whales, fish, and crustaceans, – sing their own paean to the Love which gives them being.

We need to see what Sir Thomas Browne, back in the seventeenth century, saw so clearly and said so well:

I hold there is a general beauty in the works of God, and therefore no deformity in any kind or species of creature whatsoever. I cannot tell by what Logic we call a Toad, a Bear, or an Elephant ugly; they being created in those outward shapes and figures which best express the actions of their inward forms, and having past that general Visitation of God, Who saw that all that He had made was good, that is, conformable to His will, which abhors deformity, and is the rule of order and beauty. [*Religio Medici*, 19.]

13. *He Hath Visited and Redeemed His People* – Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people. – Page 14.

The Philosopher Nietzsche was a resolute anti-Christian, but some of his judgments upon Christians contain valuable insights. Such is this statement of his: “I will believe in the Redeemer of the Christians, when they show me that they have been redeemed.” He was assuredly right in

looking for evidence of our redemption in our lives. The Christian claim is that Christ makes new and different people out of His followers by setting them free from the bondages which afflict other men. If this is true, then a non-Christian has every right to look for a glorious liberty in Christians where in other men there is only a miserable slavery. If, as we sing in the *Benedictus*, God has visited and redeemed His people, and if we are among His people, are we not celebrating a Great Redemption which God has wrought for us? What mean we by this song and shout? Nietzsche wondered; the unbeliever rightly wonders. If one of them were to ask you what you mean when you say that Christ is your Redeemer, what would you answer?

The nature of the Great Redemption in Christ is our subject here, and it is the subject of the optional canticle known as the *Benedictus* which we sing following the New Testament lesson at Morning Prayer. It is appropriate at this point in the service because in the New Testament reading, which we have just heard, we have been reminded of some particular manifestation or aspect of the Great Redemption. If we have heard with any understanding the New Testament lesson, whether it came from a Gospel, an Epistle, the Acts, or whatever portion of the New Testament, we have heard that Christ has come, that He has redeemed us, that He has turned our night to day: that *this has already been done*.

Do we look to our neighbors like people whose night has been turned to day? Nietzsche thought not. It may be that Nietzsche was somewhat blinded by prejudice against us. Then we may hear the verdict of John Wesley, who was, if anything, most emphatically prejudiced in our favor. Wesley said that the trouble with the ordinary Christian is that he has just enough religion to make him miserable. How can such a thing be, in any Christian? The only explanation is that the miserable Christian has failed to see the supreme fact about himself: that God has already visited and redeemed him. He is miserable because he wishes that Christ *might be able* to redeem this dark and sinful world, but he fears that this is too much to hope for. Somebody has summed up this theology of hoping or the best and fearing the worse in this limerick:

God's plan made a glorious beginning,
But man spoiled his chances by sinning.
We hope that the story
Will end in God's glory,

But at present the other side's winning.

No matter that some very choice souls have embraced this melancholy philosophy; it is unchristian nonsense. To be sure, this world is filled with devils. "All the earth is full of darkness and of cruel habitations" (Psalms 74:21). But from that moment when Christ refused to abandon His mission from the Father and to make a deal with the Devil, "the other side" has not been winning; it has been losing. The hosts of hell are in flight, and to be on Christ's side against the foe is to be on the winning side.

When Christ visited His people, He inaugurated an era in which the forces of redemption which flow forth from Him would operate upon this planet until, in God's good time, this era ends. We are in it now. Our redemption has been accomplished. We are redeemed, in the sense that we now have the all-sufficient help of Christ in our struggle with sin, and we have His resurrection as our assurance that death no longer has dominion over us. The end, the final fruition, of our redemption is not yet; but enough has been done to make us triumphantly sure that Christ is victor over all our foes. If we abide in Him, we are more than conquerors through him. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

14. *He Hath Made Us, and Not We Ourselves* – Be ye sure that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves. – Page 15.

There are only two possible ways of thinking about yourself. You may think of yourself as God-made, or as manmade. There is no third alternative.

Is this a mere matter of theory and speculation, or does it make any difference in you as a person? Let us look into life and see. The novels of Dickens are as accurate as well as a fascinating mirror of life. On the first page of *Dombey and Son* we find this description of a self-made man:

Dombey and Son ... Those three words conveyed the one idea of Mr. Dombey's life. The earth was made for Dombey and Son to trade in, and the sun and moon were made to give them light. Rivers and seas were formed to float their ships: rainbows gave them promise of fair weather; winds blew for or against their enterprises; stars and planets circled in their orbits to preserve inviolate a system of which they were the center ... A.D. had no concern with anno Domini, but stood for anno Dombey – and Son.

Here is a man who devoutly believes in himself, and has no doubt that any authentic Dombey is the creation of Dombey. Dickens presents him as tragic character bordering upon the ridiculous. Allowing duly for Dickens' well-known habit of caricaturing his characters, we may still say that Dombey cannot be anything other than tragic and ridiculous so long as he lives by his credo. He believes that he has made himself. This belief leads its adherent into shallows and miseries, not because it is wicked but because it is wrong. To live by it is as frustrating as to live by the conviction that two plus two equals seven; nothing comes out right.

Mr. Dombey gives himself credit for what are in fact the gifts of God and the services of his brethren to him. Thus he lacks humility, but he lacks realism also. He lacks truth. He is wrong on the point of fact. The man who does not know to whom he is indebted, who gets his creditors confused, walks in the great darkness of unreality.

The truth about Mr. Dombey, you, me, or anybody, is as George A. Buttrick states it:

What have we that we have not received? The food on our table, the words in our mouth, the liberties which overarch our days are in largest measure gifts to us from invisible helpers in past or present. The cult of the "self-made man" is an unlovely and ungrateful cult. The first fact in the history of the self-made man is that a mother went down to the gates of pain that he might be born. Nor is the least portion of our debt that which comes from the faithfulness of "common" folk. "Common," in this regard, has often its first meaning: "com-munis" – "ready to be of service". There is vast cheer and goodness in average humanity ... and they are bestowed upon us "without money and without price". We are in overwhelming debt to life – and a man overwhelmingly in debt cannot afford to be proud! [*Parables of Jesus*, by George A. Buttrick, page 85. Used by permission of Harper & Brothers, New York.]

The cardinal fact of our being is that God makes us, and that He goes on making us through the ministrations of our fellow creatures on whom we utterly depend.

God makes all things that make us.

We need to meditate, daily, deeply, upon this fact of God's original and continuing creation of us, not simply as an act in the past which called us into being out of nothingness, but as the continuing, ongoing fact which

undergirds our life at every moment and at every point. Pascal justly complains:

I cannot forgive Descartes. In all his philosophy he would have been quite willing to dispense with God. But he had to make Him give a fillip to set the world in motion; beyond this, he has no further need of God. [Pascal, *Thoughts*, No. 77.]

Pascal is right in condemning a doctrine of creation which is content to represent God as giving the world its initial starting shove and then withdrawing. God is now making His world, and every particular creature in it. He always has been, He always will be. This is the only adequate doctrine of creation.

Above all, we must make it personal. “It is he that hath made us.” I am an unfinished person; God is still making me.

The first great merit of this way of looking at yourself is that it is true. Its next great merit is that once you act upon it, you put yourself into a right relationship with God and with truth, offering yourself to Him for His further work with you and intelligently cooperating with Him in His working toward that eternal end: the finished you.

15. *Take Not Thy Holy Spirit From Us – Minister.* O God, make clean our hearts within us. *Answer.* And take not thy Holy Spirit from us. – Page 16.

I heard recently a provocative complaint about this versicle and response. The plaintiff is a Christian lady who objects to saying “take not thy Holy Spirit from us” on the ground that is an insult to God to suppose that He might possibly do so. She used this analogy: If a child were to beg his human father, who has been a very good father, to keep on being good to him, the request would imply a fear in the child’s mind that his father might quit being a good father. We never beg a good friend to keep on being what he is; it would be an outrageous insult. Why then do we offer this insult to God?

Such was the complaint. The answer is substantially this: Prayer is not always petition, even when we put it in the form of petition. When we pray “take not thy Holy Spirit from us,” we are rhetorically asking God to keep on doing what we know He will keep on doing: supplying us with his Holy Spirit from day to day. We ask this of Him, not for the sake of reminding Him of something that He might otherwise forget, but for the sake of ourselves. This prayer is an expression of our reliance upon God

for that which we cannot do without: the help and strength of His Holy Spirit working within us. The most natural way of expressing our reliance upon this Gift is to ask God to continue giving it.

The Holy Spirit is already in us by virtue of our Baptism into the life of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God Himself in us, as indwelling Life, Power, and divine Presence. To ask that he take not His Holy Spirit from us is to ask that He will abide in us. We know that He will. But He wants us, for our own sake, for the deepening of our filial relationship to Him, to cast ourselves anew each day upon the Everlasting Arms which are already *there*.

In his beloved hymn, George Matheson is expressing this prayer which is not petition but affirmation:

O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

[Used by courtesy of Novello and Company, Ltd.,
London.]

Of course God's love will not let us go; but it makes all the difference in our own lives whether we give Him back the life we owe. He will not take His Holy Spirit from us; yet it is only as we realize that His Holy Spirit is in us, helping us to grow up into Christ, that this divine Gift bears any fruit in us. In "asking" God to take not His Holy Spirit from us, we express our dependence upon Him for all good things in us, and our aspiration to be worthy children of God.

16. *In Knowledge of Whom Standeth Our Eternal Life* – O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, – Page 17.

Many of our Prayer Book collects are Archbishop Cranmer's translations of ancient Latin prayers. In some cases, Cranmer's translation is a distinct improvement of the Latin original. This cannot be said of the prayer we are now considering, the familiar collect for peace which is always said at Morning Prayer. The Latin original begins with an address to God which, literally translated, would be this: *O God, the author and Lover of peace whom to know is to live and whom to serve is to reign. . .* To

be sure, this is awkward English; but “whom to know is to live” splendidly echoes our Lord’s striking pronouncement: *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent* – St. John 17:3.

What does it mean to know God in such a way that this knowledge is itself life, real life, the life eternal?

We must understand that this knowledge of God which is life is not what we ordinarily mean by knowledge. A man’s knowledge of chemistry or history, or even his knowledge of human nature and of his own self, is at most only a valuable aid to living; it is in no sense life itself. Nor is a man’s knowledge *about* God the “life” of which Christ speaks. He specifies the knowledge *of* God, more specifically the knowledge of God which is *through Jesus Christ*. This knowledge is the life eternal.

Any believing and practicing Christian should understand what is meant here, *from his own firsthand life with God*. As a member of Christ, he already knows God through Jesus Christ, and this knowledge of God in Christ is his life with God in Christ. The knowledge and the life are inseparable. In his commentary upon the words of Jesus quoted above (St. John 17:3), A. J. Gossip offers this interpretation, which is simple and adequate:

As Christ describes eternal life here, it means and is to know God as he really is; *and all that flows from that*. For to take in what God is, to grasp something of his unselfishness, his generosity, his patience, his humility, must give one a new standard of measurement, a new scale of values, a new idea of how life should be used. And with that one must begin to try to live it in that fashion. That is eternal life. It is to live after God’s way, as life is lived in the eternities. [By Arthur John Gossip in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, Volume 8. Used by permission of Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tenn.]

This knowledge of God which is life is, then “to know God as he really is, *and all that flows from that*.” When a man knows God as God really is, this man must strive with all the strength of his life to be like the God “whom to know is to live and whom to serve is to reign.” To know God is to hunger and thirst for God-likeness. If we think that we know God, but we lack this hunger for God-likeness, we may be sure that our “knowledge” is false. This is life eternal: to know God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and knowing Him, to hunger to be like Him.

Let us never make the easy, but grave, mistake of trying to substitute our *opinions about* God for that personal *knowledge of* God which transforms us into His likeness. The former thing is theology – a very good and necessary thing, in its place; the latter is the life eternal.

17. *Whose Service Is Perfect Freedom* – O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom – Page 17.

Everybody talks about freedom. Almost everybody praises it. Almost nobody stops to analyze it carefully.

In the Bible and in the Prayer Bok we read much about freedom, but it does not seem to be what we generally mean by the term. This reference to God as a Master “in whose service is perfect freedom” is typical of the biblical and Christian concept. It puzzles many. We may agree that it is better, morally, to serve God than not to serve Him; but is the devoted slave of the Lord more *free* than the man who scorns the divine commandment? This hardly squares with what we usually mean by freedom. One person says that it is his duty to roll out and go to church on Sunday morning no matter how late he was up the night before; his companion of the night before feels no such duty. He may be a lazy and godless scamp, says our common logic, but surely he is the freer man of the two.

That, however, is the question. What makes a person free? The Christian contention is that the freedom to do as you like is in fact a false freedom, a slavery masquerading as freedom. There is a most beguiling illusion about this. When you make it your rule to do only what you feel like doing, seeking no higher sanction for your deeds than your own will and pleasure, you seem to be making your own way along as a free-faring soul should. But this *seeming* is the great illusion. You think that you are giving orders to your own desires and making them do your bidding, but in fact you are not. You are taking orders from your desires, not giving them. And as you go along thus, day by day, enjoying this false freedom, a terrible tyrant is rising up in you and taking you over, body and soul, to make you his pawn. The tyrant’s name is Self. There is no freedom except for those who have trampled Self under foot.

Another way of putting it is simply this: There is no freedom except for the self-disciplined. As we listen to a great pianist, our first impression is that of a wonderful freedom, a godlike command of his instrument: he

can make it do anything. But this freedom, this power of command, was not easily gained. It was achieved through years and years of hard drill.

Schiller had this to say about freedom, and here we come to the Christian idea:

Freedom does not mean that everyone can do as he likes, it means that one may become what he should.

The concert artist never became what he is by doing what he liked. His true freedom was to *become what he should become* – a virtuoso; and that freedom was not freedom from toil and self-denial.

In the *Forward* booklet meditation for Ash Wednesday, 1952, it is well said that “it is a part of every Lent to say ‘No’ – not for the sake of saying ‘no’ but that we may say ‘yes’ to the greatest duties and the deepest desires.” This is the purpose of all Christian self-denial: to say *no* to some things so that we can say *yes* to certain other things which we believe God gives us to do.

And precisely what God gives us to do seldom needs to puzzle us for long. Surely and clearly, God shows us through His ever guiding Spirit the way in which He would have us to go. For those who walk in the Way which is Christ, there is always sufficient light to guide, and there is ever growing freedom of the kind which we see in the concert artist: that freedom which is the power to become what one should become. Not only that; the saint who is eminently Spirit-disciplined exhibits also, in one striking way or another, that freedom which is power of command over one’s tools and instruments. The life of prayer and faithful following of Christ powerfully enhances a person’s natural ability. An eminent brain surgeon tells how impossible it would be for him to perform one of his operations without prayer. He believes that it is only God who sees him through his work. In God’s service he finds the freedom which makes him a transcendent master of his craft.

The only road to becoming what we should become is the way of self-discipline, of denying self-will and of seeking only God’s will. We must say *no* to the things of self if we are to say *yes* to the things of God, and it is only thus that we can grow into the true freedom. Do we want to be truthful? Then we must renounce lying. Decent? Then we must renounce the delightful indecencies. Kind? Then we must say *no* to our innumerable impulses to be unkind. In truthfulness in decency, in kindness, in all the other works and ways of the servant of God, there is a wonderful, strong,

and exhilarating freedom. But a price must be paid for it. The alcoholic cannot have his liquor and his sobriety both. You cannot have the freedom to “be yourself” and the freedom to become what you should be – both. And only one of these “freedoms” is free.

18. *The Might of Jesus Christ Our Lord* – Defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in thy defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries, through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. – Page 17.

“The *might* of Jesus Christ our Lord.” This is one of the unexpected phrases in the Prayer Book. If you had not heard it many times, you might be startled by it. The grace, the love, the mercy, the merits of Jesus Christ: these are expected words. *Meek and lowly* Jesus, of course; but *high and mighty* Jesus – doesn’t this epithet give us a shock?

As a matter of history, our astonishment at references to the majesty and might of Jesus is a strictly modern thing; and, it must be feared, a modern disease rather than a modern improvement. Classic Christianity has always stood in awe of its Lord. If our religion is to be brought back to its main line, it must rediscover the majesty and might of Christ our King, so that we shall know Him not simply as our gracious Friend but as strong Deliverer and King of creation.

Our modern historical approach to the New Testament, with our absorption in the study of the Jesus of history, has been of great and inestimable benefit, but it has had one unfortunate effect: it has led us to the neglect of Christ as our eternal contemporary. In our fascinated gazing at the Jesus of long ago, the far-off Mystic of the Galilean hills, we have largely lost sight of the Christ of the eternal now. We seem to have forgotten that He who died on Calvary then rose again to be our mighty re-ascended Lord, and that He sits *now and forever* upon the right hand of Omnipotence.

Jeremy Taylor, who lived before the day of this modern error, expressed the paradox of Christ in these words:

He that cried in the manger, that sucked the paps of a woman, that hath exposed himself to poverty and a world of inconveniences, is the Son of the living God, of the same substance with the Father, begotten before all ages, before the morning-stars; he is God eternal. [In *The Great Exemplar*.]

The Jesus of long ago, of Bethlehem and the Galilean wayside and the houseless and penniless estate, was, for the moment and for the sake of His mission, “in the form of a slave” (Philippians 2:7). He beggared Himself thus for that moment in time, as a step in His strategy for the redemption of the world. This is the right reading of the Gospel saga of the penniless, weaponless, meek, and lowly Jesus. It all makes sense, when we see it as a strategic maneuver in His work of reconciling all men to the Father and subduing all things to Himself. He stooped to conquer. But all this is past. Where is this once-lowly Jesus now? On the throne of the universe: very high, and very mighty.

Such is the Catholic faith concerning him. No other opinion concerning His past humiliation and His present exaltation accords with the New Testament testimony.

But it would be misleading, indeed gravely erroneous, to say that whereas Christ is now mighty He was once weak. He has always been mighty. He manifested His might supremely in becoming poor and little for our sake. The Incarnation was an incredibly mighty feat, even for God. Mr. C. S. Lewis brilliantly states the marvel: “The Eternal Being, who knows everything and who created the whole universe became not only a man but (before that) a baby, and before that a *foetus* inside a woman’s body. If you want to get the hang of it, think how you’d like to become a slug or a crab.” [Beyond Personality, by C. S. Lewis. Page 26. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company, New York.] Elsewhere Mr. Lewis rightly observes that in the Incarnation “we catch sight of a new key principle – the power of the Higher, just in so far as it is truly Higher, to come down, the power of the greater to include the less. Thus ... Montaigne became kittenish with his kitten, but she never talked philosophy to him. Everywhere the great enters the little – its power to do so is almost the test of its greatness.” [Miracles, by C. S. Lewis, 134–135. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company, New York.]

We cannot rise to Christ, any more than Montaigne’s kitten could rise to philosophic intercourse with Montaigne; but Christ can come down to us, in the might of His love which can make itself lowly to enter into the life and the pain of its poorest creature. It is the might of Christ which keeps the stars in the firmament glowing, and leads the sun in splendor on; and it is this same might of Christ which comes down to an embattled sinner who is trying to make a good fight against the foe: comes down, enters in, takes

up the sword and the shield as they fall from the weary arm, and routs the hordes of hell.

19. *This Day* – Grant that this day we fall into no sin. – Page 17.

One of the most memorable lines of Thomas à Kempis is this: “If only we could spend one day well in this world!”

On the face of it, that achievement seems not too difficult. After all, a day is short; and although there are days when a thousand devils seem to be working in the hellish concert to undo us, still there are other days when legions of angels seem to attend and uphold us. Why is it, then, that the *perfect* day never seems to come? If only we could spend one day well in this world!

It seems that we must go on sighing that wish for one solidly good day until our days are no more.

There is nothing like looking at the plain facts about ourselves to keep us humble. Each day we begin by praying “Grant that this day we fall into no sin”; each day we end with the plea, “Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders!” We ask for the grace to fall into no sin; then, unflinching, we do fall into sin. Why is not our morning prayer answered?

It is answered. The grace to live a sinless day is given to us. But we don’t use it. The truth is that we are never as sincere as we think we are in our prayers and pious resolutions. The one pure and simple reason why we never live out a really good day, a day that leaves nothing to be ashamed of at its end, is the fact that we do not want it as much as we say we do.

Three hundred years ago, William Law wrote his *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. That manual of devotion continues to be read and used because our souls, for all their duplicity, have enough health in them to crave some straight-forward honesty; and Law is a favorite guide of the honest. Here is his plain word to us:

If you will here stop and ask yourselves, why you are not as pious as the primitive Christians were, your own heart will tell you that it is neither through ignorance nor inability, but purely because you never thoroughly intended it. [*A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. Chapter 2.]

How shall we come to grips with this problem in our lives? Not by giving up our morning prayer – “Grant that this day we fall into no sin” – but by adding to it some such prayer as this:

“Grant us the grace of sincerity, so that when we ask thy help in our fight against sin, we may mean what we say.”

20. *The Continual Dew of God’s Blessing* – Send down upon our Bishops, and other Clergy, and upon the Congregations committed to their charge, the healthful Spirit of thy grace; and, that they may truly please thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing. – Page 18.

The first important point to note about this prayer is its recognition that the clergy and the laity *both* need the healthful Spirit of God’s grace. There are always some lay folk who are persuaded that they hire the clergy to be good for them. Seldom, of course, do they put it so crudely; but the principle itself is implicit in every contention that the clergy are obligated to live by a higher standard than the laity. This error may originate with the clergy rather than the laity. Whatever its source, it is an error. The Christian principle is that which is expressed in this prayer: priest and laymen alike are called to the pursuit of holiness, in which no man can make any progress except with the help of God’s grace.

Next, there is here expressed the deep Christian conviction that we cannot possibly do that which is pleasing in God’s sight except with God’s own help. At the heart of the Christian life is this paradox: that without His help in pleasing Him we cannot please God. We shall please Him if we receive, and make use of, the healthful Spirit of His grace.

The most arresting element in the prayer, however, is the allusion to the continual dew of God’s blessing. This petition is very ancient, being found in a Latin form in a source which may date from the fifth century. Its ancient author was borrowing his metaphor from the Bible. In the Old Testament, dew symbolically represents whatever descends from God to man noiselessly and invisibly and proves a refreshment, as dew in nature refreshes vegetation. Typical is the following verse (Hosea 14:5): I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

Here, as elsewhere in the Bible, the dew of God’s grace works upon the soul as the dew of God’s natural world works upon growing plants. No ear can hear, no eye can see the descent of the dew upon the thirsty land. Thus it is with the descent of grace from God to man. It would seem that what happened at the great Christian Pentecost (Acts 2), when the Holy Ghost descended upon the faithful as a rushing mighty wind, was an

exception. God is not averse to using exceptional devices for exceptional needs and occasions. But ordinarily the soul is nourished quietly by “the continual dew of God’s blessing”. This means, among other things, that we should not always be looking for emotional thrills and chills at God’s hand as He goes about providing for our needs from day to day.

The dews of God, in both the natural order and the spiritual, are not only noiseless and invisible in their operation; they are continual. The Bible is full of reminders that God is always, unceasingly, unceasingly, caring for His world and for His people. “Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” Do we fully grasp this, in our own awareness of God? It is easy to say, while we are discussing that at our comfortable leisure, “But of course I know better than to suppose, seriously, that God might actually go to sleep, leaving me uncared for!” The truth is, however, that when our bad times come, we slip only too easily into the feeling that the God who once took such good and loving care of us has forgotten or forsaken us.

In preparation for these dark hours, we need, while the sun of God’s favor so obviously shines upon us, to assimilate the truth of the continuousness of the dew of God’s blessing. His loving care for us will go on, regardless of our own awareness or unawareness of it. The dew is no less powerfully sustaining and vivifying for its quietness, gentleness, and constancy.

21. *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* – O God, the Creator and Preserver of all mankind, we humbly beseech thee for all sorts and conditions of men. – Page 18.

Joseph Fort Newton gives us a wise warning about our use of this well-loved prayer *For all Conditions of Men*. He remarks that it is “a generous sentiment, but it may easily evaporate – it lacks direction and aim.” [*Everyday Religion*, page 48. Used by permission of Harper & Brothers, New York.] By the same token he thinks that Tiny Tim’s “God bless us every one!” is “lovely but too vague, a mere wish.”

This plea for definiteness in prayer is always needed. Prayer should never be vague and aimless. We should be very specific in our praying, not with the thought of providing God with information which He might otherwise lack, but for our own sake. If we are not definite and specific as we pray, it is because we are praying lazily and carelessly. If we believe in

the value of such praying, we might as well get a prayer wheel, crank it up and set it spinning.

There is something else to be considered, however, about the very generalized terms in which this, and all of our liturgical prayers, are expressed. This is the fact that public and liturgical prayers must be expressed in general terms; they cannot be as specific and detailed as private and personal prayers. A *common* prayer is a prayer which several people offer in common. Each one of these participants must fill in the details of his own personal need, putting them into the common prayer as his private contribution to it.

Moreover, there is more than mere vague generality in the phrase *all sorts and conditions of men*: there is universality, all-embracingness. For whom are we to pray? – For *all* sorts and conditions, not just for *our* sort and condition.

All sorts and conditions: this is meant to spell out to you, as a Christian, your primary obligation to pray for absolutely everybody. To put it negatively, you are never to omit anybody from your intercession on the ground that he is of a sort or condition which lies beyond the range of your responsibility as an intercessor. There are no limits to that range of your responsibility as a pray-er for others, if you are a Christian; for you were ordained, at your Baptism, to be a priestly intercessor for the whole human race: – “to make prayers and supplications, and to give thanks for all men” (Prayer Book, page 74).

22. *A Happy Issue* – Finally we commend to thy fatherly goodness all those who are any ways afflicted, or distressed, in mind, body, or estate; that it may please thee to comfort and relieve them, according to their several necessities: giving them patience under their sufferings, and a happy issue out of all their afflictions. – Page 19.

The word *happy* has an ambiguity which can confuse us. Usually, the word means “pleasant,” “agreeable,” “just what we want.” Consider these two uses: “Happy as a boy going fishing,” and “Happy as the martyr dying for his cause.” Both uses are quite legitimate. Our question is: When we ask God to give to sufferers a happy issue out of their afflictions, which kind of happiness do we mean?

We may say, first of all, that if we are both Christian and human, we shall ask God to give both kinds of happiness to those who suffer. In asking

for an *issue* out of affliction, we are asking for an end of the affliction. Such an issue will bring the happiness of relief from pain to the sufferer. We are sure that God wants His child to have this happiness; and in praying for it, we are asking for what God Himself must want as a loving Father of the sufferer.

But there is more to the matter than simply this. Clearly God cannot always give this pleasurable kind of happiness to the sufferer and thus dispose of the matter in the best possible way. It seems that He must sometimes withhold this first kind of happiness so that another and higher happiness may be given.

Consider the case of Helen Keller. When she was an infant, it soon became clear that she was blind, deaf, and dumb. Her family and friends undoubtedly prayed for a happy issue from her afflictions. Try reverently to put yourself in God's position – yes, God's dilemma – as He heard those prayers. As these people prayed for the child, asking a happy issue, they had in mind a miraculous recovery from those bodily handicaps. God could have granted this. But would this have been the happiest of all possible issues? When we look at the life of Miss Keller as it has been lived out among us, with these handicaps rather than without them, we cannot seriously debate the question. Helen Keller as she is – a person whose life has been a tower of strength to millions of less handicapped people – is herself the happiest of all possible happy issues. If she had been set free from her handicaps, she could never have become the candle of the Lord which she has been in her generation.

A while ago I used the phrase "God's dilemma". Of course, there can be no real dilemma in the mind of God. He is never in doubt as to what to do next. Yet we may properly believe – and it seems to me that we must – that God finds it necessary to choose between happy issues for His suffering children, and often to reject one good thing for us so that He might give us a better thing. Any good human parent should understand this. When a boy who has not done his arithmetic for tomorrow wants to play baseball, there can be no doubt that permission to play the game and let the lesson go unprepared would be a truly happy issue. But there is a happier issue to be sought, in the child's learning that in this world arithmetic must be given priority over baseball. This is, to be sure, a trivial example. Most of God's choices of a happy issue for a child of His involve painful sacrifices for the sufferer.

But as we ask God for a happy issue for the sufferer, we may pray nothing doubting of one thing: that God will grant either the issue which we think the happiest possible, or one very much better.

23. *Our Creation, Preservation, and All the Blessings of This Life* – We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life. – Page 19.

Most Churchmen would agree that this General Thanksgiving for Morning and Evening Prayer is one of the supremely gracious things in our whole Prayer Book liturgy. It says exactly what we want to say in those moments when we are at our best: the moments when we want to praise and bless God for His mercies to us and to all men.

It is a pleasure to recall here an old friend whose unflinching practice it is to offer the General Thanksgiving whenever he has safely completed any journey by automobile. We can testify that he lives out the essential Christian idea – he lives eucharistically, which is to say that he lives by gratitude.

Bishop John Higgins offers this testimony from his own pastoral experience:

We remember the woman who came to church to thank God for her little child who had lived but a few short hours. [*The Hope of Glory*, page 48. Used by permission of Morehouse-Gorham Co., New York.]

Chesterton recalls in his autobiography [From *The Autobiography of G. K. Chesterton*, page 12, published by Sheed & Ward, New York.] a magnificent old gentleman who was his maternal grandfather. One day this man's sons were criticizing the General Thanksgiving in the Prayer Book. One of their complaints was that very many people have little reason to be thankful for their creation. And the old man, who was then so old that he hardly ever spoke at all, said suddenly out of his silence: "I should thank God for my creation if I knew I was a lost soul!"

Existence is good; even if existence is, literally, hell for us, it is still good; to wish that we had never been born is not only a snapping at the hand of God, a sheer imbecility; it is a being wishing that it were a non-being, a something wanting to be a nothing.

We bless Him for our creation, and for our preservation. There are not really two separate gifts here, but one: God preserves us so that He can go on creating us. God was making you ten billion years ago, and He knew

what He was doing: setting up a world you could live in and lining up an ancestry for you. He is making you now, and knows what He is doing. He will be making you ten billion years from now, and knowing what He is doing.

We bless Him for our existence, for His continuing creation of us, and for all other blessings of this life. In this connection, we may ask what makes a thing a blessing. Food, clothing, shelter; health, education, culture; friendships, pleasures, satisfying work to do – things of this kind come to mind as obvious blessings. Yet we must always bear in mind that a thing which ought to be a blessing can be a curse if we let it become so. One example from among thousands of possible examples should make the point: A good job can be a great blessing to a man; but what if it keeps him away from God? In His parable of the great feast (St. Luke 14:15–24), Jesus tells us how that can happen. As we thank God for all the blessings of this life, we need to be asking for the grace to receive and use His blessings as blessings. The ultimate test is this: A thing is a blessing in its effect and consequence, if it brings us closer and knits us more strongly to God; which brings us to the very reason for God’s creating, preserving, and blessing us. St. Francis de Sales gives that reason for our being its classic formulation, which will serve as the link between this chapter and the next:

God created you in order to show forth his goodness by giving you grace in this life and glory in the next. [*Introduction to the Devout Life.*]

24. *The Means of Grace, and the Hope of Glory* – We bless thee ... above all, for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. – Page 19.

We have thanked God for our existence, for our preservation, and for all our temporal goods – “the blessings of this life”. This takes in all the comforts, conveniences, and pleasures of our earthly existence. Thinking on these things and casting up our accounts, do we really, deeply, sincerely mean it as we go on to say – *above all*, we bless and thank God for the gift of Jesus Christ to us, for the means of grace and the hope of glory which we find in Him?

In an earlier chapter, [In Chapter 2, in dealing with such phrases as *no health in us* and *miserable offenders.*] we have considered the problem of meaning what we say in our worship when the liturgy places on our tongues words not of our own choosing and perhaps not of our actual meaning. I can only repeat

here the rule as stated in that chapter: “We should always bear in mind that in the words of the liturgy we speak as our *Christian* selves.” In our Christian selves, at any rate, we prize the gift of our redemption through Jesus Christ above all other of God’s gifts. If in our actual selves at any given moment this is not our real state of mind, we need to pray for a better mind.

To understand precisely what we mean by the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, the means of grace, and the hope of glory, we must examine these words and the connections between them carefully.

Redemption I have defined elsewhere, thus:

What we call Redemption is that process by which God unspoil us, that is, transforms us from self-centered to God-centered beings. The first thing He has to do is to break the grip of self-love upon us, and the first step to be taken in this first thing is that step which brings us to putting *our*, *us*, and *we* where *my*, *me*, and *I* used to be before the healing process began. [*Living the Lord’s Prayer*, page 28. Used by permission of Morehouse-Gorham Co., New York.]

Redemption is given to use as a healing process, by which we are changed from self-centered to God-centered beings. This process begins in us the moment we begin our life of living membership in Christ, of active participation in the Christ-life.

With the gift of redemption are immediately linked the means of grace and the hope of glory, which are all of a piece with our redemption through Christ. Let us consider first the words, then their interconnections.

In the New Testament, *grace* is God’s good will and favor towards us. When St. Paul declares, “by grace ye are saved” (Ephesians 2:8), he means by God’s kindness. Grace is God’s love in action, doing for us what we can never do for ourselves. “Grace is the touch of the Holy Ghost, his power working in us. We cannot distinguish between the Holy Ghost and his gift of grace.” [*The Christian Faith*, by C. B. Moss, page 325. Used by permission of Morehouse-Gorham Co., New York.]

But what are the *means* of grace, for which we thank God? There is no need to make this difficult and complicated. The means of grace are the ways, the instruments, and channels, by which God makes his grace effective and operative in our lives. Does beautiful music serve to liberate you from bondage to self and to exalt you to God-centeredness? Then it is a means of grace to you. Tennyson paid this tribute to his wife: “The peace

of God came into my life before the Altar when I wedded her.” Certainly she was a means of grace to him. Anything that opens up our lives to the redeeming influences of God is a means of grace.

But when Churchmen speak of the means of grace, they mean supremely, though not exclusively, the sacraments of the Church. This is not the place for a thorough examination of sacramental grace – the grace mediated to us specifically through the sacraments; here it must suffice to say that in each of the sacraments which God has appointed in His Church, one particular grace is given: in Baptism, the grace of being born into the family of God which is the realm of grace: in the Eucharist, the grace of divine sustenance for the soul; and so on, through the entire order of the sacraments.

Finally, there is our hope of glory. By this we mean our hope that, by the mercy of God, we shall be brought at last to our eternal home in God – made perfect and complete in Christ. Our hope is for the glory of full Deiformity at last – perfect conformity to God as we know Him in Christ. Says our great Anglican doctor, Richard Hooker:

The use of Sacraments is but only in this life, yet so that here they concern a far better life than this, and are for that cause accompanied with “grace which worketh salvation.” Sacraments are the powerful instruments of God to eternal life. For us our natural body consisteth in the union of the body with the soul; so our life supernatural in the union of the soul with God. [*Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V, 1, 3.]

The means of grace, given to us in this life, have as their ultimate purpose the preparation of us for the fulfillment of our hope of glory in the life to come. It is because all this is made gloriously possible to us by Jesus Christ that we thank God *above all* for Him.

25. *When Two or Three Are Gathered Together* – Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee; and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt grant their requests. – Page 20.

It has become a standard joke that the rector can always use this “Prayer of St. Chrysostom” when the attendance is spectacularly small and the allusion to the two or three gathered together is only too correct. We need to be sure that we see the deeper truth which is involved here. We should not take the Lord’s promise to hear us “when two or three are

gathered together” as a divine compliment to us for coming out to church when no one else has. We need no special word of the Lord to tell us that He will hear the prayers of any assembly of His people, be it large or small.

Christ’s promise, which is referred to in this prayer, is recorded in these words (St. Matthew 18:19–20):

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

His primary meaning is that our heavenly Father is especially responsive to the prayers of His children which they offer corporately, when gathered together, and that Christ the Lord is especially present with us when we gather in His Name.

What we have here is a reminder that there is no proper substitute in the Christian life for the common prayer and worship which we cannot offer privately. In other words, you can *not* worship God on the golf course as purely and acceptably as you can worship Him in His Church in the midst of His faithful.

There are always some voices to remind us of what is quite true: that all of our churchgoing and public worship is vain if we do not love and serve Him in our private lives. But multitudes of modern Christians have failed to see what is equally true, that the highest and holiest private walk with God is no adequate substitute for that corporate communion with God which is realized in fellowship with the rest of God’s family in the worship of the Church. There is heartening evidence that the Church of our age is rediscovering this vital corporateness of her true life with Christ in God. Certainly it is a thing devoutly to be wished.

No Catholic ever spoke more catholicly, no Evangelical more evangelically, than did John Wesley about this matter: The Gospel of Christ knows no religion but social, no holiness but social holiness.

This is the New Testament doctrine. True Christianity fulfills the truth expressed by Aristotle, that the city is prior to the individual because it is essential to his being really man. When man sunders himself from the city, he perishes as man. When God sent redemption to earth, He sent it in the form of a social body, a community, a kingdom. As Bishop Gore put it:

Fellowship with God is to be won through fellowship with His Son, but that not otherwise than through fellowship with His Church. “That ye

may have fellowship *with us*” – that is why St. John writes his Epistle – “and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” [*The Church and the Ministry*, by Charles Gore, page 43. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company, New York.]

Consider now your own immediate groups. There is your family. If you are all Christians in your family, do you realize and fulfill your togetherness in Christ by praying, worshiping, reading the Bible together? When two or three are gathered together in His Name, in your home, there is He in their midst.

Then there is your parish. Are you tempted to assert your spiritual “independence” now and then by neglecting your church attendance? You see that *independence* is here put in quotation marks. This is to indicate that your spiritual “independence” is a fraud. No Christian can be, for a moment or in the slightest degree, independent of the Church. One of the early Fathers put it strongly, but not too strongly: “No man has God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother.” When one declares that he has had enough of the fools and hypocrites in the Church and is going off to be alone with God, he is serving notice that he will not accept redemption on God’s terms and has decided to fashion an improved scheme of his own.

To put the case positively: We taste and see how good the Lord is, only as we taste and see in company with His other children, gathered in His Name.

26. *Grace, Love, and Fellowship* – The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. – Page 20.

This “grace” has become so familiar to us as the ending of the services of Morning and Evening Prayer that we may fail to notice that it comes from the Bible. It is the concluding sentence of St. Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians. It is in fact Paul’s summary, in a sentence, of the whole joyful mystery of our life in Christ with God. He is telling the world of the unspeakable Gift of God as he has received it, and in trying to describe it, he speaks of it as threefold: the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit. This treasure is the pearl of great price for which Paul had given up all else. It is what God promises to anybody who will be baptized into the Life and the Death of Christ.

It is a mistake to try to analyze this summary statement of the Apostle too systematically, for it is not given to us as a theological formula but rather as Paul's stammering effort to speak out what God has done for him.

Floyd V. Filson offers this explanation:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is the undeserved but freely given and powerfully effective favor of Christ, which not only opens the way to faith and new life, but also continues to give the believer the daily help he needs. *The love of God* is here the outreaching, active good will by which God, who has sent Christ for man's salvation, freely gives all further gifts needed to complete his divine purpose to save men (cf. Rom. 5:8; 8:32). *The fellowship of the Holy Spirit* may mean here that fellowship with God and with the other members of Christ's church which is established and sustained in Christians by the presence and working of the Holy Spirit; or the phrase may refer to the *participation in*, the sharing in, the Holy Spirit enjoyed by all members of the church. This verse is not a formal statement of the doctrine of the Trinity, but it reflects the aspects of divine redemption and Christian experience which led the church later on to formulate this doctrine as the best expression it could give to the Christian understanding of God. [*The Interpreter's Bible*. Vol. X, page 424. Used by permission of Abingdon Press., Nashville, Tenn.]

If we are Christians in life, in experience, in spiritual fact as well as in name, we rejoice as Paul did in this threefold gift. It is by the *grace of Christ* that we know God as He is, and that we know ourselves as wholly at the mercy of God's mercy. Or to put it otherwise: Grace is mercy doing its work. "Grace in religious parlance means divine benevolence unearned and unearnable." [*The Life of the World to Come*, by R. J. Campbell, page 149. Used by permission of Longman's, Green & Co., New York.] It is by this grace of Christ that we know the Everlasting Mercy which sends Christ to us; it is by this grace that we know that Mercy as indeed everlasting and inexhaustible; and it is by this grace that we are convicted in our own minds and made to realize how utterly helpless we are by ourselves to *earn our way* in God's world. We are totally dependent upon the grace of God for all things; and it is by the grace of Christ – who reveals to us and brings to us the grace of God – that we know this grace and find our sufficiency for all things in it.

This experience of the grace of God in Christ naturally fills us with the jubilant awareness of its corollary: the love of God for us. Paul and his

Christian contemporaries, looking back to the event on Calvary of only a few years before, saw the Son of God fulfilling his mission from the Father by pouring out His blood and soul for His people; and, as J. M. Baillie observes:

The most remarkable fact in the whole history of religious thought is this: that when the early Christians looked back and pondered on the dreadful thing that had happened, it made them think of the redeeming love of God. Not simply of the love of Jesus, but of the love of God. [*God Was In Christ*, page 184. Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.]

It is often pointed out to us that we Christians are not the only people who believe and trust in God's love. God be thanked, there is truth in that statement. Yet it must be said that it is only those who see God loving us unto His own Death on Calvary who have anything like a full knowledge of the fullness of God's love for us. It is indeed by the grace of Christ that we know the love of the Father and that we know ourselves as children, not mere creatures or slaves, of God.

The experience of Christ's grace and of God's love leads on to an activity which Paul calls "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit". Concerning this, James Reid's commentary is sound and to the point:

The fellowship of the Holy Spirit is the true description of the church. The church is more than a social group with a common interest in religion, more than a gathering of people for worship, or an organization for the service of others. The name given to it at Pentecost was "the fellowship". It was a new divine creation, a community knit together by the Spirit. The power of the church comes through this fellowship – the power that sustains the individual Christian and takes him out of the loneliness in which he might feel that he was fighting a solitary battle and walking a solitary road. The life a Christian lives is the life in him of this indwelling Spirit, by whom also he is one with the church. It is through this fellowship that the church has power to preach the gospel and to make a Christian impact upon the world. Through it the church becomes the lips and eyes, the hands and feet and burning heart of the Lord Jesus. [James Reid, in *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. X, page 425. Used by permission of Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tenn.]

One reason, perhaps the only reason, why we have not been able in this chapter to distinguish more sharply and concretely among these three aspects of the Gift of God is that they are so vitally and so inseparably one Gift, not three. We cannot experience the grace of Christ without learning the love of God and entering into the fellowship of the Spirit.

Blessed Paul prays that this Gift “be with us all evermore”. Be it so.

The Order for Daily Evening Prayer

Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. – St. Luke 24:29.

Give us to go blithely on our business all this day. Bring us to our resting beds weary and content and undishonored, and grant us in the end the gift of sleep. – Robert Louis Stevenson.

Rest is the end of all motion, and the last perfection of all things that labor. – Richard Hooker.

Teach me to live, that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed;
Teach me to die, that so I may
Rise glorious at the awful day.

O may my soul on thee repose,
And with sweet sleep mine eyelids close,
Sleep that may me more vigorous make
To serve my God when I awake.
Thomas Ken.

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety. – Psalm 4:8.

27. *Magnificat* – My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden. For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call be blessed. – Page 26.

The song known as *Magnificat* (St. Luke 1:46–55) is the song of Mary as she awaits the birth of her holy Child. In the office of Evening Prayer, we make Mary’s song our own.

The Church's liturgy is purposely dramatic in asking us to play the part of Mary at this point in our worship. It makes sense only if in some way we stand where Mary stands in relation to God. The truth is that we do, and our primary endeavor in this chapter will be to see this truth.

In his splendid poem of the Nativity, *Assumpta Maria*, Francis Thompson has the mother of Christ sing:

He upbears me , He *Ischyros*,
I bear Him, the *Athanaton*!

[For those who lack Greek: *Ischyros* means Mighty One,
Athanaton means Immortal One.]

It is the ineffable paradox of the Incarnation: God becoming the child of one of His own creatures. Christ the eternal Word, who was with God and who was God in the beginning (St. John 2:1), upbears Mary as her maker and sustainer in being, yet she bears Him as her babe. John Donne in his Annunciation sonnet apostrophizes Mary thus: "Thou art now thy Maker's maker, and thy Father's mother." [John Donne was too good a theologian to make the mistake he seems to be making here – that of confounding the Persons of the Father and the Son. He is calling Christ the Father of Mary only in a bold poetic endeavor to express the fullness of the paradox.]

As Mary sings the *Magnificat*, the burden of her song is this: I bear as my child Him who upbears me as my God and Saviour; therefore my soul doth magnify the Lord whose wonderful doing this is.

Clearly it is meet and right that Mary should sing this song. But what common ground is there between her and us, giving us warrant to make her song our own?

Consider the following facts?

The first fact about both Mary and ourselves is that we have the same need of the same Saviour. She needs Christ's salvation just as we do. We share with her, and she shares with us, the inability to deliver our own souls from the thralldom of sin and the horror of the grave. So it is with full propriety – equal to hers – that we say: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

Mary in her humility knew her absolute dependence upon God.

"He hath regarded the *lowliness* of his handmaiden." We, like her, come to know God's loving pride in us His children when, and only when, we take no pride in ourselves. Humility has been beautifully defined as

pride in God. Mary placed her pride in God, and God crowned her humility with a name which will be forever blessed.

This above all, however: As Mary sang *Magnificat* the holy Child was already cradled in her womb; and concerning this we must make an avowal which may seem at first thought fanciful: *In this too we stand where Mary stood.* If we are Christians, Christ lies hidden and cradled in us at this moment. Isn't this, after all, a familiar idea to us, and a necessary one? Do we not speak of Christ coming to us, and coming into us, He abiding in us and we in Him? No Christian questions the truth of Phillips Brooks; verse:

No ear may hear his coming,
But in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive him still
The dear Christ enters in.

[Used by permission of Oxford University Press, New York.]

If this is no mere pretty poesy but simple truth, Christ is as truly in us as He was in Mary – if we are meek as she was meek to receive Him.

Back in the early Christian ages Mary came to be known as *Theotokos*, which means “bearer of God”. This title was meant to affirm that the divine Saviour receives His manhood from her by being born of her into human life for His redemptive purposes; or, to put it in another way, Christ cannot come into our human world as an actual member of our human family until she, the *Theotokos*, accepts her calling to bear Him and to give Him to the world.

We too are called to be *Theotokoi* – bearers of God, bearers of Christ. It is a commonplace with us that we take Him into our lives, through the Holy Communion and otherwise. We take Him into ourselves so that we may share Him with others. He who comes into us wills to go forth from us in such a way that others may receive Him from us.

This is the central secret of Christianity: the getting and giving away of Christ, the bearing Him and then the sharing Him. Mary was the bearer and sharer of God; if we are less than that, we are less than Christians. But if we are that, we stand where Mary stood, and we have her right to sing *Magnificat* – since He who upbears the universe by the word of His power, the *Ischyros*, the *Athanatos*, does not disdain to knock at the doors of our poor lives and ask that we will receive Him, bear Him, and give Him away.

28. *Nunc Dimittis* – Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace. – Page 28.

When at Evening Prayer you say *Nunc dimittis*, you are playing the part of Simeon the prophet, just as when you say *Magnificat* you are playing the part of blessed Mary. The story of Simeon is told by St. Luke (St. Luke 2:25–35) in a few words, and every Churchman ought to know it for no other reason than to enable him to say *Nunc dimittis* with understanding.

The venerable Simeon is an aged Jew of the old dispensation, who has but one wish: to live long enough to see the long-expected Messiah come in the flesh. When he sees Mary coming into the Temple to present her Child, he knows that it is the Desire of all nations who lies in her arms, and with soul brimming with quiet ecstasy he breathes *Nunc dimittis*:

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation.

To receive these words in the evening office of the Church is to identify yourself with Simeon. You say *Nunc dimittis* immediately after the New Testament lesson, which has, in one way or another, reminded you of that Fact which crowns and glorifies our lives: that Christ is now with us. “Mine eyes *have seen* thy salvation.” We do not await the coming of the Light; we have received it. The Lord has come; He is now with us; the victory is won; and what we are now awaiting is not His victory over death and hell but the final consummation of that victory in the New Jerusalem.

Because this is so, because your eyes have seen the Lord’s salvation as an already accomplished fact, you are ready to depart this life in peace. Or, if it is not so, it ought to be.

Are you ready, in honest truth, to depart this life at any moment cheerfully and in peace? This whole question of whether the Christian should welcome death at its approach or resist it unto his heart’s blood is a question with weighty arguments on both sides. The chief ones we may review briefly.

First is this: We are to leave it to God to set the hour of our departure, and we are to do this gladly and eagerly, not grudgingly because we have no alternative.

At the same time, so long as we believe that God may have work for us still to do in this flesh, we are to take the best possible care of ourselves

so that we may stay here as long as possible, to finish the job. Our business in this world is to carry out our assignment from God. This done, we have no further business here. Yet it is He, and not we ourselves, who allots the tasks and declares the end of the working day.

There is such a thing as living in constant readiness for death. This is what we need to cultivate. The secret of it is in the distinctively Christian way of doing the work God gives us to do from day to day. "I find," said George MacDonald, "that doing the will of God leaves me no time for disputing about His plans." He might have added that it left him no time for worrying about when God would call a halt to his earthly labors and bring him up higher. That scene in *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which Mr. Valiant-for-truth comes to the crossing, is always worth hearing again:

Then said he, "I am going to my Father's; and though with great difficulty I am not hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get it. My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought his battles who now will be my rewarder." When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the riverside, into which as he went he said, "Death, where is thy sting?" And as he went down deeper, he said, "Grave, where is thy victory?" So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.

We love to think that when our time comes, we shall step into the river with some measure of Mr. Valiant-for-truth's good cheer and hearty confidence of the better things ahead. His secret is an open one. He had earned his peace in death by earning his name in life. His words are no idle boast: "My sword ... my marks and scars ... I have fought his battles." His eyes had seen his salvation; and that vision of his salvation had not put him to sleep but had set him to work to fight and to suffer in the Lord's good cause. With this behind him, he could be sure of what was ahead of him, and he could depart in peace. "I have fought a good fight," St. Paul writes to Timothy; "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

If we covet for ourselves that cheerful readiness to depart in peace, the way we know. If for us to live is Christ, we shall never doubt that to die is gain.

29. *All Holy Desires, All Good Counsels, All Just Works* – O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed. – Page 31.

If you are any kind of Christian in your practice, you will find as you examine yourself that there is a force working within you at the very center of your being – a lifting force, a kinetic energy which is constantly putting the pressure on you to develop, to mature, to grow up. You are childish enough, in all conscience; but this mysterious impulsion will not allow you to remain childish in peace. At times it stings you as a goad, at times it beckons you as a guide, at times it provides you with power and adequacy which you were sure you did not have. Whatever that force is, it will not let you live contentedly with yourself as you are.

Have you ever looked at yourself and been dissatisfied and disgusted by what you saw? Have you ever detested your faults with all your heart? Have you ever longed to be what you most grievously fell short of being – wise, serene, strong, loving; in a word, Christlike? That divine dissatisfaction with yourself was indeed divine in its origin. It comes from Him “from whom all holy desires do proceed.” A holy desire is a longing to be like God rather than like your present self.

Have you ever found yourself with a good idea in your mind which, you felt sure, was not really the child of your own brain but was a *given*, a counsel from some higher wisdom than your own? It probably was indeed a *given*, which was given to you by Him “from whom all good counsels do proceed.” A good counsel is simply a good piece of advice. If you live in intimate communion with God, you may be sure that He will give you good counsels.

Have you ever once, in all your life, been moved to do a single good deed for God’s sake or your neighbor’s rather than for your own? If you are a Christian, you have, many times. This was the work in you of Him “from whom all just works do proceed.”

God the Holy Ghost is God dwelling within us and quietly but invincibly filling us with holy desires, good counsels, and just works. They are never really our own, but His. Von Hugel rightly speaks of God as He who “secretly initiates what he openly crowns” in us. [*Essays and Addresses, Second Series*, page 225. Used by permission of E. P. Dutton & Co., New York.]

In the human life of Jesus Christ, the complete man, God shows us what He wants us to become at last. But if God merely showed us this, then left us to work our own way to that exalted goal all by ourselves, He would be breaking our hearts by giving us the vision of an unattainable goal and commanding us to attain it. As it is, however, God shows us our goal in Christ, and He comes into our lives to do the actual transforming work with us, from within ourselves.

Do we need holy desires in place of our present unholy desires? Good counsels in place of our own confusion and nonsense? Just works in place of our evil doing? God is already deep inside us to give us what we need, if we will but draw from that deep well and drink all that we bring up from it. We must drink *all* that we draw from the well of the divine inspiration, however; not just that which is pleasant to our taste. For example: It may be that one good work to which God calls me is all to my taste, because it consists of a good service to Tom, and I like Tom; but if next He impels me to a good work for Dick, who I don't like, I may want to evade the divine leading from within by saying: "It must be one of those whimsical vagrant notions which sometimes flit across the mind."

If we are to be transformed by the power of God from within ourselves and grow from glory to glory in the image of Christ, we must be habitually obedient to the inner voice of God, obeying it regardless of whether we find its specific directives to our taste.

Bernard Iddings Bell splendidly describes the Holy Ghost and His work with us in these words:

God is not alone an Absolute, reigning, in distant heaven, a merely inexorable Lawgiver. Nor is God only a good Jesus who lived, long ago, a beautiful life for our example, and then went away again forever. God is also the Holy Ghost, implanted and indwelling within us – to strengthen our weakness, to enlighten our blindness, to comfort our sorrows, that the vale of misery may be filled with pools of water. Closer is he than breathing, nearer than hands and feet. It is the Holy Spirit who is God *talking to us*; yes, closer still, God *loving us*. In him the Absolute draws near and nurtures us. In him Lord Jesus lives and leads his own. Gently the Holy Ghost guides those who will trust him, out of doubt into certainty, out of cowardice into courage, out of spiritual duplicity into integrity of soul, out of inner war into inner peace, out of boorishness into gentility. [Citation missing.]

30. *That Peace which the World Cannot Give* – Give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give. – Page 31.

Our nation today is full of longing for “peace of mind,” as is evidenced by the enormous popularity of books promising to guide the reader to that blessed estate. Our Bible is full of two pertinent things: warnings against a false peace, and promises of a true peace.

There is a peace which is “as this world giveth,” and this the Lord and His prophets denounce as a false peace. Then there is a peace which is not as this world giveth, which one can have and hold even in the midst of pain and disaster; and this peace is none other than the Peace of God.

Back in 1832 John Henry Newman preached a sermon entitled “The Religion of the Day,” in which he castigated the cult of peace-of-mind as it flourished in his England. Then, as now, there were people who held that any belief or practice is good if it produces peace of mind. Newman took issue thus:

Doubtless, peace of mind, a quiet conscience, and a cheerful countenance are the gift of the Gospel, and the sign of the Christian; but the same effects (or, rather, what appear to be the same) may arise from very different causes. Jonah slept in the storm, – so did our Blessed Lord. The one slept in an evil security: the Other in the “peace of God which passeth all understanding.” The two states cannot be confounded together, they are perfectly distinct; and as distinct is the calm of the man of the world from that of the Christian.

Newman’s contention is timelessly true. Peace of mind is something that can come from any one of a variety of causes, some of them good and others very bad. The cat that just swallowed the canary enjoys peace of mind – that peace of mind which comes from the gladdening absence of an operative conscience.

A person can often get peace of mind by simply refusing to look at some fact that God wants him to see. Dives evidently enjoyed peace of mind during those days when Lazarus lay rotting at one of his gates. How could Dives manage that? By using another gate, of course, for his going out and his coming in, to avoid the distressing sight of the disturbing fact.

We need to make a sharp distinction between two totally different things: peace of mind, and the Peace of God. The former is easily obtainable to anybody skilled in the art of seeing only what he wants to see

and who is further aided by luck. Peace of mind is usually the fruit of effective self-deception. It is the jewel of the selfish and egotistical soul. It is the peace one gets, or tries to get, by seeking his own peace as an end in itself, and seeking it if need be at the price of truth, duty, and the will of God.

The Peace of God, that peace which the world cannot give, is gained by the exactly opposite course. It comes to him whose heart is set upon neither peace nor strife for himself but upon the will of God. Wendell Phillips spoke of those few great souls who manage to forget themselves into immortality. Certain it is that one can forget himself into the Peace of God; but we should remember that this Peace is not the result of the self-forgetting but rather it is the result of the doing of the will of God (which can be done only as we forget ourselves in our remembering of God).

The moment we quit asking “What do I want?”, and start asking “What does God want of me?”, we are setting our feet upon the road which leads to the only true Peace.

31. *The President, the Governor, and Other Ministers* – Have mercy upon this whole land; and so rule the hearts of thy servants The President of the Unite States, The Governor of this State, and all others in authority, that they, knowing whose ministers they are, may above all things seek thy honour and glory. – Page 32.

Archbishop William Temple most properly reminded us that “God is not the head of the clerical profession,” and that God is not primarily interested in our religion.

God has many ministers – meaning servants of His will – who are not bishops, priests, deacons, or nuns. Anybody who does something that God wants done is, in the doing of that work, God’s minister. The civil magistrate, the President, the governor, the mayor, the health officer, who does his work for the common good, is carrying on a ministry given to him by God. The judge on the bench who, day in and day out, dispenses justice as one who must answer at last to the only Judge; the devoted teacher; the doctor who spends himself unstintingly in the cure of others; the businessman who finds more satisfaction in serving his customer than in profiteering; the man in elective office who sets duty ahead of votes: any such person, doing an honorable work in and honorable way, is a minister of God.

Note carefully just what it is we pray for in this prayer for the President and all civil rulers: that they may know “whose ministers they are.” We believe that if a man will bethink himself, as he goes about his work, that he is God’s minister, he will be moved and inspired to give his best to his work. We are asking God in this prayer to implant in every person in civil authority a compelling sense of his stewardship as a minister of God.

In both past and present, Christian people generally have been too negligent of their duty to pray for God’s civil ministers and to insist that their civil rulers do their work as God’s ministers. Too readily have we marked off one kind of ministry as “sacred” – the priestly ministry of the Church’s pastors – and in doing so have slighted and belittled all other callings as merely “secular”. It has been easy to think of the priest as God’s minister and to think of the King, or President, or governor, or judge, as being, at most, human society’s minister. The consequences of this unbiblical and unchristian mistake have been bad all around. When we encourage a man to regard his job as common, mundane, secular, and not in itself of any special importance to God, we are encouraging him to act upon this low view of his work – in a congruously low way. If he does so, the people who have failed to make him see himself as a minister of God are largely to be blamed. There is no more effective way of helping a politician to be a crook than to call him a mere politician and to remark sagaciously: “These politicians are all alike!” A politician is called to be a minister of God. Treat him as one, and you help him to be one.

When our civil rulers, knowing whose ministers they are, seek God’s honor and glory, we are in a happy case. The only alternative is sure corruption in the body politic.

We are frequently told that in this country a man’s religion is his private business and that we have no right to inquire concerning it when he seeks a place of public trust. This is palpable nonsense. We have every right to know, and every duty to inquire, whether a man seeking a place of civil authority is willing to acknowledge whose minister he is and to do his work accordingly. If we know where our own interest lies, we will never vote for anybody who is ignorant of his calling to be God’s minister. If he will not work for God, we should make it certain that he shall not work for us.

Prayers and Thanksgivings

And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends. – Job 42:10.

For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not the hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

– Tennyson, *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*.

The climax of those anthropomorphic appearances (of God to man, in Genesis) is in that most admirably composed passage of words with Abraham concerning Sodom (Gen. 18:20–33). Up to then the few conversations between man and the Omnipotence have been extremely one-sided. But now there appears something new: the conversation becomes a dialogue. The remoteness and rigour of the Lord take on a tenderness ... and there exists not only a promise but a reply. The promise, that is, becomes a fuller and richer thing; it is the whole meaning of prayer. ... The fantastic intercession of Abraham dances the retreats and salaams and dances again; and he thunder that threatens on the left the Cities of the Plain murmurs gently on the right above the tents. “And the Lord went his way.”

– Charles Williams, *He Came Down From Heaven*.

[Apparently disconnected acknowledgment to this page: “*Halftitle, page 100.* / From *He Came Down From Heaven*, by Charles Williams. Used by permission of Messrs. Pearn, Pollinger and Higham of London, agents for the late Charles Williams.]

32. *Honourable Industry, Sound Learning, and Pure Manners* – Bless our land with honourable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. – Page 36.

We talk much about our American standard of living, and sometimes we add the modest suggestion that it is the highest in the world. What, precisely, do we mean by the American standard of living? Opinions vary quite widely. It is only too apparent, however, that very many Americans measure our standard of living by purely material terms. Have we more bathtubs per capita than any other nation? More privately owned homes? More butter and more beer? Then our standard of living excels all others, and there’s an end of it. Such is the common reasoning.

It is not Christian reasoning. In this prayer *For Our Country* we ask for certain blessings which, all together, constitute a Christian standard of living for a people. If we were asked what a thoroughly Christian society would be like, we could reasonably point to this prayer and say that in such a society we should find this prayer fully answered and the blessings here prayed for fully realized. When we offer this prayer, we are asking God to make our country a Christian society in which these particular blessings abound.

Let us consider now three of these blessings we ask: honorable industry, sound learning, and pure manners.

1. *Honorable industry*. Since dishonorable industry is that in which the industrialist – and the worker, the retailer, the everybody else concerned in it – seeks his own profit by selfishness or fraud, then honorable industry must be that in which each participant in the industry seeks the good of all – stockholder, manager, worker, distributor, and consumer. The principle of honorable industry, its motivating drive and primary concern, is the profit and the good of all, rather than of one or a few.

There are those who say that strictly honorable industry does not “pay off” in a ruthlessly competitive business world such as ours. There are others, however, and among these are some top-notch industrialists, who contradict this cynicism and say that it is good business to be good in business. This writer claims no authority on the economic question of whether honor in business “pays” in the pecuniary sense. It is heartening to note that many eminent authorities in that field say that it does. What we can say with assurance is that in any land whose corporate standard of living is acceptably Christian, industry is *honorable*, and the ruling criterion of honor is Christ’s commandment that we love and serve one another.

2. *Sound learning*. This is a very common phrase. Everybody who has his own theory of education will tell you that his scheme will give us “sound learning”. Here again, the Christian has his own distinctive concept of what constitutes sound learning. In the Christian scheme, sound learning is such learning as will make the child of God know his world as the Father’s world and will make him know his own responsibility to his Father in heaven and to all other children of God. Sound learning is such learning as teaches us to know God and to love one another. Sound learning teaches us to see and know all things with the mind of Christ in us. No other theory of learning can be sound if the Christian religion is true. If, by this

definition of sound learning, most present-day education is condemned as unsound, and if there are few Christian educators at work in our land, so much the worse for our land, and may God have mercy upon us. Sound learning is learning in true godliness. An education which is not centered in God and the Things Unseen is no education in the Christian sense, but the mere training of a rational beast.

3. *Pure manners.* In interpreting this phrase, we must beware of giving it a merely superficial sense. Pure manners is not identical with good etiquette or fastidiously correct outward behavior. Pure manners is an inward and spiritual grace: It is the pure and loving good will of a soul, unmixed with any base alloy of self-seeking. The world speaks of *good* manners, the Christian speaks of *pure* manners. I may exhibit “good” manners toward another person simply as a tactical measure, to use him for my own selfish purposes. My motive may be abominable, but my manners in dealing with him may be pleasant, agreeable, and unimpeachably correct. *Pure* manners, in Christian parlance, means an inner disposition of pure love for God and the brethren. It is what St. Paul describes when he speaks of charity, in 1 Corinthians 13.

Although pure manners is not to be simply identified with outward courtesy, none the less pure manners seeks always to be outwardly courteous. “Charity [pure manners] doth not behave itself unseemly.” Every Christian must endorse Hilaire Belloc’s judgment:

Of Courtesy, it is much less
Than Courage of Heart or Holiness
Yet in my Walks it seems to me
That the Grace of God is in Courtesy.

[Citation missing.]

33. *Pride and Arrogancy, and Every Evil Way* – Save us ... from pride and arrogancy, and from every evil way. – Page 36.

Some people insist upon identifying patriotism with jingoism. Your patriotism is not acceptable to them until you can show them that you despise and detest all other peoples. By the jingo rule, the test of your love of country is your hatred or contempt of other countries.

A Christian cannot be a jingo patriot. To the Christian conscience, such a slogan as “My country, right or wrong!” is simple blasphemy. It is a

form of that unpardonable sin of which our Lord warns us, the sin of making evil our good. This we do if we uphold our country in any act or policy which we know to be morally wrong. For the jingo patriot, a thing becomes morally right the moment it becomes a part of his country's policy or goal. It was of this kind of patriotism that Samuel Johnson was speaking when he thundered forth his just judgment that patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel.

There is a genuinely Christian patriotism, and it speaks in these words of Lord Milner of England:

The last thing which the thought of the Empire inspires in me is a desire to boast, to wave a flag, or to shout *Rule Britannia*. When I think of it, I am much more inclined to go into a corner by myself and pray. [From "Sussex," in *The Five Nations*, by Rudyard Kipling, copyright 1903 by Rudyard Kipling. Reprinted by permission of Mrs. George Bambridge and Doubleday & Company, New York.]

Lord Milner loves Britain most ardently. No jingo could surpass him in that. It is *how* and *why* he loves his country that distinguishes him from the jingo. Being a Christian before he is a Briton, he loves his land *reverently*, his reverence being not for the land but for the God of all lands, to whom the British Empire is as dust in the balance. He loves his land as being a creation and an instrument of God, and not itself God. He loves it because, through British institutions and the British people, he has been blest and enriched by manifold good things. These things are gifts of God, mediated to him through British channels.

Thinking thus about Britain, this Christian Englishman thanks God – not Britain – for British blessings, and he also prays God for mercy upon his people.

A hateful and prideful jingoism is a bad thing. It must be said, however, that there is a contrary thing which in its own way is equally bad. The anti-jingoist too often solves the problem of jingoism by doing away with patriotism. It is as bad to have no love of county as it is to idolize one's country. The truth is that our own country is to be peculiarly loved above all others. We do not call a man a hater of all womankind because he loves and cherishes his own wife above all others. There is an important law of our human nature which requires that we love all mankind by loving first those whom we encounter first: those closet at hand. To be a good citizen of the world you must begin by being a good citizen of your own

little village. Many of our present-day internationalists, who view all local and particular patriotism with distrust as “isolationism,” need to review this basic fact about ourselves.

Kipling puts the truth finely in this verse from *Sussex*:

God gave all men all earth to love;
But, since man’s heart is small,
Ordained for each one spot should prove
Beloved over all,
That, as He watched creation’s birth,
So we in God-like mood
Might of our love create our earth,
And see that it was good.

[From “Sussex,” in *The Five Nations*, by Rudyard Kipling, copyright 1903 by Rudyard Kipling. Reprinted by permission of Mrs. George Bambridge and Doubleday & Company, New York.]

“A man’s feet must be planted in his country, but his eyes should survey the world.” Thus spoke Santayana, whose eyes certainly surveyed the world. He might have said more positively, however, that a man’s feet must be planted in his own country so that his eyes can survey the world. It is only as we love and cherish the immediate that we can come to love and cherish the all. It is only as we love that particular province of the Kingdom of God – in Toynbee’s phrase – in which God places us, that he can come to love the whole Kingdom with a whole heart.

“Save us,” we pray, “from pride and arrogance [in our patriotism] ... and from every evil way.” Save us, we mean, from the pride which would make us thank God that we are not as other men are, and from the arrogance which supposes that all “lesser breeds” exist primarily to minister to our needs and desires. In national and social life, as in personal life, pride is the poisonous fountain of every evil way, and the wrath of God abides upon the nation which glories in itself.

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord ... Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine” (Psalms 33:12, 18–19).

34. *God’s Holy Catholic Church* – O gracious Father, we humbly beseech thee for thy holy Catholic Church. – Page 37.

This prayer expresses one very important truth about the Church on earth: that it needs to be prayed for. It is true that the Church is God's, not man's; that it is holy; that it is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven. But it is also true that the Church can be corrupt, that it can be in error or otherwise amiss, that it can be in want, that it can be divided.

Not all Christians share the concept of the Church which underlies this prayer. Some see the Church as merely a human organization, with no divine life and character of its own. On this view, the Church is a voluntary association of followers of Jesus who are drawn together by their common loyalty and purpose, the resulting society being what they call the Church. Hence, according to this theory, the Church is strictly and solely human. There is another view which sees the Church as a divine body with no human alloy at all. On this view, it is simple blasphemy to pray for the correction of any need or fault in the Church; for who dares to ask God to correct that which is purely divine? That is like asking God to correct Himself.

The doctrine of the Church expressed in this prayer is the doctrine of the Anglican Communion, which considers it the scriptural and Catholic position. In this chapter let us attempt a simple summary of this doctrine.

The Church s God's, not man's. We start with that. It is holy as no merely human society can be holy, because God has created it for the work of making man holy, and He has breathed into it His Holy Spirit to be its very life. It is Catholic because "it is universal, holding earnestly the Faith for all time, in all countries, and for all people; and is sent to preach the Gospel to the whole world" (Prayer Book, page 291).

But if the Church is of God in these respects – that it is created by Him, animated by His divine life, and given the whole world to be its province and its parish – the Church is also of man in that its membership is human; and it is here, of course, that the Church's troubles begin.

The Church is corrupt in those spots where her human members are corrupt. The corruptions in the Church are strictly our own, but they are there, and only God can purify them. The Church can be in error whatever its ruling mind is the mind of men. Christ is infallible, but His ministers are not. The truth which the Church receives from its Lord is pure and perfect truth, but we who handle the Word of truth always mishandle it in some way and pervert it to some degree. The Church is infallible only when it perfectly manifests the mind of its divine Head to the world.

The Church needs continuous reformation for the simple reason that *we* need continuous reformation.

Our great theological contemporary Karl Barth has been accused of neglecting the Church in his proclamation of the Gospel to our age. This criticism may have some general validity, but in his *Dogmatics in Outline*, Barth presents this excellent statement of one side of the true doctrine of the Church.

The Christian Church does not exist in Heaven, but on earth and in time. And although it is a gift of God, He has set it right amid earthly and human circumstances, and to that fact corresponds absolutely everything that happens in the Church. The Christian Church lives on earth, and it lives in history, with the lofty good entrusted to it by God. In the possession and administration of this lofty good it passes on its way through history, in strength and in weakness, in faithfulness and in unfaithfulness, in obedience and in disobedience, in understanding and in misunderstanding of what is said to it. [*Dogmatics in Outline*, page 10. Used by permission of Philosophical Library, Inc., New York.]

Barth is not speaking here the final word to be said about the nature of the Church. He is emphasizing the reality of the human, the temporal, and the contingent in the career of the Church through the ages. What he says is true only for as far as it goes; but within that range it is wholly true. Martin Luther is quoted in his *Table Talk* as exclaiming, with Christian sense as well as vigor:

We tell our Lord God plainly, that if He will have His Church, He must maintain and defend it; for we can neither uphold nor protect it. If we could, indeed, we should become the proudest asses under heaven!

This seems the right note on which to leave the matter: Our need to pray for the Church should not undermine our faith in the Church's divine mission, authority, power, and life. We need only to realize that when we pray for the Church, we pray that God will defend the Church against not only the gates of hell but against the sins of the follies of us, her own children.

35. *Our Unhappy Divisions* – Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions. – Page 37.

The most conspicuous single characteristic of the worldwide Church in the twentieth century is its feeling of guilt about the divisions within itself. Most Christians have come to see that these divisions among us are a grievous scandal, in the New Testament sense of the word *scandal*: a stumbling block, an obstacle. In this case, the divisions within the Church are an obstacle to the Church's accomplishment of its mission in the world, which is to extend the rule of Christ in human affairs.

This Christian sense of shame for our divisions has given birth to what we call the Ecumenical Movement. This movement looks toward the restoration of outward unity to the Church, and almost every major Christian communion actively participates in the prayer, thought, and work of the movement.

In this prayer we ask of God one thing in particular: "the grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions." Let us consider first the divisions, and then the dangers.

There is a profoundly true sense in which good Christians of separated communions can in good conscience sing this verse of *Onward, Christian Soldiers*:

Like a mighty army moves the Church of God;
Brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod;
We are not divided, all one body we,
One in hope and doctrine, one in charity.

There is, after all, only one Church of God, and all baptized persons are its members; and just so is there "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all ..." (Ephesians 4:5-6). Insofar as we realize, in our minds and hearts and in our works, this God-given unity which we have in Christ, "we are not divided, all one body we."

But this fact must be faced: although our divisions may be only *outward* divisions, they are terribly costly to the Kingdom of God. For they are hindrances to our realizing, and to the world's realizing, the real unity which all Christians have supernaturally in Christ. A Roman Catholic Christian, an Episcopalian Christian, and a Methodist Christian are members of the one Body; temples of the one Spirit; professors of the one hope; servants of the one Lord; confessors of the one faith; children, by the one Baptism, of the one God and Father of all. That is the supremely

important fact about them. But the secondary fact that they are Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, and Methodist most grievously gets in the way of the first and supreme fact.

The greatest danger of our divisions is, as already indicated, that we shall fail to see our real unity in Christ and so fail to think, pray, love, and work accordingly. Our calling is to work together for our one Master. Since our unhappy divisions began, we have been mostly working against each other, to the delight and profit of the Devil. Our divisions are tragic because they put asunder those whom Christ has joined together. Somebody has said, only too truthfully: "Sectarian Christianity is an army that turns its own siege batteries upon itself while the world, the flesh, and the devil triumphantly win the victory."

Another danger of our divisions is that each tries to make his own small portion of the Church into the *whole* Church. The Church in her glorious catholic reality is a vast body of manifold beauties and graces. Each member should be a partaker of *all* this precious inheritance. But when the Episcopalian feels that it would be disloyal – or stooping – to get something from the Romanist, and the Presbyterian feels the same way about the Episcopalian, and the Lutheran is sure that his Church has all that a Christian needs, and so on, each one confusing his small bay with the mighty ocean, all are losers.

Perhaps we should mention a more private danger to the individual soul: that our sectarianism may confirm and strengthen our pride. The assurance that we, and we alone, are the whole Church is hardly conducive to Christian humility and charity. It is vital to our soul's health that we live in the awareness that all of us who belong to Christ belong to one another. Our divisions make this vastly harder to realize in mind and to actualize in practice.

We are not asking in this prayer for the "grace" to water down our convictions to the point where we can have "reunion all around, with everybody". Some impatient souls in our Church and in others want this; it is a wrong approach. Honest differences have honest reasons which must be honestly faced. What we do need, and must earnestly pray for, is a deep and sensitive concern for the peace of Jerusalem and the unity of God's people in Christ: a unity almost blotted out by the dust of partisan strife. The reunion of Christendom can come only as God gives it; but He can give

it to us only as we realize the sinfulness of our unhappy and unholy divisions.

36. *Prejudice* – Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord. – Page 37.

Most decent Americans today disapprove of prejudice and want to combat it, in themselves and in others. We are not so smugly happy in our own prejudices against other folk as we used to be. The conquest of prejudice is a triumph for the Spirit of God and of Christ, and not just an advance in democracy. But whether we are making progress or not, there is plenty of prejudice left among us – and within ourselves. It is an evil and devastating blight and it must be banished from our hearts and from our realm.

Christians above all others have reason and motivation for war to the death against prejudice, for prejudice injures souls for whom Christ died. To love our neighbor is to hate the prejudice that hurts our neighbor.

What, precisely, is prejudice?

In the essence, prejudice is *pre-judging*. It works usually along the line of such logic as this: Many Negroes steal; this man is a Negro; he is probably a thief. See what happens here: The individual is judged before he has any chance to demonstrate his innocence. He is pre-judged. And, of course, he hasn't a chance of escaping condemnation so long as the trap of this prejudice is set against him.

Some American anthropologists once made a study of a certain tribe of African natives, and they observed that these people cremated the bodies of all their dead except the medicine men. This seemed a strange exception, so they asked the chief of the tribe why they did not burn the bodies of medicine men. The chief smiled indulgently and explained that it was because the bodies of medicine men would not burn. They then asked him if it had ever been tried, and the chief was still magnificently patient as he replied: "What is the use of trying such a thing when we already know that such bodies will not burn?"

No real prejudice is any more intellectually respectable than was the chief's. A prejudice may make a victim of its object, but it makes a fool of its subject: which is also an offence in God's sight.

Prejudice is to be detested and attacked for a number of reasons, being a sin against charity and a sin against truth. In this prayer *For the*

Unity of God's People it is cited specifically as an obstacle which hinders us from godly union and concord. This is a prayer for Christians rather than for society as a whole, and the object of the prayer is the unity of the Church in the fellowship of Christ rather than the unity of the American people. It is frankly acknowledged that there is prejudice of Christian against Christian, and the fact that we are in Christ makes the scandal especially shocking and grievous.

We pray that we may be delivered from *prejudice* – from the sin and folly of *pre-judging* our fellow Christians. This is not the same thing as deliverance from difference of opinion, difference of rite and ceremony, among Christians. An Episcopalian's disagreement with a Roman Catholic on the question of the headship of the Church, or his disagreement with the Quaker as to whether there are sacraments necessary to salvation, is not to be classified as a prejudice. But if the Episcopalian falls to calling the Roman Catholic a superstitious fool, simply because he is a Romanist and some Romanists are superstitious, then his reasoning is on par with the African chief's reasoning about medicine men's corpses.

Grievous though our differences of creed and rite are, if we can break our baneful habit of pre-judging one another, we shall make one giant stride toward that unity of God wills for His family the Church.

37. *Heathen Lands* – We give thee humble thanks for opening heathen lands to the light of thy truth. – Page 38.

Many modern Christians are squeamish about using the term “heathen” to call a heathen land or a heathen soul by its proper name. It is assumed, for some reason, that when we use this word (except in fun) we are lapsing from Christian charity into bigotry and all uncharitableness. Because of his widespread prejudice against the word, this prayer which contains it is seldom heard in our churches. When a prayer for missions is indicated, the minister usually takes the one immediately preceding this one. It is an excellent prayer, and it refrains from calling the heathen by that name.

I am not scoffing at the generous attitude which lies behind this distaste for the word. Any desire to speak respectfully of all men and all nations is a thoroughly Christian desire, and not to have it is to fall short of Christian charity. But why must it be assumed that when we call a man a heathen, we are giving a bad name? The word “heathen” does not mean

“atheist,” “cannibal,” “wife beater,” or “savage”; it means simply “non-Christian”.

In this prayer we thank God for opening non-Christian lands to the light of Christ and the invasion of His Gospel. This God has done, and is doing. Are we glad or sorry? To listen to a great deal of our verbal breast-beating about the failures of Christian civilization, you might infer that the Christianization of the once-heathen Europe was one of the blackest tragedies ever to befall the planet. This sentimental nonsense, which has been known to suggest that Christians can learn some Christianity from such heathens as Confucius and the Buddha and Gandhi, is really shockingly ignorant of the facts both of Christian history and of the record of the so-called “other great world religions”. Christian culture at its lowest is higher than any heathen culture at its highest, judged by the Sermon on the Mount.

As we offer this prayer, we should remind ourselves of the important fact that we, too, were heathen until the light of Christ shone upon us and we received it. Our ancestors were originally heathen, and their lands were invaded by Christian missionaries; with what result? That all the blessings of Christian civilization are ours, and “the means of grace, and the hope of glory”. To acknowledge this is not to glory in our selves but in God. To abstain from acknowledging it, to pretend that there is no advantage in belonging to the Christian tradition, is to slander Christ.

One day when Disraeli was engaged in parliamentary battle in Commons, one of his ill-mannered opponents sneered at Disraeli’s Jewish ancestry. The imperturbable Prime Minister adjusted his spectacles and said benignly, “Let me remind the honourable gentleman that at the time when my ancestors were noblemen in the court of Solomon, his ancestors were painted cannibals on the banks of the Thames.”

There is nothing like an habitual recollectedness of our ancestral savagery to keep us humble, and grateful to God for opening up heathen lands to the light of His truth. Among other things, it has helped to lift us out of cannibalism. And if God does not continue to open up heathen lands – our own included, since we are all heathen in our own ways and degrees – to the light of His truth, we can sink back to something worse than cannibalism, and in a fearfully short time. Such is man; such is man’s need; and such is the saving power of the deheathenizing Gospel.

38. *Seasonable Weather* – Grant such seasonable weather that we may gather in the fruits of the earth. – Page 39.

It seems somehow incredible to many people that God can do anything about the weather. Many Christians of today confess to a very weak faith in the efficacy of prayer for rain or for sunshine. Prayer for courage, for grace to withstand temptation, for patience, for all such spiritual blessings, yes, certainly; prayer for healing from polio or pneumonia, yes, but less certainly; but prayer for rain in time of drought seems somehow childish, superstitious, the sort of thing that no educated person can seriously do in a scientific age.

When the skeptics take the trouble to formulate their case against prayer for good weather, they usually make much of the argument that prayer for a change in the weather is an attempt to alter the course of nature, to interfere with the orderly operation of nature's laws. There is a simple answer to this objection: Nature really has no laws of her own. What we call the laws of nature are, after all, the laws of God. Why shouldn't we alter the course of nature, by prayer or by any other means, if we do so for the benefit of God's children? If "nature" seems bent upon visiting a plague upon a city, and through mass inoculation of the citizens we ward off the plague, it may be said that we are altering the course of nature. But who cares?

Nature, and all the elements and forces of nature, are here to minister to the needs of man. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:26). This grant of authority over the lower creatures includes the weather. God places man above the clouds – in every sense of that expression.

There is another objection to prayers for good weather which carries more weight. It may be stated thus: "If we think that all we have to do, when we want rain or something else of the sort, is to get down on our knees and ask God for it, we'd better wake up to reality. We don't get things that way: at least not things like rain or sunshine." This objection has a solid and important truth in it. The truth is that God gives us intelligence; He gives us our science; He gives us our ability to plan; He gives us the kind of inventive power which issues in our trying to irrigate land when it doesn't get enough rainfall. God requires us to use all of the

resources He has given us to cope with natural adversities. It is surely correct that God is not going to change the weather simply because we ask Him to; but He may change the weather if He sees that we are doing our best with what we have, and that we are earnestly devoted to serving Him with our material bounty as well as we can.

Our Lord teaches us to ask the Father in His Name for whatever we believe that we need. To ask of God anything in Christ's Name is to ask it for Christ's service. If we ask God for "seasonable weather" simply because such weather would make life easy for us, or line our pockets, we are not asking in Christ's Name. But if we are a Christian people who want to feed the victims of famine with the fruits of our harvest, and we ask God for such weather as will make this possible, we are then asking in Christ's Name; and if it is rain we need for that purpose, rain we shall get. Or something better.

For the earth is the Lord's, and all the fullness thereof – the weather included.

39. *God's Servants in the Service of Our Country* – We give thee thanks for all those thy servants who have laid down their lives in the service of our country. Grant to them thy mercy and the light of thy presence, that the good work which thou has begun in them may be perfected. – Page 42.

Although the author of this noble prayer for use on Memorial Days is of our own generation, we do not know who he was. It is one of the prayers added to the American Prayer Book at the last revision in 1928. It is, as Massey Shepherd points out, "both a thanksgiving and a petition. The latter combines adroitly both the traditional plea of the Church for 'mercy and the light of thy presence' for those in paradise, and also, by reference to Phil. 1:6, the newer note characteristic of our American forms of prayer for the deceased, namely, that they may continue to grow in God's service." [*The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary*, page 42. Used by permission of Oxford University Press, New York.]

With the deepest respect for Dr. Shepherd's judgment in the matter, I would suggest that there is still another implication of this petition. It seems to me that we are praying for two blessings here: one to be given to these souls in paradise, and the other to be given to us. It is true that God can perfect *in them, in eternity*, the good work He began in them here in time; but it is also true that God can bring to pass *among us*, in this present

world, the fulfillment of their sacrifice. Did these men lay down their lives in the service of their country? Then, God will bring forth some great and abiding good to our country as the harvest of their sacrificial sowing. No true sacrifice offered for the good of others can ever fall fruitless to the ground. God will never permit such an outrageous defeat of the highest work of which man is capable: the sacrifice of self.

We need the reminder of this at all times, perhaps above all on such national memorial days as May 30 and November 11, when we are tempted to a sad cynicism about the “futility” of the soldiers’ sacrifice in past wars. This cynicism can make a show of reason. We remember, for example, that the men who fought in the first world war were told that they were fighting to “make the world safe for democracy.” It is notorious that the world did not turn out as promised, after they had fought and won it. The “war to end war” did not end war. Musing along such lines, we easily descend into that melancholy state of mind in which we say, compassionately, “Poor lads! They died so bravely – and so vainly!”

The man of mere common sense may be pardoned such reasoning. Any Christian should know better. He does not need to know exactly *what* God will bring to pass as the result of somebody’s sacrifice, but he certainly knows that God makes every sacrifice of love a blessing to the world.

A man came home after the last great war with an empty coat sleeve. A tactless neighbor said, “I see you’ve lost your arm.” The veteran replied sharply: “I didn’t lose it. I gave it.” That was a gallant reply. Moreover, he did not give it in vain. Our world is better and richer for every such sacrifice, in war or in peace.

40. *The Care and Nurture of God’s Children* – Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who hast committed to thy holy Church the care and nurture of thy children; Enlighten with thy wisdom those who teach and those who learn, that, rejoicing in the knowledge of thy truth, they may worship thee and serve thee from generation to generation. – Page 42.

On Armistice Day, 1948, a distinguished American made an address to the Boston Chamber of Commerce, in which he said:

With the monstrous weapons man already has, humanity is in danger of being trapped in this world by its moral adolescents. Our knowledge of science has clearly outstripped our capacity to control it. We have many men of science; too few men of God. We have grasped the

mystery of the atom, and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. Man is stumbling blindly through a spiritual darkness while toying with the precarious secrets of life and death. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living. This is our twentieth centuries claim to distinction and progress.

You may be curious to know who is this speaker who pleads with such passionate sincerity for a spiritual rebirth of our society. It is not, as you might guess, some preacher, or educator, or philosophic statesman. It is a five-star general of the United States Army, Omar Bradley. He is not alone among the military men who warn us that ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants, and of the dreadful perils inherent in this situation. Generals Eisenhower, MacArthur, Ridgway, and Marshall are among the many top ranking military men who speak this warning and make this plea.

Their plea is for a radical change in our education. If we are ethical infants, it is because we have been educated to be ethical infants. This was nobody's deliberate intention, of course; yet it has been the inevitable consequence of a theory of education which has left God and the moral law out of the classroom because they are "controversial subjects".

It is easy, and cheap, to blame our educators for our present state of religious illiteracy and moral infancy. This is not only easy and cheap, it is wrong, for it puts the blame where it does not belong. We are all guilty together.

American Christians have sat by and watched the secularization of our school system. We have seen God and the Things of God dropped from the curriculum. Some of us have been deeply anxious as this has gone on, fearing the result but feeling that nothing could be done to stop it; others have fatuously supposed that we could take care of the spiritual nurture of the nation in our Sunday schools.

In his prayer *For Religious Education* the Episcopal Church makes clear its conviction that God has committed to His *Church*, and not to civil society as such, the care and nurture of His children. The reminder of this may come a shock to many American Episcopalians who have simply taken for granted that our non-Christian public school system is divinely ordained and established.

The Church was originally the schoolmistress of God's children. She never had any right to relinquish this role, and she must strive to recover it as swiftly and as completely as possible. Just how to begin this task and to prosecute it is another question. The first thing that needs to be done is an awakening, throughout the Church, to what needs to be done: the Christianization of present-day education. Education that is not Christian is a growing menace to man.

Meanwhile, Christians must do the best they can with what they have, to put the truths of God at the center of our learning and our life. What we have to do this with is not nearly enough, but if we go about the task in the spirit of fasting and prayer, God may see us through this contemporary dark night of the human mind and spirit.

41. *No Peace With Oppression* – Almighty God, who hast created man in thine own image; Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil, and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice among men and nations, to the glory of thy holy Name. – Page 44.

Only people who are both Christian and free can offer this prayer. It presupposes that we have a freedom which we can reverently use; most people on our planet today have not. It assumes further that we have some power, of money or influence or any other means of getting things done in this world, some weapons with which to contend against evil and oppression. This, too, most people today lack. And one must be a Christian to offer this prayer meaningfully: a Christian to the extent that he lives by the Christian principle of stewardship.

Any Christian understands that much is required of him to whom much is given. The possession of freedom and power entails the obligation to use it to the glory of God and in the service of others.

We offer this prayer, then, as Christians who have some power, some means, some freedom. We realize that our power and resources are given to us for our use in fearless contention against evil; our freedom is given to us that we may use it “reverently” in the maintenance of justice among men and nations. Why “reverently”? Because we recognize its divine source. Our reverent use of His gift is the expression of our reverent regard for Him.

The American Christian and his non-Christian countryman may fight side by side against a common foe, but for different reasons. To illustrate: The non-Christian American may favor a national foreign aid program to relieve material need in depressed areas of the world, on the ground that such a program is our most practical way of combating Communism. The Christian, by contrast, has only one reason for contending against evil of any kind afflicting any man anywhere, and that is that man, made in God's image, is the victim of the evil. The debasement of man is the defilement of the image of God. The crucifixion of man is the crucifixion of Christ. Using any human being as a thing or a source of revenue or a beast of burden is a profanation of the Holy Ghost.

There are still those among us who say that the Church ought to keep out of politics and that the Christian, as a Christian, ought to concern himself with "purely spiritual" affairs – whatever that may mean. If that is the sound view, there seems little point in our praying in church for the grace to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression. Actually, however, the people who say that the Church should leave temporal and political matters alone are the ones who need to do the proving. Arrayed against them are the Scriptures, the Gospel, the immemorial teaching and practice of the Church, and the Christian mind and conscience. The Christian who does not contend against evil in any form, with whatever weapons he has, is a strange sort of soldier and servant of our embattled Lord.

42. *Singleness of Heart* – Deliver us, we beseech thee, in our several callings, from the service of mammon, that we may do the work which thou givest us to do, in truth, in beauty, and in righteousness, with singleness of heart as thy servants, and to the benefit of our fellow men. – Page 44.

Thomas Huxley can be quoted approvingly by Christians on at least one point, when he says: "It does not take much of a man to be a Christian, but it takes all there is of him."

In our Lord's great parable of the talents (St. Matthew 25:14–30), in which the man with only one talent is judged so severely, it is not at all because he is only a one-talent man. His fault lies not in his poverty of endowment but in his failure to use his lone talent in an all-out way. He did not give all of himself to the doing of the task his master had set him to do. It is for this failure to be all-out that he is condemned.

We need to study this parable carefully. It is God's instruction to us concerning a most important matter. It is to tell us, among other things, that God will not require of us a ten-talent performance if He has equipped us with only one talent. Hence it is a parable of God's compassionate understanding of us as well as of the severe exactingness of His demands upon us. The conscientious person always needs to be assured that God is not demanding of him the impossible – that is, that which exceeds his innate powers and capacities. Such a person is inclined to reproach himself for his own incapacities and limitations. Self-reproach of this kind is not only foolish and useless; it is a sinful reproach to one's Maker. If I am innately, constitutionally mediocre in ability, my mediocrity is of God and not of myself; and to complain of it is to complain of God.

It may help us to understand what is meant by singleness of heart in God's service, and better yet, to enter into that blessed estate, if we take into account certain other things referred to in this prayer.

There is first of all the fact that our callings are really "several": God gives to each one of us a work to do that is unique. If I can grip this truth, and be gripped by it, I shall spend less time viewing – with envy – what is given to other men to do, and what God gives them with which to do their work. That habit of keeping one eye cocked on our neighbor and his work when we are supposed to be doing our own is one of the most mischievous time-killers, and joy-killers, at work in the world. Every man must learn to keep his eye – both eyes – on his own field, and both hands on his own plow. That is first.

Next, there is the service of mammon from which we must pray to be delivered. By this is not meant simply working for money. There is no sin at all in working for money. We cannot serve God in the world without having some money and some things that only money can buy. It is not good Christianity to hate money. The service of mammon is rather the setting up of material gain as our chief good: living *for* money rather living *with the help of* money. The false and excessive love of money, that which makes it an end in itself, is a very serious peril to the soul. It is noteworthy that, of the twenty-nine parables of Jesus in the Gospels, thirteen – nearly half – are concerned with the use of possessions.

Then we pray for the grace to do the work which God gives us to do "in truth, in beauty, and in righteousness": a superbly moving and inspiring Christianization of the old Greek ideal of "the good, the true, and the

beautiful”. It will help me to do my work in the world with true singleness of heart as God’s servant if only I can catch, and hold, a vision of the glorious possibilities in my work: – if I will do it in the right spirit. It is a pity that more Christian poets have not glorified the theme of George Herbert’s prayer:

Teach me, my God and King,
In all things thee to see;
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for thee.

All may of thee partake;
Nothing can be so mean,
Which with this tincture, “for thy sake,”
Will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine:
Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine.

This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold;
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told.
[*The Elixir.*]

If we can only know that the work God has given us to do has a princely dignity in the eyes of God and of all the company of heaven; if we can only realize that earth has nothing to show more fair than a common person’s common life lived out with uncommon truth, beauty, and righteousness; if only these truths can be uppermost in our mind at all times, we shall be able to serve God with true singleness of heart.

43. *That Peace Which Is the Fruit of Righteousness* – Almighty God, our heavenly Father, guide, we beseech thee, the Nations of the world into the way of justice and truth, and establish among them that peace which is the fruit of righteousness. – Page 44.

There is no room in Christ’s religion for a policy of peace-at-any-price touching any matter. Jesus Christ is our Prince of Peace, but He is

Prince only of a certain kind of peace.

Tacitus has a grim line which, translated, runs: “They make a desert and call it peace.” The reference is to those “peacemakers” who make peace by plowing under all troublemakers. Nobody is likely to confuse this kind of peacemaking with the Christian kind.

There is another kind of peacemaking, however, which can be easily confused with Christ’s kind, and in fact commonly is. This is the “peace” which comes from pretending that things are other than they are, and more particularly from pretending that all is well when all is not well. We get this “peace” by refusing to look at facts which we do not want to see. It is often easy to persuade ourselves as we do this that we are exercising the high virtue of minding our own business. Imagine the kind of scandal that Sarah Cleghorn thus describes:

The golf links lie so near the mill,
That almost every day
The laboring children can look out
And see the men at play.
[Used by permission of Sarah N. Cleghorn.]

All is not well with our souls when we can live at peace with any such thing.

We could mention other kinds of peace which are easy and cheap substitutes for the peace of Christ. There is for example the “peace” we sometimes get in a home, or community of even a church, where something is badly wrong and we concentrate upon avoiding an open scandal rather than upon setting the wrong thing right and thereby risking a scandal. When a priest or a prominent layman goes wrong, we strive desperately to keep it out of the papers so that it won’t “hurt” the Church. Might it not help the Church to deal forthrightly with the matter, then to let the truth be told to the public? Our fear of scandal is, after all, a fear of truth; and when it grips the Church of the God of Truth, it is “one more devils’-triumph and sorrow for angels.”

Then there is the peace that comes from saying, “Who am I to be setting other people right? I’m no saint myself.” This one deceives many of the elect because of its surface resemblance to humility. It is, of course, selfish cowardice.

Our prayer *For the Family of Nations* rightly describes the peace of Christ as the fruit of righteousness and the work of love. We never get this peace by dodging facts, dodging work, or dodging responsibility. There are risks in it, costs to pay, wounds to suffer. All the nations of the world want peace. They shall not have peace until they discover and submit to the laws of Christ's peace, "which is the fruit of righteousness." This peace of Christ is like the happiness of Christ, in that it is never attainable as an object of our direct pursuit; it comes as the by-product of another quest. When we seek justice and righteousness and make that our goal, this peace then comes to us. This is what the nations have to learn: and most individuals likewise.

44. *Adorning the Doctrine* – Ye shall also pray for the ministers of God's Holy Word and Sacraments ... that they may shine as lights in the world, and in all things may adorn the doctrine fo God our Saviour. – Page 47.

A little girl was once overheard saying in her prayers: "O God, make all bad people good, and make all good people nice." The first part of her petition is solidly wise but calls for no special note; it is her plea that good people may be made nice which arrests us. We know what she meant: too many good people are not nice. When a little girl speaks of somebody as "nice," she means amiable, pleasant attractive. When "goodness" is not dressed in this fair garment, it can be repulsive; or if not, that it may be simply dull and unconvincing.

In Steinbeck's *East of Eden* there is this character sketch:

George was a sinless boy and grew to be a sinless man. No crime of commission was ever attributed to him, and his crimes of omission were only misdemeanors. In his middle life, at about the time such things were known about, it was discovered that he had pernicious anemia. It is possible that his virtue lived on a lack of energy. [Used by permission of The Viking Press, Inc., New York.]

One wonders if Mr. Steinbeck, as he wrote that last sentence, was pondering the root meaning of "virtue" and noting the irony in the case of George. "Virtue" means strength and energy of character; George's "virtue" – such as it is – lives on his very lack of energy. Whatever Steinbeck may have thought about it as he wrote, we may safely lay it down that any "virtue" which feeds on "lack of energy" is a virtue hardly worth mentioning.

It may be that the child as she prayed had in mind some “good” person not of the George type but of the type of the pharisee, the prig, the spiritual bully, the holier-than-thou. Certainly nobody is more un-nice, in the little girl’s sense of the word, than the good person who knows he is good. Spiritual pride is the most repelling thing of which our nature is capable. And any person who has made a good beginning toward genuine goodness in his life is subject to a subtle and relentless temptation to it.

In the Bidding Prayer we pray that to all the clergy may be given the grace to “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour” in their living. The prayer is that these men of God may be made not only good men but nice men, that they may preach the Gospel with eloquent words but even more with the eloquence of winsome and Christlike lives. We are to pray that our clergy may be made walking advertisements of the holy wares which they commend to the world. It is right that we should offer this prayer especially for the clergy, because in the eyes of the world the cleric is a more official representative of Christianity than is the layman. Yet the layman must pray for his own self that whatever goodness there is in him may be made bright, attractive, and “nice”: since he too is known and marked as one of Christ’s company. Christians are the only Bible the world reads; the world around us will not be drawn to a Saviour whose agents and representatives are “good” but not “nice”.

Is there anything we can do besides pray for this grace of spiritual attractiveness? Yes, there is, and this is fundamental: we can remind ourselves unceasingly that “there is no health in us.” Our goodness is not *our* goodness in the sense of being our achievement. If we are in any way good, God has made us good in spite of ourselves.

All goodness becomes attractive the moment it becomes humble; and goodness becomes humble the moment it learns the truth of its own origin. “There go I to the gallows – but for the grace of God.” Whoever the man was who first said that, there is one fact about him we do not need to be told: He was “nice” – attractive, pleasant, a wonderful walking advertisement of Christianity – and an adornment of the doctrine.

Be sure you do not under-rate the value of that niceness. It is not just a nice extra, it is an absolute necessity if Christ’s light is to shine through you into the encircling darkness of the world.

45. *Everlasting Damnation* – From all evil and mischief; from sin; from the crafts and assaults of the devil; from thy wrath, and from everlasting damnation, Good Lord, deliver us. – Page 54.

Hell has become for most Christians an embarrassing subject. We would like to get rid of it, to drop it from our body of vital beliefs. Trying to do this, some take very bold liberties with the traditional doctrine of hell in their endeavor to make it less offensive to the taste. Some affirm the reality of hell but deny its everlastingness. Others, working along the same line of reasoning, restrict hell to the immediate moment of transgression: “If I drink too much tonight, I shall get my hell not later than tomorrow morning.” Others concede that there may be some reality in the postmortem hell of traditional belief, but they suggest that it is not really penal – and not really uncomfortably warm. Still others solemnly warn us, in one breath, of the reality of hell, then cheerfully suggest in the next breath that, after all, perhaps nobody actually goes to it.

We pray in the Litany to be delivered from everlasting damnation. In this particular supplication it is instructive to note the sequence of terms:

From all evil and mischief — from sin – from the crafts and assaults of the devil – from thy wrath – and from everlasting damnation, Good Lord, deliver us.

When Cranmer composed it, he was probably not trying to set out these terms in a strictly logical order, starting with the originating impulse or prime mover toward damnation, and proceeding to name the particular contributory factors in order of their appearance; but it is not accidental that he names Everlasting damnation at the very end, as the final consequence of the things that have gone before. My object in mentioning this obvious fact is that we should not overlook it: “everlasting damnation” is never without its just and grave causes. We can count on the justice of God. He will not arbitrarily consign anybody to hell just to vindicate His own majesty. Indeed, we are not trifling with Christ’s own teaching when we say, as is frequently said, that God never sends anybody to hell, but that the damned commit themselves to hell. This is an entirely sound view. The “evil and mischief” and “sin” which start one on his way toward damnation are, after all, of one’s own choosing and doing; the “crafts and assaults of the devil” can be withstood and beaten off if we are willing to make the fight and to take upon ourselves the whole armor of God. God’s “wrath” will help us and heal us – if we will accept it in good season, before it is too late.

But there must come a time at last when there are no more second chances. Our probation cannot last forever. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). “Men are not in hell because God is angry with them,” says William Law, in a solemnly beautiful simile; “They are in wrath and darkness because they have done to the light which infinitely flows forth from God, as that man does to the light of the sun who puts out his own eyes.” I should love to be able to quote this statement as the last word that needs to be spoken on the subject, but it has one grave defect: You cannot imagine a normal man putting out his own eyes. But you *can* imagine a man blinding himself to the light which flows forth from God, through carelessness which becomes at last a fixed habit. One can drift toward hell without meaning to; in fact, one must inevitably be drifting toward hell if he is not driving toward heaven.

Our Lord’s words touching this matter are indeed rigorous:

Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few. – St. Matthew 7:13–14. [This translation is from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyrighted 1946 and 1952 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches.]

But what precisely is this everlasting damnation from which we pray to be delivered? The “damnation” is the state of failure to have entered into that harmony with God which is Life Eternal; and it is terribly conceivable that this state of failure may become permanent, so that when at last our life passes to its eternal portion, its condition will be that of everlasting exclusion from the realm of Light and Life.

I would close this chapter with a reminder with which C. S. Lewis closes his chapter on the same subject, in *The Problem of Pain*:

In all discussions of hell we should keep steadily before our eyes the possible damnation, not of our enemies nor our friends (since both these disturb the reason) but of our selves. This chapter is not about your wife or son, nor about Nero or Judas Iscariot; it is about you and me. [*The Problem of Pain*, page 116. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company, New York.]

46. *Earthquake, Fire, and Flood* – From lightning and tempest; from earthquake, fire, and flood; from plague, pestilence, and famine; from battle

and murder, and from sudden death, Good Lord, deliver us – Page 54.

Some of the disasters itemized in this supplication are what the lawyers call “acts of God”. This legal phrase has a specific legal purpose: to declare that no human being can be held responsible for the act and compelled to pay damages. There is no use suing anybody for damages if lightning destroys your house: It is an act of God.

But is it, in fact?

The term “acts of God” may solve a problem for the lawyers, but it creates a problem for the theologians; or rather it points up a problem which already heads the list of all religious problems. This is the problem of the relationship of God to the evils in His world.

We said that some of the disasters mentioned in this petition are acts of God in the legal sense: They originate in non-human causes which are beyond human control. Lightning, tempest, and earthquake are certainly beyond human control. Much fire and flood is also. Through medical science we are gaining some measure of control over plague and pestilence, but we are only beginning to make some progress with this. Battle and murder are definitely acts of man, but we cannot control the man or the nation which chooses to make war and to kill, any more than we can control cosmic radiation. Sudden death, when it strikes, comes as an event not of our choosing or controlling.

In this chapter we shall confine our attention to those disasters which originate in non-human causes and which are entirely beyond our control. Earthquake, fire (from non-human causes), and flood are typical. And the problem, as a problem, is simply this: If the God who loves us is also the ruler of all nature, why do such things ever happen?

Let us say, first off, with St. Paul, that “we know in part,” and only in part. The world of nature tells us some things about God and the ultimate purpose of creation, but not all. Wordsworth says of nature that

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless –
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,

Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

But with all respect to this inspired bard of nature, I wish that we could ask him to enlarge upon what he so casually mentions in those last two lines. What impulse from a vernal wood might throw some light upon the moral *evil* in man? Has he seen a snake in a lovely glade devouring a nightingale? That kind of thing happens in beautiful nature. I do not mean to charge that nature is not beautiful; but there is the problem.

The biblical teaching is that the natural order is in a state of disorder. God says to Adam the transgressor: “Because thou ... hast eaten of the tree ... cursed is the ground for thy sake, ... thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee” (Genesis 3:17–18). Whether you interpret this literally or take it figuratively, it means at the very least that the miseries which now abound in both the world of nature and the life of man are the consequence of the world’s alienation from God.

In one of his profoundest passages, St. Paul brings the natural world into the scope and purpose of Christ’s redemption. In Romans 8:18–23 [This is the Epistle for the fourth Sunday after Trinity, on page 194 of the Prayer Book.] Paul observes that “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” But now Christ has come to lift the curse from all creation. In Him the whole world gets a new birth and a new start. We have already received the “first installment” [A legitimate translation of the word in verse 23, translated in the Authorized Version as “the firstfruits” of the Spirit.] of this, but only the beginning. As more and more of the world is brought under the sway of Christ and thus reconciled through Christ to God, we may expect to see more and more light and less darkness in nature.

Assuming the truth of this view – of nature sharing with man the bitter fruits of the Fall – what sense can we make of earthquake, fire, and flood in God’s good world? The answer is that they belong to “the ugly and uncharitable twist in nature”. [F. W. Maycock, *Original Sin*, page 43. Used by permission of the Dacre Press, Westminster.] They are against God, and God will eventually destroy them. But a world which chooses to continue in alienation from God, even if it thus involves itself in torment, must suffer these tyrannies and terrors until its own fury against God be overpassed.

47. *Sudden Death* – From battle and murder, and from sudden death, Good Lord, deliver us. – Page 54.

The coupling here of “sudden death” with “battle and murder” may suggest, to many, a *violent* death as the evil from which we are praying to be delivered. The intended meaning, however, is a death occurring so suddenly and unexpectedly that one is not ready for it when it comes. Death by heart attack is as much a calamity from this point of view as death in a plane crash.

The Christian must desire some time before his departure from this earth to “make his peace” with God and the world. This is a proper and indeed an inevitable desire for the Christian. He knows that, whenever his time comes to die, he will not be fully ready for it; but he believes that if God gives him some time to make a final examination of conscience, to make amends so far as possible for all his trespasses against others, and to fortify his soul for that “long mysterious exodus of death” with a prayer and sacrament, it will be a blessed help to him in his effort to be a true Christian in his dying.

If we do not hope for an opportunity for deathbed repentance, we ought to hope for it. There is something wrong with our attitude if we do not. It is easy to say, as so many say, “I don’t believe that in five minutes one can patch up the mistakes of a lifetime. Surely God is going to take one’s whole life into account, not just the last moment of it.” Within limits, this attitude is sound and right. But we are taught of Christ that our every sin must be repented; and we cannot forget the Saviour’s word to the dying thief, whose repentance was presumably at his last mortal moment: “Today you shall be with me in paradise.” Whatever else that means, it means that no soul needs ever to say, “It is too late for me to repent.” It is never too late; neither is it ever too soon.

When we rightly pray to be spared a sudden death so that we may have time to prepare ourselves for our journey forth, we are not asking for a convenient season at the end of life, in which, by the magic of repentance, we can wipe the slate clean. People who dream of a time when they will know they are about to die and when they can “make a deal” with God to escape punishment for their transgressions, are obviously not repenting in the Christian way. Perhaps there are not nearly so many of these people as we may suppose. It is hard to conceive of any earnest Christian falling into

so crude an error about the Christian doctrine of repentance and forgiveness.

We must grant, however, that the prayer for deliverance from sudden death can be a selfish, opportunistic, and heathenish prayer. We can offer it from the unworthy motive and desire to purchase a little time at the end to make an advantageous deal with God, which will enable us in the meantime to live as we please. Against this kind of scheming within ourselves we must be constantly on guard. But our prayer to be spared a sudden death can be completely Christian if we will have it so. There are innumerable ways in which a Christian can glorify his Saviour in his dying as in his living. A holy death can be a most eloquent witness before the world to the grace and goodness of the Lord who rules the water-flood of death and who gently leads His people over. If He will give us both the time and the grace we shall need for this final service to Him on earth, blessed shall we be.

It should go without saying, of course, that if despite our prayers we are called upon to suffer “sudden death,” this too can be made to serve God’s glory, even though we do not have the privilege of a conscious sharing and cooperation in it at the moment. In another prayer (Prayer Book, page 591) we pray for “grace always to life in such a state that we may never be afraid to die.” If we seek this grace with all our hearts, constantly, each day, each moment, it will be given to us; and if at the time of our sudden death we are armed with that grace, having diligently sought it, we may be sure that our passing will be all that we would choose it to be. But we still have every right to pray that we may be spared a sudden death. We shall want some time to prepare ourselves, no matter how well prepared we try to be from day to day.

48. *Sedition, Privy Conspiracy, and Rebellion* – From all sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion; from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism; from hardness of heart, and contempt of thy Word and Commandment, Good Lord, deliver us – Page 55.

This supplication of the Litany has a colorful history. As it stood in Cranmer’s English Litany of 1544, it included – following “privy conspiracy” – the resounding clause, “from the tyranny of the bishop of Rome, and all his detestable enormities”. Queen Elizabeth ordered this removed, not out of tenderness for the Bishop of Rome, but because she had the good sense to see that the words of the Church’s common prayer ought

to be words of healing and reconciliation and never words of scorn or abuse.

The words “schism” and “rebellion” were added to the English Prayer Book in 1661. This was just after the time of Cromwell’s Commonwealth in England, which had been an evil time of sedition in the State and of schism in the Church. The American Churchman must try to see how, from the Church of England’s viewpoint, civil rebellion and ecclesiastical schism are very closely bound up with each other. From the American Christian’s viewpoint, at least as regards the American scene, sedition against the civil government and schism within the spiritual state of the Church are both evils, but hardly twin evils: the one does not automatically bring to mind the other. In seventeenth-century England, and for that matter in twentieth-century England, to attack the established Government (sedition) is to attack the established Church (schism).

What, then, should we Americans have in mind as we pray to be delivered from sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion, and from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism? Within the modern American context of Church and State in which we live, we mean the following things by these terms:

Sedition is working or plotting against the social order. Open and honest and constructive opposition to those features of the *status quo* which we think ought to be changed is not seditious. We have come to regard it, in fact, as our duty. Sedition seeks not the improvement of established social order but its destruction. To illustrate: The good socialist, or the good conservative Republican in a New Deal era, who exercises his opposition to what he doesn’t like in an open manner and with constructive intent, is not guilty of sedition; the communist is, because his avowed purpose is to destroy any noncommunist society.

Privy conspiracy is secret and unlawful plotting against the lawful rulers of the state. *Rebellion* is simple refusal to obey the law of the land. It must be understood that the Christian’s duty is to obey the civil law, and if he disapproves of the law to work for its repeal but not by defying it, except when obedience of the civil law would necessitate disobedience of the law of God.

False doctrine is religious error. *Heresy* consists, usually, of exaggerating one particular doctrine, which may be true in itself, at the

expense of Christian truth as a whole. *Schism* is separation from the Church and from the body of the faithful.

It is implied by what follows in this supplication that the civil sins of sedition, privy conspiracy and rebellion, and the ecclesiastical sins of false doctrine, heresy, and schism all proceed from “hardness of heart, and contempt of God’s Word and Commandment.” This implication may give offense to some who say that the heretic or schismatic may, after all, mean well toward God and man, so that it is unjust to accuse him of hardness of heart and contempt of God’s Word and Commandment. The point deserves respect. A person brought up in a religious body which is heretical in its teachings and schismatic – that is, separated from the body of the Catholic Church – is, we must assume, in good faith in his heresy and schism. It is only when people choose to separate themselves from the Church, knowing full well what they are doing, that they may properly be charged with hardness of heart and contempt of God’s Word and Commandment.

The original act of schism and division, however, is born of this uncharitableness and contempt of God’s will. When a person says, in effect, that he will divide the body of Christ because he does not approve of the human leaders of it, he is committing a grievous sin against his brethren. Schism is a cruel thing in itself. Division and separation among Christians is a hateful sin – and a sin of hate. If we love God and His other children, we must fervently pray to be delivered from that evil spirit which fosters discord in the State and division in the Church. And this is the true object of our prayer in this petition of the Litany.

49. *In All Time of Our Prosperity* – In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our prosperity; in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, Good Lord, deliver us. – Page 55.

To pray for deliverance in our tribulation, in our dying, and in our final appearing before the Judge of all, makes obvious sense. We know what we need to be delivered from in each of these crises. In our tribulation we need to be delivered from rebellion, from panic, from despair. In the hour of death we need to be delivered from hell and everlasting damnation. In the day of judgment we need to be delivered from a strictly just judgment after the balance-and-scales fashion; for “if thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it?” (Psalms 130:3).

But in this supplication we ask God's deliverance also "in all time of our prosperity". What do we need to be delivered from at such times? From the prosperity itself, as though that were a bad thing? We cannot think so. By prosperity we mean physical and temporal well-being: good health, a good home, all of the necessities of life, enough of the luxuries to make life enjoyable, good friends, a useful and agreeable work in the world. When such prosperity is ours, we have every reason to believe that it comes from our Father in heaven.

Yet we know too, if we know our own souls, that there comes to us in our prosperity something that is not from God. This evil companion of prosperity cannot be precisely labeled. It is a compound of complacency, greed, false security, satisfaction with things as they are and with ourselves as we are, self-congratulation, pride in self and contempt of others, all culminating at last in contempt of God. It is the root of true godlessness, an true godlessness is the fancy that we have what we have because it just happens to be here. The chief end of life is, on this principle, to grab and gobble all that we can. God fades out from our consciousness as we go along taking these blessings for granted and not considering their source in His goodness. It is from this descent into godlessness, through forgetting our absolute dependence upon God, that we pray to be delivered "in all time of our prosperity".

We must keep God continually in our minds, wills, and affections if we would keep our souls alive. This is what we find so hard to do in our prosperous times.

What all of us need, among other things, is a steady, hardworking, *fair-weather* religion, by which I mean a religion which keeps us growing in the knowledge and love of God even when God is making life most pleasant for us. This is the Christian form of the paradox expressed by the Stoic Marcus Aurelius in his remark that even in a palace life can be lived well. He saw what any wise soul must see, that it is harder to find our joy and life in God when so many created things are given to us which seem such delightful substitutes for their Creator Himself.

There is a Scotch story in which an old lady lies dying, and the minister asks her if she can face this last storm of life. "Aye," she whispers; "I thatched my roof while the sun was shining." God could deliver her from terror in the hour of death because she had kept Him on the throne of her life in all time of her prosperity.

Somebody has coined this prayer for use in time of spiritual fatigue: “From the false refuge of a weary collapse, good Lord, deliver us.” It suggests another one we need, which might run thus:

From the poverty of a prosperity which we think we have created ourselves; from the disease of a health which we think sufficient apart from thee; from the misery of a happiness which is as this world giveth; and from the hell of a present world which is good enough for us so long as we are permitted to wallow in it, *Good Lord, deliver us.*

50. *O Lamb of God ... Have Mercy Upon Us* – O lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world; Have mercy upon us. – Page 57.

The New Testament applies some strange epithets to Jesus. These came from men who were very close to Him, who knew Him in the flesh, who saw Him in action. St. John of the Revelation speaks of “the wrath of the lamb”. We find it very hard to imagine a lamb as being fierce and dreadful in his wrath. Yet this strange phrase, “the wrath of the lamb,” comes out of the firsthand experience of people with Jesus. St. John speaks of Him also as “the conquering lion of the house of Judah”. St. Matthew quotes Jesus as describing himself as “meek and lowly of heart”. It racks the imagination to take it all in: meek, and majestic; Lamb, and Lion; Friend of publicans and sinners, and King of kings; helpless Babe of Bethlehem, and Judge of all nations.

To our minds the image of the lamb suggests meekness and gentleness. Hence, when we think of the Lamb of God, we think immediately, and perhaps exclusively, of His mildness and gentleness of manner in dealing with us. But we need to remind ourselves that in the Bible the lamb is not simply, or even primarily, a symbol of inoffensive meekness. In Hebrew and in early Christian imagery the lamb is the supremely precious and sacred sacrificial animal. Christ as Lamb of God is He who by His self-sacrifice takes away the sin of the world. Thus, when St. John Baptist hailed Jesus coming out to Bethabara as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” he was impressed by the power of this omnificent Lamb who *could* do what none other could do: take the sin of the whole world upon His own shoulders and carry it away.

In the Litany, and often in the Holy Communion, we address Christ as the Lamb of God, and we beg Him to have mercy upon us and to take away our sins: to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. When we do this,

we should realize that we are appealing to His *power* as well as to His mercy.

Bishop Westcott summarized the mystery of Christ's atoning work in these words:

Christ took to Himself and bore to the grave the uttermost burden of sinful humanity, and Himself sinless and victorious over death, offers to men fellowship in the fruits of His conquest. How His life and death avails with the Father for us is a question which we have no power to answer. It is enough for us to acknowledge the supreme triumph of divine love from first to last, one will of one God reconciling the world to Himself in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. [*The Historic Faith*, page 67. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company, New York.]

How then, with what understanding and in what spirit, shall we offer this prayer *O Lamb of God ... have mercy upon us*. We know that He has mercy without our asking. Rightly prayed, this is not so much a request for something which we must ask for in order to get, as it is a kind of regenerative shudder at the recollection of what our sin has cost Christ.

But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed,
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.

Until the Christian has arisen to a vivid and painful awareness of what his own sin has cost his Saviour, he has not risen – and that is the right word – to that true contrition and grateful love which leads to newness of life.

51. *Conceived in Sin* – Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me. – Page 60.

It has been our rule throughout this book not to deal with passages in the Prayer Book which are taken directly from the Bible. For expository comment on such passages the reader should go to a good commentary on the Scriptures. But it seems advisable to make one departure from our rule, and to take up for frank consideration here a verse in Psalm 51 which is used in the Penitential Office and which is a rock of stumbling to many: “Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me.” (Psalms 51:5).

It is understandable why people should find this offensive: It seems to cast an ugly aspersion upon their mothers.

Let us say first of all what this verse does *not* mean, and cannot reasonably be made to mean. It does not mean that the sexual act which causes the conception of a human life is a sinful act. When people draw this inference from the verse, their inference is entirely groundless. The psalmist's reference is not at all to the procreative act.

What the verse says is that every soul born into this world is born into an inheritance of sin as a member of a sin-infected race. When we take these words upon our lips in the Church's Penitential Office, we are confessing our own involvement in the sin of the human family as a whole, of which we are members, and therefore tainted members. Our parents before us were sharers in this sin of the world. Hence, they conceived us "in sin" because sin had defiled everything they did, just as it defiles everything we do.

You are at liberty, as a Christian, to hold whatever theory you wish to as to *how* the human family fell into this sorry state of spiritual debility which is congenital and universal, or you may prefer to hold no theory at all as to the origin of the fact; but the fact itself, the fact of our innate fallenness, is something we cannot dispute without making nonsense of the promises of Christ, for it is from the evil consequences of the Fall the He promises to deliver us. The Christian faith assumes that we are born of sinful parents, and that their bias toward sin is something they cannot hold back from us as they give us birth.

We may dislike this verse in the Penitential Office because of what it *seems* to say. But what it actually *does* say, rightly understood, is tragically true: that we are the sinful children of a sinful race, and only God can deliver us from the body of this death.

The Holy Communion

Looking with a certain contempt upon Christianity, you observe that it has no philosophy, no metaphysic. But is not that an error? The Christian's metaphysics is – that he eats God. – Theodore Haecker.

We beseech Thee, make us living men.

– *From the Eucharistic Prayer of Oblation of Bishop Sarapion, c. A.D. 350*

Who worships Christ in bread and wine
And kneels before the high and pure,
Meets him again in street and mine
And in the faces of the poor.
– Author unknown

Come together in common, one and all without exception in charity, in one faith and in one Jesus Christ ... the son of man and Son of God, so that with undivided mind you may ... break one Bread which is the medicine of immortality and the antidote against death, enabling us to live forever in Jesus Christ.

– Saint Ignatius of Antioch, c. AD. 100.

I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. – St. John 6:51.

52. *The Collect for Purity* – Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee and worthily magnify thy holy Name; through Christ our Lord. – Page 67.

In pre-Reformation days in the Church of England the priest used to say this Collect for Purity in his private preparation for the Eucharist. Archbishop Cranmer wisely decided that it should be made a part of the public liturgy so that both priest and people might use it together in preparation for the great offering and sacrifice of the Eucharist.

It is above all a prayer for cleansing, offered by sinful people as they draw near the All-Holy. It is a peculiarly searching prayer, very simple and yet very deeply penetrating. Massey Shepherd reminds us that the whole of Christian worship is actually involved in the right offering of it, and that it relates our corporate prayer to each Person of the Holy Trinity: [*The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary*, page 67. Used by permission of Oxford University Press, New York.] (1) The Father is He who “seeth in secret” (St. Matthew 6:6); it is to Him that all our desires and secrets are known. (2) It is the Holy Ghost, indwelling and sanctifying us, who alone can make us able to offer true worship, as St. Paul says: “The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought ... and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans

8:26–27). (3) Such worship as is “according to the will of God” must be worship “through Christ our Lord,” since, as Dr. Shepherd expresses the point, “only in [Christ’s] entire self-offering can we see what it means to love perfectly and magnify worthily the holy Name of God and fulfill in our lives the Father’s will for us – entire devotion and unfeigned praise.” [*Ibid.* Page 67.]

The sincere and intelligent offering of this prayer requires of us several things.

First, we must realize that all the secret places of our lives lie open to God’s unceasing inspection. We can deceive our brethren, and we can deceive ourselves; but we cannot deceive God about what is inside us, and we are never so ridiculous as when we try to put on a convincing act before God. As true worshipers, therefore, we come to Him without any mask or pretense, realizing with awe and trembling our nakedness before Him, our complete openness to His all-searching gaze.

Next, we realize that our real life is the life that is lived in our minds, hearts, and will. The man whom God sees and judges is the inner man. Hence it is the thoughts of our hearts which we are offering to Him as our true self and being. As they are, these thoughts of our hearts are nothing to be proud of, and we dare not offer to God our actualities as a holy and acceptable sacrifice: We dare offer Him only our possibilities. This is what we are doing as we ask God to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Him, as we cannot now. We are asking God to make us fit to love and serve Him as we ought. This He will do by cleansing the thoughts of our hearts – that is, by sanctifying the inner man, our new self in Christ.

In sum: We are praying, here and everywhere throughout the Eucharist, to be made into Christlike beings, as one ancient Eucharistic Liturgy so strikingly expresses it:

O Lord, make us living men.

53. *God Spake These Words* – Then shall the Priest, turning to the People, rehearse distinctly The Ten Commandments; and the People, still kneeling, shall, after every Commandment, ask God’s mercy for their transgressions for the time past, and grace to keep the law for the time to come. – Page 67.

Whatever one may think about the propriety of reciting the Ten Commandments as a part of our preparation for the Eucharist, the fact

remains that it is still a required part of the Liturgy. It has become popular in recent years to disparage the use of the Commandments in the service. Some nonsense is spoken against the Decalogue in the discussion of this question, such as the complaint that the Commandments are “negative” – and we must positively be positive about all things at all times. The weightiest contention against the use of the Commandments in the Communion Service is this: that they really should be used for the private examination of conscience, hence before coming to the service rather than in the service itself. With this contention I wholly agree.

While we still have the Commandments in the service, however, we ought to use them – at least once each month as the rubric (page 67) requires; and we can reap spiritual profit from using them with understanding.

Here are several suggestions as to their use by the communicant.

First, you can examine your own self, privately, by the rule of the Commandments. As you do so, bear in mind that God requires of us more than a literal obedience of each Commandment. For example, it can hardly be said that you are adequately obeying the Second Commandment simply because you do not say your prayers before an image of Apollo which you have carved. This Commandment asks such questions of you as these: Do you take money too seriously? Do you take yourself too seriously? Do you take sex, or business, or fun, or any other creature so seriously that it comes in any way between you and the Creator?

Examine your life by the Commandments, frequently; and keep in front of you the splendid Christian version of the Commandments in the Prayer Book Office of Instruction (pages 288–289). [The reader who wishes to think through the Christian implications of each Commandment may wish to consult my book devoted to this subject, *Living the Ten Commandments*.]

The people’s response, which is said after each of the Commandments, is an instructive statement in what it implies: *Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law*. This implies two things: first, that we have already broken this law, in its spirit if not in its letter, and for this reason we must cast ourselves upon God’s mercy; and second, that we cannot obey God’s laws except as God pours into our hearts that grace which will dispose and enable us to do so. We are praying here for what we may call the grace of obedience, the grace of law-abidingness. How badly we need it – all of us! The truth is as Jeremy Taylor states it in

Holy Living: “Obedience is a complicated act of virtue, and many graces are exercised in one act of obedience. It is an act of humility, of mortification and self-denial, of charity to God, of care of the public, of order and charity to ourselves and all our society, and a great instance of victory over the most refractory and unruly passions.”

One other point may be helpful. As we begin the service of the Eucharist, it is well to be reminded that God is working, through this Blessed Sacrament and other means of grace, to get on with His work of changing us from our present selves into those Christlike beings which God wills us to become. Now, He can get on with this recreation of us only as we master our side of this two-sided project which is self-subjection to God, our achievement of perfect obedience and plasticity in His hands. St. Thomas Aquinas gives this truth in classic theological expression:

The highest perfection of a thing is that it should be subject to that which perfects it. Matter is not perfect unless it be subjected to form, and the atmosphere is not beautiful save when it is transformed by sunlight, and the soul is not perfect except it be subject to God. [In his *Sermon for the Feast of All Saints*.]

If the Commandments do nothing else for us, they do provide us a means of doing something that is a necessary precondition of growth in grace: the practice of voluntary and loving obedience. When we obey God’s Commandments, not out of fear of hell but out of desire to obey our Father because we love to obey Him, we are complying with the first law of growth; and God will give us the growth.

God spake these words long ago. He still speaks them to those who unfeignedly love Him.

54. *Hear What Our Lord Jesus Christ Saith* – Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. – Page 69.

This familiar feature of our Communion Service, our Lord’s twofold Summary of the Law, has been added in order to satisfy a demand which the Christian mind is bound to make: that we recognize that love is the fulfillment of the law. We are, after all, New Testament Christians and not Old Testament Jews, and we cannot let our liturgy suggest to anybody that

the Christian life is nothing more than a matter of abstaining from worshipping graven images, and from murder, theft, and adultery. After we have kept all the Commandments, we are still woefully unprofitable servants, for dare we to say that we have loved God with all our being, and our neighbor as ourselves?

The Christian life is primarily a life of positive loving rather than of mere negative abstention from this evil and that. This must not be taken to mean, however, that there is no need for negative commandments for the Christian. Even a loving Christian may need to be commanded, “Thou shalt not forget thy wife’s birthday.” If we love God, we want to know what things come between God and ourselves, so that we can abstain from them; love demands negations of that kind. If we love our neighbor, we are most eager to hear and obey any thou-shalt-not which will keep us from injuring our neighbor.

We cannot hear the Ten Commandments, and search our hearts as we hear them, without realizing that we have broken them all, in thought, word, and deed. Nor can we hear God’s law in our Lord’s positive enunciation of it without being likewise convicted by our conscience. We have not loved God with all our heart and soul and mind, and we have not loved our neighbor as ourselves. Lord have mercy upon us!

But can our love be commanded thus? Can we love to order – even on God’s order? To many, this is a very real question. They are taking the teenage view of love – that it is something that happens to you, a divine disease that makes you its happy but helpless victim. The Bible knows no such kind of love, either between God and man or between man and man. We are commanded to love God, and our neighbor, with the biblical, not the Hollywood, kind of love; and this love is not at all a matter of emotion but a matter of will and purpose. To love God is to fix our will upon the devoted doing of His will. “We love him because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

It is not difficult to love God with warm fervor if, to begin with, we have some faint awareness of His goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men. Our love for God is born of our sense of His unspeakable gifts to us. If, then, you have trouble in loving God as you ought, do not try to whip up within yourself an emotion which you feel ought to be there if you are “in love” with God; just sit down with the fact that every good thing in your life is a gift of His love for you. Out of this awareness of God’s care for man springs all of man’s care for God. To love Him with all our heart

and soul and mind is to give our whole being back to Him as our response to His love.

Rightly to obey this first and great commandment is to obey the second, which is like unto it as a matter of course. To love God is to love all that God loves; because all of His creatures are precious to Him, they become precious to us as we grow, by love, into a sharing of his mind and will. St. Catherine of Siena states the principle of this quite adequately:

The reason why God's servants love creatures so much is that they see how much Christ loves them, and it is one of the properties of love to love what is loved by the person we love.

We must be sure that our love for our neighbor is this kind of love, and not any other: that we love our neighbor because God loves him, and as lovers of God we share God's mind toward all His beloved. What we often call love is nothing more than selfish desire, in which the "lover" seeks his own pleasure or gain at the expense of the one he pretends to love, as is written of one such "lover":

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force,

Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.

When you love another in the mind of the Lord, you have but one object: his good, not your gain. This is admirably stated by Father M. C. D'Arcy, S.J.: "Love between persons means that each wants the other to be more himself." [*The Mind and Heart of Love*, page 166. Used by permission of Henry Holt & Co., New York.]

One more word about this commandment to love: As Christians understand the purpose and nature of human life, to love is to live, and God is commanding us here to do nothing less than to wake up and live. "We know that we have passed from death to life," St. John casually remarked in his day, "because we love the brethren." And St. John or any other saint would tell you, quite simply and plainly, that you have no business talking about the right ordering of life until you have begun to love God with all your being, and your neighbor as yourself. Until you do that, you are still waiting to be born.

55. *Lord, Have Mercy* – Lord, have mercy upon us. *Christ, have mercy upon us.* Lord, have mercy upon us. – Page 70.

This ancient cry for mercy known as the *Kyrie eleison* [From its original Greek text – *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison*; “Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.” The added “upon us” of our English version is an addition, having no counterpart in the Greek.] is generally interpreted as a penitential prayer, most appropriately placed at this point in the Liturgy. The conventional interpretation is this: We have listened to the law of God for us as this is enunciated in either the Ten Commandments of our Lord’s Summary of the Law; we have examined ourselves as to our keeping of God’s law, and we have found ourselves ignominiously guilty; so now we cry *Mercy, Lord!*

This is an entirely permissible understanding of the matter, and it is probably the best conception for our ordinary use; but it is only fair to acknowledge that this penitential idea is a medieval and modern interpretation of the *Kyrie*. It is not the original. The following historical note may deepen our understanding:

Originally, these phrases (of the *Kyrie*) were not designed to be the penitential petitions for pardon which we might now assume, so much as acclamations of devotion. *Kyrie eleison* is a full Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Hosanna* (“Save now!”) which, unlike the Greek word, has succeeded in retaining its connotations of festal adoration. An adequate rendering of the *Kyrie eleison* of the primitive Church would perhaps be something of the order of “Thou art the Lord, the fount of all mercy!” Certainly it was in such a sense that the pagans raised it as a shout of praise to the Emperor. The Eastern Christians appropriated it as a recurring respond to the suffrages of the Greek litanies, ending with a solemn repetition of it from three to twelve times over. Gregory the Great seized upon this use in multiples of three as symbolizing the Holy Trinity, and made this interpretation explicit by changing its second occurrence to *Christe eleison*. [*Prayer Book Studies, IV, The Eucharistic Liturgy*, page 171. Used by permission of The Church Pension Fund, New York.]

It should be possible, I think, for any Christian worshiper to join in the *Kyrie* with both its original and its modern implications in mind. Consider the original meaning first: *Lord have mercy!* approximates the meaning of the Hebrew *Hosanna* which means *Save now!* Used in this

sense, the *Kyrie* is an acclamation of Christ our Saviour as He comes to us, in the Body and the Blood, in the Eucharist. He is our true Messiah; in every Eucharist there is a messianic coming of the Lord to His people, to impart to them His saving life; and so, as we ritually prepare for His coming, we ritually hail Him at His drawing nigh: “*Hosanna! Thou art the Lord, the fount of all mercy!*”

The alternative understanding of the *Kyrie* is, as we have noted, simply penitential. Having heard God’s law, we know our failure to keep it, so we cast ourselves upon His mercy.

You need not choose between these two interpretations. If you find it hard to join in the *Kyrie*, using it in both ways at the same time, as an acclamation of Christ at His coming and as a plea for mercy and pardon, you might alternate between the two uses. There are times and occasions in the Christian Year and in one’s own spiritual life when one interpretation of it seems more immediately relevant than the other. Interpret it and apply it to yourself according to your need.

56. *More Blessed to Give Than to Receive* – Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. – Page 72.

We have come now to that part of the Eucharist known as the Offertory. It consists of our offering to God certain outward and visible tokens of our own selves: bread, wine, and money. These offerings are the “alms and oblations” referred to in the Prayer for Christ’s Church. The oblations are the bread and wine, the alms are our money placed on the alms basin. The bread and wine represent the fruits of our toil which we now offer and present to God for His blessing, and the money represents the profit from our toil which we now offer to God, beseeching Him to accept and use it in the service of His will.

The celebrant is directed to turn to the people and to say this or some other Offertory sentence (pages 72–73): “*Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*”

In actual fact, we are not giving anything to God in the sense of taking something that is now ours and making it His, since “*All things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee.*” Everything that we call our own is, in fact, God’s property already. Yet God wants us to have somewhat to offer Him, so He gives us things that we can give back. He

does not need this, but we do, if we are to become what God wants us to become: the children of the Father and brothers of Christ in our new character. *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* Why? Because it is literally God-like. Our God is a giving God, not a getting God.

How shall you join worthily in this holy offering? It is terribly easy to let it become an empty ritual. The bread and the wine are taken care of, you vaguely suppose, by somebody else: The altar guild buys it, the priest and the acolytes handle it in the sanctuary, and you have no contact with it until it comes to you in your Communion as the Body and Blood of Christ. As for your money, you make a pledge, and you hope it is a decent one for a person of your means; you do so realizing that the church has its bills to meet, so its members must pay their way – hence this collection. This is a most natural way of regarding the Offertory action: but it is fatal to the whole mystical enterprise of the sacrificial exchange – to our giving ourselves to God and His giving Himself to us. In the Offertory you must put your *self* on the alms basin and be yourself presented to God at the Altar.

Too often we speak of coming to Holy Communion in order to get something – to receive the heavenly manna which God offers to His people in this sacrament; and our words betray our interest – which is in getting. We cannot remind ourselves too often that God's great purpose is to change us from what we now are, crass grabbers and getters, into what He is determined to have us become, self-givers in the image of Christ. Always think of your Communion in terms of God's purpose with you. To be sure, He wants you to receive the manna which He gives; but He wants you to give yourself to Him as He gives Himself to you. When you offer the holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist rightly, you bring up to the Altar your present spoiled and sinful self, and you bring back from the Altar – *Christ-in-you*. It is in giving yourself to Him that you receive Him, even that you are made into Him.

In the exchange between heaven and earth which is the eucharistic Sacrifice, to give is to get. All depends upon whether, as you join in the Offertory action, you give your whole self, body, mind, money, work, will, and all that is you, holding nothing back.

57. *The Whole State of Christ's Church* – Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church. – Page 74.

Older readers of this book may remember that the preface to the Prayer for Christ's Church used to read "... the whole state of Christ's Church militant." At the last revision of our American Prayer Book the word *militant* was dropped, for the very good reason that we now pray not only for the Church on earth but also for the Church in paradise – "all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear." This prayer for the faithful departed was added at the last revision, thus enlarging the range of our prayer to include souls beyond the grave.

The term *whole state* has two distinct meanings. (1) "Whole" means "healthy". We are praying that God will give His saving health and holy strength to all members of His Church. (2) "Whole" means "complete". We are offering our intercessions now for everybody in the Church, for every part of the Church: all Christian rulers, bishops and other ministers, the laity as the people of God, all Christians in trouble, and all Christians who have passed from the Church on earth into the Church in paradise. Concerning this prayer let us ponder this comment on it by Bishop John Higgins:

This is the prayer that encompasses the whole wide world. When one of Napoleon's generals in the Egyptian campaign scoffed at a certain plan of procedure as being "mere imagination," the Little Corporal flashed back: "Imagination, yes. But imagination rules the world!" This prayer for "the whole state of Christ's Church" demands the use of imagination; it insists that we summon up in the eye of the mind the far-flung fellowship which confesses the Name of all Names. The "whole state of Christ's Church" means the desperate, hungry, uprooted Chinese Christian who only lately learned the Name that can set this world on fire. It means the converted Hindu Untouchable who has found a new way of life and a new hope in Christ. It embraces the islands of the Pacific and penetrates the coldest vastness of Alaska and the Yukon. It includes the malarial swamps of the Upper Amazon and the Araucanian Indians a thousand miles nearer the Horn. To see these pictures, and for a few moments to dwell on them, commending the far-flung fellowship to the love and care of God, is to get the global point of view that every Christian needs. [*This Means of Grace*, page 74. Used by permission of Morehouse-Gorham Co., New York.]

To this true statement we may add the reminder that to enter deeply into this prayer of wide-ranging intercession is to get not simply "the global

point of view” but an even broader range of loving concern: a cosmic point of view which embraces not only this present world but the larger and eternal world into which have passed those who have departed this life. Our prayers are to embrace all whom the love of God embraces; and nobody ever passes beyond the range of the love of God.

58. *The Punishment of Wickedness and Vice* – We beseech thee also, so to direct and dispose the hearts of all Christian Rulers, that they may truly and impartially administer justice, to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of thy true religion, and virtue. – Page 74.

Many Churchmen are dissatisfied with this petition as it stands. The main objections are two: the first, to the limitation of our intercession to *Christian* rulers, and the second to the prayer for the *punishment of wickedness and vice*. The two objections are distinct and unrelated. Let us consider them in order.

It is true that the term *Christian Rulers* is a survival from an age when most nations within historic Christendom were governed by Christian rulers. This is not true today. Many heads of states, even within Christendom, are neither Christians nor rulers. In a modern democracy, such as the United States or France or Canada, nobody actually rules. In theory, at least, the people rule themselves through their elected representatives, who are not rulers. In democratic monarchies such as England and Norway the monarch reigns but does not rule. It was very different back in the sixteenth century, and even down into our own generation. Today, there are very few Christian rulers left in the world. Hence this term is widely considered unsatisfactory. The President of the United States may be a Christian, but he does not rule; the men in the Kremlin may rule, but they are not Christians. And the Church ought to pray, in her great prayer of universal intercession, for the President of the United States, the dictators who rule Russia and China, and all men everywhere who carry on the government of nations.

Such is the view of those who criticize the present phrasing of this petition, and I must say that I share it. It may be recalled that in the early ages of Christianity, when the Church was savagely persecuted by the civil power of the Roman Empire, Christians prayed constantly for the Emperor and for all others who ruled in the kingdoms of men – that through their labor God would maintain peace and order. Those early Christians were

surely right in their sense of the sacred responsibility which Christians have for upholding the civil authority in their prayers.

It is true, of course, that the Prayer for Christ's Church is ostensibly a prayer for Christians only, and not for all men. Perhaps the right solution is to change it into a prayer for all men and for all the world. Meanwhile, we can always add to this prayer for all Christian rulers our own prayer for the heathen rulers and the democratic functionaries: in a word, for all who carry on the government of all men and nations.

The other common objection is to the term, *the punishment of wickedness and vice*. There seems to be a general feeling that this expresses a sub-Christian and outmoded concept of penal justice. In some dioceses this feeling is especially strong and the clergy tempted to say "*correction of wickedness and vice*," but I fail to see that it would be an improvement. There is nothing unchristian in the proposition that wickedness and vice ought to be punished. We are to love the sinner but to hate the sin. If this is the Christian principle relevant to this issue, it follows that we shall have to go right on punishing wickedness and vice whenever we can and as much as we can. Only so can the wicked and vicious *people*, for whom Christ died, be corrected.

We dare not ask God's blessing upon any policy or practice of vengeance against the wrongdoer, but this is not what we are doing when we pray that civil authorities will be enabled to punish wickedness and vice.

God is on the side of law and order, and God is not mocked. The transgressor must be made to see that he has taken a hard and unprofitable way. If we keep a good grip on this truth, we shall not go wrong in our understanding of the prayer for the punishment of wickedness and vice.

59. *True and Lively Word* – Give grace, O heavenly Father, to all Bishops and other Ministers, that they may both by their life and doctrine, set forth thy true and lively Word. – Page 74.

A minister once sent some books to a bindery to be rebound. Among them was a New Testament. When the books came back, he was astonished to find on the cover of the Testament this label: T N T. The binder's explanation was that he could not find room on the new binding to spell out

The New Testament in full so he had inscribed only the initial letters of those three words. Remarks Halford E. Luccock, who tells the story:

Not a bad name for the New Testament! It is TNT. It explodes, and pieces come down in unexpected places. We are told nowadays by cautious souls that nowhere in the Bible is there a text reading, “Go ye into all the C. I. O. strikes and preach the gospel,” or, “Go ye into all the diplomatic conferences and preach the gospel.” That is of course true. Nevertheless when the great truths of Jesus’ message are spread abroad they explode and come down in the midst of industrial conflicts and suave political preparations for war. [Quoted in *Treasury of the Christian Faith*, edited by S. I. Stuber and Thomas Curtis Clark, page 45. Used by permission of Association Press, New York.]

There is another pertinent story, about two girls in vehement debate on their way home from Sunday school. One of them was heard to exclaim: “I tell you, Barbara, the Bible does not end in Second Timothy; it ends in Revolutions!”

It does so in historic fact. This is the Bible’s record to date; it has been the most revolutionary book in the world. The Word of God which speaks to us through the Bible is the most lively thing that ever explodes under the sun – *whenever it does explode*. This is an important and necessary proviso. Albert Schweitzer remarked, some time after the first world war, that the words of Jesus are like those unexploded shells lying around on the old battlefields waiting or somebody to come along and touch them off. Once touched off, these old shells will show themselves very “lively” indeed. But somebody must touch off these explosive words of Jesus – put them into action.

We could give ten thousand illustrations. One will do. Consider the word of God that is contained in Romans 13:14: “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.” A young worldling was doing his best to run away from God when he stumbled upon this word. It exploded, and out of that explosion came Augustine the convert, on his way to becoming the great bishop, doctor, and saint. As Augustine tells us about the impact of that word of God upon him, he shows us that it was the pent-up power of God within that word which killed the old man and brought the new man into being. This was the Lord’s doing. Yet, some human agent had to touch off that word. In this case there were several such human agents. Augustine’s mother Monica; his friend and teacher, Ambrose of Milan; and other Christians he knew, were the human triggers who exploded the divine shell. These people, to

use the Prayer Book expression “both by their life and doctrine set forth” – to Augustine – “God’s true and lively Word.” So the Word of God, as it came to Augustine, was not simply a word printed on parchment and made up as a book; it was a Word incarnated, made flesh, lived out, by some people he knew. In the Bible he found *written down* that Word which made a new man of him; in Monica and Ambrose he found that Word *set forth*, spelled out in flesh and blood, lived out, actualized.

God’s Word is true, but it becomes lively, vital, living, life-giving, only when somebody becomes a human Bible. It is only in a secondary sense that the Bible, as a book, is itself the Word of God. Rather, the Bible is the written record of that Word of God as it was spoken of old to the patriarchs, prophets, and saints. The Word is made flesh in Jesus. Hence the Word is primarily a Person rather than a book. Jesus is God speaking to us. He is the true and lively Word whom “all Bishops, and other Ministers” are to “set forth, both by their life and doctrine.” An appalling burden, this, even upon the holiest of men! Who is sufficient for it? No man, by himself. Yet we are assured by this same Word that if a man will accept the calling to set forth Christ not only with this doctrine but with his life, as a minister of Christ, the enabling grace will be given to make it possible. The grace of Holy Orders which is given to every man ordained to the sacred ministry is this enabling power of God by which a man can set forth the Word in his own life. The man needs only to rely upon this grace to accomplish this impossible ministry.

As for the layman, he too is “ordained,” at his Confirmation, to this ministry of showing forth the glory of Christ the Word not only with his lips but in his life. Every Christian is called to be a little Christ. And this is how God goes on speaking His true and living Word to each oncoming generation: through the truly apostolic succession of people who are living Bibles – known and read by the world.

60. *Ye Who Do Truly and Earnestly Repent* – Ye who do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life ... draw near with faith – Page 75.

This invitation to “draw near” to God in the Holy Sacrament reminds us of the three conditions which God requires us to meet if we are to partake of this Food to our comfort, that is, to our strengthening. These

conditions are repentance, love, and faith. Let us consider each one briefly, trying to sharpen our apprehension of its precise meaning.

(1) *Repentance*. When we repent, we *acknowledge* our sin – face up to it, own it as our own, detest it, and confess it to God; we resolve not to do it again; we intend to lead a new life, and we actually set our feet on the path of that new life.

It is most important to understand that repentance is not only being sorry for our sins, it is doing something about it: confessing, resolving, and actively turning from the evil to the good. When God instructs us as to how to go about repenting, He says to us what he said to His people long ago by the voice of His prophet Isaiah: Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well. ... Isaiah 1:16–17. Repentance is ceasing to do evil and learning to do well, and we have not repented until we have put our feet on God’s way and are actually walking in it.

Let us understand, then, this being so, that we cannot leave our repenting until this moment in the Eucharist when we take the time to confess our sins. We are to bring our repentance to church with us – as something that we have taken care of before coming, and we have already entered upon.

(2) *Love and charity*. Many people are troubled in mind about this requirement that they be in love and charity with their neighbors – that is, with all men – when they come to Holy Communion. Of course, we all ought to be troubled about it in the sense of having a deep concern of conscience. But we must not suppose, as so many seem to suppose, that to *love* somebody is necessarily to like and admire that person to the *n*th degree. If that were correct, we could love only those people who are exactly to our taste. Thank God, this is not required of us. Christ bids us love even our enemies. “Your neighbor” is anybody and everybody. He may hate you; he may make peace between you impossible. He may have a character which you are morally bound to detest. We often say that as Christians we are to love the sinner while we hate the sin. This is true. And we can always rise to it, with Christ’s help.

To be in love and charity with your neighbor is to *will* his good – to wish for it with all your heart, to pray for it, to work for it. In this connection we should always remember what God is seeking to do with us through Holy Communion – to build us up in Christlikeness. He is seeking

to develop *the mind of Christ* in us. He must have our cooperation. We cooperate by practicing Christ-mindedness. His mind toward all men is the mind of love. There is nothing softly sentimental in this, and there is no pretense that the souls whom Christ loves, and whom we must love, are other than they are. They may be most unlovable in their own being; but He loves them anyway, and He asks that He may show His love for them through us. Hence our minds must be disposed and directed accordingly: We love others because Christ in us is loving them through us. Before coming to Holy Communion we are to see to it that we have our minds and wills thus aligned in love.

(3) *Faith*. Are you in *faith* as you come to Holy Communion? It is easy to answer this question glibly and wrongly. You believe in God, you profess the Faith – the body of essential Christian beliefs; and so, you may conclude, you have faith and enough of it. But the right question to ask is this: Do I live by simple *trust* in God, or do I put the trust by which I live in my own self, or in luck, or in other people?

The Holy Communion is a sacrament of simple trust.

We come, obedient to thy word,
To feast on heavenly food;
Our meat the Body of the Lord,
Our drink his precious Blood.

[*The Hymnal 1940*, Used by permission of

The Church Pension Fund, New York.]

We do not know *why* God chooses to feed and sustain us in this way, nor do we know *how* He does it. How good it is for us that we do not! For, as it is, we can come in *trust* – relying upon God’s promise rather than upon our own understanding; and nothing could be better for us.

What you have to do, to put yourself into a state of faith, is to practice simple trust, “casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7). You should remind yourself at all times that you never do anything by your own strength, but only by the strength which God supplies you. To trust that you will always get whatever you need from Him is faith.

True faith does not, of course, excuse us from thinking, or from doing our work. We do not ask God to do our work for us. We ask Him for the

strength we must have to do it. “Our sufficiency is of God” (2 Corinthians 3:5).

61. *The General Confession* – Then shall this General Confession be made, by the Priest and all those who are minded to receive the Holy Communion, humbly kneeling. – Page 75.

Instead of taking up the words and phrases of the General Confession piecemeal for our examination, it may be more helpful to consider the passage as a whole. In other chapters of this book we deal with such matters as man’s sin and God’s wrath against sin.

The first fact about the General Confession which strikes us is its extremely penitential language: “We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness”; “The remembrance of [our sins] is grievous unto us; The burden of them is intolerable”; and by our sinning we have provoked most justly God’s “wrath and indignation against us”. This is very strong language. Is it too strong? Do we mean what we say in these words? Can we bring ourselves to mean it?

Such are the questions which an honest mind must raise about the General Confession. In Chapter 2 of this book, under the title “No Health in Us,” we have dealt with the main question here, as to our sincerity when we use such severely self-condemnatory language in our worship. To what has already been said under that heading we may add the following relevant consideration:

This is a *General Confession*, in which we confess not only our own private and personal sins but the sin of the whole world. As Christians, we are not only vicarious sufferers – making the pain of others our own; we are vicarious penitents – making confession and reparation to God for the sins of our brethren. In claiming this, however, and in acting upon it, we must never forget that we are involved in the actual guilt of our guilty world. We are members of a sin-infested social order – or social disorder. If we look at *all* the sin of the world and realize that we must repent and make reparation for it, we begin to see that the extremely penitential language of the General Confession is, after all, not a shade too strong.

Let us, then, offer the General Confession with this understanding: that we are the Church of God, coming to meet our Lord in His eucharistic tryst with us; and we come to Him as the sinful representatives of our sinful world.

62. *God's Wrath and Indignation Against Us* – We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, Which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, By thought, word, and deed, Against thy Divine Majesty, Provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us.
– Page 75.

Some Christians find it hard to make this expression their own. Their objection usually follows some such reasoning as this: God is our loving Father, even when we sin grievously; He never for a moment ceases to be that, under any provocation; and no loving father, even among sinful men, exhibits wrath and indignation against his children.

I hope that this is a fair statement of the position which the objectors take. Now let us consider it. There are two fundamental questions here, which must be answered together: (1) Can God have wrath and indignation against His creatures? and (2) What is the wrath of God?

If there is such a thing as a real wrath of God, it must be very different from what is normally regarded as the wrath of an angry man or an enraged bull. A man flying into a temper tantrum is a man at his worst, and he is less than a credit to his species. If wrath must be of this sort, the very suggestion of a wrath of God is fantastic.

But the Bible speaks often – in the New Testament as well as the Old – of the wrath of God, and it is quite clear that the biblical writers do not have in mind any kind of a bad temper of God's part.

Dr. Paul Tillich offers the following observation upon the biblical conception of the wrath of God:

The idea of the divine wrath has become strange to our time. We have rejected a religion which seemed to make God a furious tyrant, and individual with passions and desires who committed arbitrary acts. This is not what the wrath of God means. It means the inescapable and unavoidable reaction against every distortion of the law of life, and above all against human pride and arrogance. That reaction, through which man is thrown back into his limits, is not a passionate act of punishment or vengeance on the part of God. It is the reestablishment of the balance between God and man, which is disturbed by man's elevation against God. [*The Shaking of the Foundations*, page 71. Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.]

This is correct, as formal theology; but you may be wondering what it has to do with your personal sins and God's wrath and indignation against you. The answer is simply this: Whenever you sin, in any way or in any degree, your sin is a "distortion of the law of life" and an attempted "elevation against God" on your part. You may not regard it as such at the time you choose to commit the sin. Let us suppose that you have borne false witness against your neighbor. Why did you do it? You did it, you may say, because you did not like that particular neighbor; and he recently did you an injury for which you wanted to get even; and besides, like everyone else, you enjoy gossiping. In this autopsy upon your sin you make no mention of God, because He does not seem to be immediately involved. Why should He be wrathful and indignant about it – since you weren't gossiping about Him.

In some such fashion as this we all make light of our sins, by pretending that our sin is not an assault upon the Most High and Most Holy One. But whatever we may think our sin to be, it is in fact our attempt to displace and to dethrone God. And as we go on sinning, God must go on reestablishing order by putting us back in our places. This continuing process of the divine reaction against our continuing rebellion is the wrath of God; and we who experience it must experience it as real wrath and indignation against us.

The wrath of God is, of course, not the last word about God. God is love; yet love arrayed against evil is wrath. It is because God loves us with so pure and perfect a love that His wrath must be a fire to consume all of our sin.

63. *Comfortable Words* – Hear what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith unto all who truly turn to him. – Page 76.

An English writer of the seventeenth century speaks of a good schoolmaster as "comforting" a boy with a birch rod. This vividly reminds us that in historic English usage the word "comfort" has a wider range of meaning than our present-day usage suggests. To us of today *comfort* means soothing, consolation, and little more than that. But the root meaning of the word is *strength*: to comfort is to give strength, in this original and basic meaning of the word. That schoolmaster's rod "comforted" the errant schoolboy by helping to make a man of him.

Whenever *comfort* or *comfortable* is used in the Prayer Book, we are to understand that the original sense, that of *strength* and *strengthening*, is intended: “Hear what strengthening words our Saviour Christ saith unto all who truly turn to him.”

Consider how these three words of Christ strengthen us. The first is His invitation to those who travail and are heavy laden to come to Him for His refreshment. The strengthening fact here is the accessibility of the Bread of Life to us who faint by the way. There is open to us a source of supernatural strength which will make us more than conquerors: The Lord Himself is our Strength, and He is at hand to impart His saving health to us. The second and third of the strengthening words, the quotations from St. Paul and St. John, speak to us of Christ’s mission to save sinners and the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice of Himself to secure the forgiveness of our sin. These words strengthen us by assuring us of the goodness of the God with whom we have to deal. They are also comforting in the modern sense of consoling. The realization of our sins fills us with sorrow, if we have a true realization of them; and to us in this condition, the consoling news of God’s forgiveness is a part of the strengthening we need. But there are other situations in our lives when the comforts of God will be more like the schoolmaster’s rod.

The essential truth is this: that God will always give us what we most need for our strengthening at any particular moment. He will give this to us, it should be added, without asking our opinion as to what we most need. He does not ask us what will comfort us most; He decides, then gives it to us. Do we mourn? We are comforted with the balm of His love. Do we doze? We are comforted by the sharp prick of His love. Do we play god to ourselves? We are comforted with the chastening rod of His love. The comfort we most *need* is what we get.

Bernard Iddings Bell gives us an inspired interpretation of the first of the Comfortable Words, that which reads, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.” He observes that the phrase translated “I will refresh you” more truly means “I will give you pause for a moment,” and he goes on to say:

It is indeed a part of the work of Christ to solace the suffering, comfort the sorrowful, strengthen the dying; but His main concern, nevertheless, is not with invalids; it is with the virile contenders. It would be a mad army that was made up entirely of doctors and Red

Cross nurses. The business of an army is not to bind up, but to fight. When a Christian dies rightly, a veteran dies, battle-scarred. No Christian asks to be protected from the challenges of life. The sick should be seeking not a home for incurables, but a place of recovery, that they may fight once more. The sorrowful ought to be consoled by the sound of a trumpet, calling again to a battle in which loved ones have fought and died. In everything Christ does for us there is a note of vibrant activity, instant conflict. But when we have striven and intend to strive, when we have been shriven that we may the better strive, nervous tension can relax, and one may feel flowing for a moment through one's veins new vigor, foretaste of that state of being where

Wish and fulfillment can severed be ne'er
Nor the thing prayed for come short of the prayer.

[*The Altar and the World*, page 64. Used by permission of
Harper & Brothers, New York.]

64. *An Advocate with the Father* – If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our sins. – Page 76.

The last of the three Comfortable Words probably gives most of us more confusion than solid comfort. The Standing Liturgical Commission of the Church feels so strongly that this passage no longer accomplishes its purpose in the Liturgy that it proposes [*Prayer Book Studies, IV, The Eucharistic Liturgy*, page 235. Used by permission of The Church Pension Fund, New York.] that this verse be replaced by the following one, from the same Epistle:

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness – 1 St. John 1:9.

The text affirms the same truth about God and ourselves as the one (1 John 2:1–2) we now have, and it is already comprehensive. We may hope that eventually it will be adopted as the concluding Comfortable Word. Meanwhile, we have the present one to interpret to ourselves as best we can.

The basic metaphor behind it is juristic. An advocate is an attorney, a pleader, a friend at court; and this Comfortable Word is meant to assure us that we have a Friend in the court of heaven whose intercession for us is always enough to secure our acquittal. But we must rely solely upon

Christ's intercession for us. There is really nothing that can be said for us, no case that can be made for us, nothing in our own behavior that merits a favorable verdict. The only thing that can be said for us is that our Advocate with the Father is Jesus Christ the righteous, and *He*, not our own performance, is the Propitiation for our sins.

At this point, the Scripture ceases to be strictly juristic. When you engage an attorney to be your advocate in an earthly court, you do not ask him to offer to the court *his* virtuous behavior; you are asking your attorney simply to convince the court, if he can, that you are not guilty as charged. But we look to our Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, to do something very different for us. To begin with, we plead guilty before God. We confess our sins and cast ourselves upon the mercy of God. But we know that God is just as well as merciful, and that the All Holy One is of purer eyes than to countenance iniquity. God's only reply to man's sin must be His wrath and condemnation. And we have sinned. What, or *who*, can be the necessary propitiation for our sins? There is only One: He who knows no sin in His own spotless Being, and who takes upon Himself the sins of the world.

We are not to think of Christ's propitiation for our sins as being in any sense a placating, mollifying, or appeasing of God. We must recognize that the great work of accomplishing our atonement with God is something that we cannot fully understand, visualize, rationalize, or humanize. God does it on His own level of being. God the Son, the Beloved of the Father, offers His own perfect Life in sacrifice and substitution for us, and God the Father accepts us because He accepts His Son and we are acceptable in the Beloved. To trust in Jesus Christ that He will save us from the judgment of condemnation and rejection which our sin deserves is to trust that He, our great High Priest and Intercessor, can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We come to Him literally "without one plea," without a single word that can be said in our defense. John Wesley stated our case before God most accurately:

I give up every plea beside —
Lord, I am damn'd; but Thou hast died.

How Christ secures our acceptance with the Father, by offering His sinlessness for our sin, is something we gratefully and humbly leave to Him. But He bids us rest our souls, and our "case," on the truth and the sufficiency of it.

65. *All the Company of Heaven* –

Lift up your hearts.

Answer. We lift then up unto the Lord.

Priest. Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.

Answer. It is meet and right so to do.

It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God.

Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious Name; evermore praising thee, and saying,

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, Lord God of hosts, Heaven and earth are full of thy glory: Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High. Amen. – Pages 76–77.

For the purpose of understanding it, we should consider as a whole these sections of the service which are known technically as the *Sursum corda* (“Lift up your hearts” *et seq.*), the Preface (“It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty” *et seq.*), and the *Sanctus* (“Holy, Holy, Holy,” *et seq.*).

It should be noted, first, that at the moment when the celebrant said *Lift up your hearts* the whole service moves into a new stage and onto a new level. The consecration of the bread and wine, to be the sacramental Body and Blood of Christ, actually begins at this point. The Consecration Prayer on pages 80 and 81 is not the consecration but rather the center of the consecration. We enter upon the consecration stage of the Eucharist at this point when, following our cleansing from sin in the confession and absolution, we lift up our hearts unto the Lord.

We may even say that at this point the service, the eucharistic action, moves from earth to heaven, and we along with it. It is true, of course, that heaven is on earth and earth is in heaven, since heaven is where God is, and God is everywhere; nonetheless, we are conscious that we are in heaven only when we know that we have received God’s forgiveness, and that He is taking us up to Himself. We who are the Church on earth have this consciousness of being in heaven at this moment in the Eucharist when we lift up our hearts to the Lord and ascend with Christ into the heavenly places.

There seems no need to offer an explanation of the keynote of thanksgiving which is struck by the Preface. Every Christian realizes, as a first principle, that we all live in God's world as charity children. He asks of us only one thing in return: that we try to live solely by faith – that is, by our awareness of His love and care. It is therefore our bounden duty to thank Him, at all times and in all places, not only with our lips but in our lives.

This gratitude by which we live we now bring with us as our eucharistic offering to Him. Bringing in our hands nothing except our loving gratitude, we ascend into heaven on the wings of prayer and praise, and God lifts us up into His august Presence, where we fall down before Him crying the great Trisagion – “Holy! Holy! Holy!” As we do this, we are not alone. No man ever comes to God alone. We, the Church on earth, do not even come to Him as the Church, and only that. As we enter into His courts with praise, we are surrounded by a great cloud of fellow adorers of God: angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven.

Precisely who, and what, are the beings referred to by these terms? They are angels and men. We are sure that we men are not the only beings whom God has created in His own image, to be His children and His servants. The existence of purely spiritual beings – beings who, like us, are God's children, but, unlike us, do not have material bodies – is an article of our faith. Our Lord teaches us that angels exist, and He tells us some things about their nature. [A few key passages are the following: St. Mark 12:25, 16:5; St. Matthew 18:10, 24:31, 25:31; St. Luke 2:13, 16:22, 22:43.] In our worship and adoration we experience a real communion, a community, a solidarity of interest and purpose, with the wonderful fellow lovers and servants of our common Father.

The company of heaven whom we join in the adoration of the King of Love are all of His human children. We are especially mindful of those who have passed from our life of flesh and time into the nearer Presence of God. Never are we more profoundly and happily sure of their nearness to us than when, in the *Sanctus*, we join them in falling down before Him whom to know is life eternal and whom to serve is to reign.

We may be few in number as we gather in our parish church to offer to Him our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. The sermon may be dull, the hymns may drag, the sanctuary may be dingy. You may be tempted to discouragement, disillusionment, loss of faith in the value and reality of the

whole strange enterprise which is Christianity. Be not deceived by what you see with the eye of flesh. You are not alone, or few in number, or weak; you are a citizen of no mean city:

Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator ... – Hebrews 12:22–24.

66. *A Full, Perfect, and Sufficient Sacrifice* – All glory be to thee, Almighty God, our heavenly Father, for that thou, of thy tender mercy, didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption; who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world. – Page 80.

As we begin our consideration of the key words and phrases of the Prayer of Consecration (pages 80–81), we should remind ourselves that this great prayer is really a grand unity, albeit manifold in its elements. Let us take a moment now to fix in mind the overall pattern of it.

The opening section, beginning with the words “All glory be to thee” and ending with “until his coming again,” we may call the Thanksgiving. [We are using the terminology of, and following the scheme used by, the Standing Liturgical Commission, in *Prayer Book Studies. IV. The Eucharistic Liturgy.*]

Then comes the Institution (“For in the night” to the end of the first paragraph).

The paragraph beginning with “Wherefore” and ending with “procured unto us by the same” is the Oblation. The next paragraph is the Invocation. The concluding paragraph is the Supplication.

We may itemize the constituent elements of the prayer thus:

The Thanksgiving. A solemn ascription of glory to God for the gift of His Son Jesus Christ to accomplish our redemption, followed by the recollection of Christ’s institution of the Holy Communion as a perpetual memory of His sacrifice.

The Institution. A precise repetition of the words spoken, and the actions performed, by Jesus at the Last Supper, in the upper room, when He instituted the sacrament.

The Oblation. The formal offering to God of the bread and the wine.

The Invocation. A prayer invoking the Holy Spirit upon the bread and wine, that by the operation of God they may be to us the sacramental Body and Blood of Christ.

The Supplication. A petition for the particular benefits which God promises to faithful partakers of the Eucharist.

Our present concern is with the opening section, the Thanksgiving.

Even the casual reader will note in the Thanksgiving an obvious insistence upon asserting that Christ's sacrifice on the Cross was the *one and only* "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice ... for the sins of the whole world." There is an historical reason for such a strong emphasis upon this truth in our Liturgy. At the time of our separation from Rome in the sixteenth century, our Anglican fathers had to deal with a very widespread medieval notion that Christ was sacrificed anew in every "sacrifice of the mass." [Cf. the language of Article XXXI of the Articles of Religion: "The Offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone."] So deep-rooted was the pernicious error in the popular mind and devotion that it seemed necessary to include in the reformed liturgy of the Eucharist this very specific reminder of the sufficiency and unrepeatability of the sacrifice on Calvary. In the Eucharist we plead before God the one sacrifice made for us by Christ; we do not repeat that sacrifice.

"Sacrifice" and "oblation," as here used, mean virtually the same thing: offering to God. Christ's sacrifice for us consisted of His whole life of perfect obedience of the Father's will in seeking to restore us to God. In the course of this lifelong self-oblation He encountered the hatred of the world, which crucified Him. His sacrifice thus culminated on Calvary, where He showed Himself literally faithful unto death; but we should think of His sacrifice as being not *confined* to Calvary: His death was the heroic culmination of it.

We should bear in mind, also, that Christ eternally intercedes for us with the Father, and this is the continuation in heaven of His oblation and sacrifice for us. In the Eucharist we are praying the Father to look upon us and to receive us *as we are in Christ*, and not as we are in our own nature, and on our own performance and deserts. The first two verses of William Bright's communion hymn contain probably the best commentary on the mystery of Christ's sacrifice and our sharing in its benefits through the Eucharist:

And now, O Father, mindful of the love
That brought us, once for all, on Calvary's tree,
And having with us him that pleads above,
We here present, we here spread forth to thee,
The only offering perfect in thine eyes,
The one true, pure, immortal sacrifice.

Look, Father, look on his anointed face,
And only look on us as found in him;
Look not on our misusings of thy grace,
Our prayer so languid, and our faith so dim;
For lo! between our sins and their reward,
We set the passion of thy Son our Lord.

[*The Hymnal 1940*, Hymn 189. Used by permission of The Church Pension Fund, New York.]

I have left to the last the most difficult word in this passage: *satisfaction*, in the description of Christ's death as accomplishing "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and *satisfaction*, for the sins of the whole world." Our Liturgical Commission proposes that we drop the word at the next Prayer Book revision, and denounces it as "unscriptural, and unethical." [*Prayer Book Studies, IV, The Eucharistic Liturgy*, page 252. Used by permission of The Church Pension Fund, New York.] It might be better to drop the word, as being not strictly relevant to the eucharistic action; but I must dissent from the Commission's judgment of the word itself and the truth it represents. It may be "unethical," but then the whole business of a purely innocent person taking upon himself the sins of the guilty, and by his sacrifice taking away the sin of the world, is "unethical" – because it is beyond all ethics and all strict justice. As for its being "unscriptural," while it is true that the New Testament does not apply the word "satisfaction" to Christ's work, it does speak of Him as bearing the sins of many and of making expiation, propitiation, and atonement, which is what the term implies in Christian doctrine.

The following passage from *Doctrine in the Church of England* is a sound presentation of the doctrine of satisfaction:

The Cross is a satisfaction for sin in so far as the moral order of the universe makes it impossible that human souls should be redeemed from sin except at a cost. Of this cost the death on the Cross is the expression. In it the moral order is not abrogated, for the Cross alone fully expresses and reveals the horrible nature and result of sin. But because this is achieved, the moral order can be, and is, transcended. In so far as the sinner responds to the love of God, the chain of consequences, in accordance with which sin, left to itself, must inevitably issue in spiritual death, is broken though.

Thus the Cross is a “propitiation” and “expiation” for the sins of the whole world. Christ, by the submission of His sinless life to the consequence of sin, created the conditions in which God can and does take the penitent sinner into the full fellowship of His Kingdom and treat him as His child. The redeeming love of God, through the life of Jesus Christ sacrificially offered in death upon the Cross, acted with cleansing power upon a sin-stained world, and so enables us to be cleansed. This is the meaning of such symbolic language as the phrase “they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14).

Thus the atonement ... truly inaugurates “a new covenant” – that is, a new system of relations between God and man.

[*Doctrine of the Church of England*, page 92. Used by permission of The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, London.]

67. *A Perpetual Memory* – Jesus Christ ... did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death and sacrifice, until his coming again. – Page 80.

The Eucharist is a perpetual memory of Christ’s death and sacrifice, yet it is more than a memory; certainly more than a mere memory or a bare memorial. The only way to grasp the meaning with its full force is by examining the passages in the New Testament which describe the words and actions of Jesus as He instituted the sacrament.

In St. Paul’s account of it (1 Corinthians 11:24–25) the phrase “this do in remembrance of me” is attributed to Jesus. (Paul’s version of what happened in the upper room is earlier than any of the others which we have, and there is no reason to question its soundness; so we shall assume that the

details as he gives them are correct.) In the Greek, the most important word in this phrase is *do*, and here it clearly means “perform this action”. Whatever Jesus was actually doing at the time that He said “this do in remembrance of me,” we are to do. His actions consisted of His giving thanks to God over the bread, breaking it and distributing it among His friends, and likewise blessing and distributing the common cup of wine.

The next point concerns “in remembrance of me”. A. G. Hebert makes the important observation that “the word ‘remembrance’ is in Hebrew far more concretely conceived than in English; it implies not a mere subjective remembering, but a real coming back of the thing remembered.” [*The Throne of David*, page 190. Used by permission of Morehouse-Gorham Co., New York.] This is hard for our modern minds to grasp, until we consider a few biblical cases and put ourselves into a “biblical state of mind”.

In 1 Kings 17:18 we find the widow of Zarephath expressing her fear that the presence of Elijah in her home will “bring to remembrance” her past sins in such a way that they will kill her son. Clearly, she has in mind a bringing to remembrance much more positive and potent than a mere subjective recollection of her past misdeeds; no mere mental recollection of things past ever killed anybody. Another example may be found in Numbers 5:15, where it is implied that a certain ritual act will bring “to remembrance” the iniquity of a guilty person with terrible effect, if the sin was indeed committed.

In these passages, and everywhere, the Bible recognizes more clearly than does our modern faulty philosophy that the past is always a real part of the present, and is therefore always operative in the present. Hence no act of God or man is ever past in the sense of being over and done with. If Christ once died for us on a cross, this is present and eternal fact; if He once accomplished our redemption by an act of pure sacrifice, this is present and eternal fact. Thus the Eucharist, by bringing this to our remembrance, is not turning our gaze backward to an heroic death and gallant sacrifice which is now far away in the long-ago; in bringing it to our remembrance in the true biblical sense, the Eucharist opens our eyes to that immortal sacrifice of Christ which is present and eternal Reality.

68. *Until His Coming Again* – Jesus Christ ... did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious

death and sacrifice, until his coming again. – Page 80.

The reference in the Consecration Prayer to our carrying on the Eucharist “until his coming again: is an echo of St. Paul’s statement (1 Cor. 11:26): “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.” In the early Church, when it was taken for granted that the Lord would come again at any moment to gather His elect into His Kingdom, the Eucharist was much more eschatological [That is, related to the “Last Things,” and especially the second coming of Christ.] than it is in its present form, in the sense that its language expressed a vivid looking and longing for the End. As time went on, and Christians came to feel that the Lord was going to let the present stage of history go on for a while longer, this note of tense expectancy gradually faded from the Eucharist as from all other phases and functions of Christian life. In this connection we may consider some observations of Dr. Walter Lowrie, in his valuable study of the Eucharist:

According to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus Himself used Eternal Life as an equivalent for the Kingdom of God. It was preserved essentially only so long as the Eucharist was consciously oriented towards the future, as it was for example in the exclamation, *Maranatha* (O Lord, come!), which we find in the earliest liturgical document, contained in the “Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,” and in St. Ignatius’ description of this sacrament as “the drug of eternal life” or “the antidote of death”. Even St. John, who was inclined to suppress the more definite expressions of eschatology, associated with the Eucharist the hope of the *resurrection* of the dead. The association of Eternal Life with the Eucharist was the primary significance it had for early Catholicism, and we cannot now afford to ignore it. It is ominous that in our liturgy the only definite reference to the last things is the brief phrase, “until he come,” which we take from St. Paul. [*The Lord’s Supper and the Liturgy*, page 6. Used by permission of Longmans, Green & Co., New York.]

For some reason Dr. Lowrie overlooks some other words in our Liturgy which are quite definite references to the Last Things. I refer to the words of administration, in which the communicant is told as he receives the sacrament that it is to preserve his body and soul unto everlasting life; and to the post-communion thanksgiving, in which we thank God that we are “heirs through hope” of His everlasting kingdom, and we declare that

the Eucharist assures us of the heavenly inheritance. Even so Dr. Lowrie is right in his contention: we give too scant an expression in our modern Liturgy to an aspect, a function, of the Eucharist which is of primary importance. The Eucharist is to keep us going, to sustain us on our march, while we wait for our Lord to come again, with glory, to bring this present order (or disorder) to an end and to establish fully His Kingdom on earth.

To view the same truth from another angle: the Eucharist is preeminently Christ's way of manifesting His presence and power to His faithful soldiers in this present time, which is the time between His first coming, nineteen centuries ago, and His second coming, whenever that will be. In the time of His first coming, He was physically present with us. Now, He is sacramentally present with us, and will continue so "until his coming again," when He will establish a new mode of presence with us, and the sacrament of His presence will no longer be needed, at least in its present form.

Thus the Eucharist is the great sacrament of this waiting time, as we go about the tasks our Lord assigns to us in preparation for that Day of the Lord when He will call His faithful ones from labor to fulfillment and glory. Through the Sacrament, He strengthens us for our work; in the Sacrament, He assures us of His presence even now, and His love and care.

But the Eucharist is also the great sacrament of *alertness and expectancy*. In the earliest Liturgies a dominant note was that of *Maranatha* – "O Lord, come!" Father Benson of the Cowley Fathers once said in a retreat address: "A priest ought always to say Mass with that expectancy; he ought to be prepared for the Host and everything to fall away and Jesus Himself to appear." [Quoted by Henry R. C. Lovell in the anthology *Behold, Thy King Cometh*, edited by Brother Edward, page 102. Used by permission of Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Ltd., London.] This is right; but, of course, the lay worshiper should share in that expectancy.

We should never celebrate the Eucharist without the distinct understanding that the Lord Jesus might come again before we leave the sanctuary.

69. *This Is My Body ... This Is My Blood* – For in the night in which he was betrayed, he took Bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you; Do this in remembrance of me. Likewise, after supper, he took and

Cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this; for this is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me. – Page 80.

It seems clear that all liturgies of the Eucharist from the beginning have included, somewhere in the text, the words of institution which Jesus spoke at the time when He instituted the sacrament. The Church endeavors at this point in her eucharistic action to repeat exactly those words and actions of her Lord which originally constituted this new covenant of His presence with us. Our effort to do this is an expression of our desire to obey literally His command: *Do this*.

Here we must consider the question of the “moment of consecration”. In the Middle Ages there developed a theory that the bread and wine were changed into the Body and Blood of Christ at one particular moment of consecration, and that this moment came at the recitation by the priest of these words of institution. This explains why, in the Roman rite today, the elevation of the elements by the celebrant at this point in the service – that is, immediately following the words of institution – is regarded as the most solemn moment of the Mass; for that which was mere bread and wine a moment ago, before these words were spoken, is at this point presumed to be the Body and Blood of Christ. Our mother Church of England repudiated this theory at the Reformation. In the Anglican view, the Prayer of Consecration as a whole is the act of consecration.

Why, then, do we regard the repetition of these words and acts of institution as so important, indeed essential? This question is well answered by a Lutheran liturgical scholar:

The use of the [words of institution] is more than the recital of an historic event or the citation of authority to engage in this holy proceeding. It is a solemn, corporate act of prayer, an exalted liturgical celebration, in which the worshiping congregation apprehends and holds aloft the divine promises, claims the divine warrant, and invokes the divine blessing. [*The Lutheran Liturgy*, by Luther D. Reed, page 340. Used by permission of Muhlenberg Press, Philadelphia.]

We should notice that the words of institution are actually addressed to God the Father, as a part of the Thanksgiving. Thus we are recalling before God (and not, of course, reminding or informing God) that we are now

undertaking this holy action because He has instructed us to do so, through His Son our Saviour.

The next question to consider in this: Just what was it that Jesus did at the Last Super, concerning which He says to us “Do *this* ...”?

Jesus sat down with his friends for a supper which He knew would be His last supper with them. It was on or shortly before the Jewish feast of the Passover. This feast celebrated God’s deliverance of His people Israel from their bondage in Egypt, and part of its ritual consisted of a fellowship meal. It would only confuse us to enter into a detailed examination of the Jewish Passover, which is both complicated and obscure. What is to our purpose is to note that Jesus and His apostles sat down for their last supper together with the Passover mystery in their minds. Jesus had come to the conclusion (or else He had known it from the beginning) that, through the completion of His sacrifice by His death, He would accomplish an eternal Passover victory for all men, thereby delivering them from a more grievous bondage than the Israelites had suffered in Egypt – the bondage to sin, Satan, and death.

And so, as Jesus presided at the table, He took the bread and the wine which was their repast; as “Head of the family” He recited the prayers of blessing over them which were customary; and to these traditional table blessings He added those ineffably mysterious words: “This is my Body ... This is my Blood ...” He promised that whenever His friends should assemble in His Name and “do *this*,” they would thereby make a remembrance of Him. We should note that He does not make a specific promise of some specific blessing to be received by them if they will do this. In fact, He simply gives us the command to do it, without telling us what we shall receive if we obey.

But the faithful were not long in finding out what they would receive in their faithful doing of the Eucharist. After the Lord’s death, resurrection, and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, the Church entered upon her career of watching and waiting for her Lord until His coming again. We are now in this in-between period; and we find that in and through this sacrament of His abiding presence our Lord comes to us, abides with us, and sups with us. Moreover, He imparts His own life to us through the Sacrament in such a way that we become partakers of His divine life and nature.

This is my Body ... This is my Blood. But how can such things be? After all our efforts to explain, to rationalize, to reduce to a formula, it remains a mystery. There can be no doubt that our Liturgy expresses a very definite belief in the objective Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist: His presence manifested to us in, by, and through the consecrated bread and wine. Our reason for believing this is our conviction that when Christ said *This is my Body, This is my Blood, and Do this in remembrance of me,* He meant that He would come to us, in the Body and the Blood, whenever we do this. And so every true Anglican will say, with the greatest of Anglican doctors, Richard Hooker,

What these elements are in themselves it skilleth not, it is enough that to me which take them they are the body and blood of Christ, his promise in witness hereof sufficeth, his word he knoweth which way to accomplish; why should any cogitation possess the mind of a faithful communicant but this, O my God thou art true, O my soul thou art happy! [*Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V, lxxvii, 12.]

70. *This Our Sacrifice* – And we earnestly desire thy fatherly goodness, mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. – Page 81.

Is the Eucharist a sacrifice? This question has occasioned much bitter controversy among Christians. Unfortunately, the disputants have more often than not leaped into the fray without first looking carefully at the word. If by the eucharistic sacrifice you mean that each time the Sacrament is celebrated there is a new sacrifice, the answer – at least the Anglican answer – is emphatically No. But if the eucharistic sacrifice is a re-pleading, a re-presentation of the one perfect Sacrifice of Christ, the answer is Yes.

What we see Christ doing on Calvary and in His whole incarnate life among men – offering Himself up to God in sacrifice for His human brethren – He does eternally, although in heaven His eternal Sacrifice is carried on without the agony and struggle which characterized the earthly and temporal manifestation of it. “The Eucharist is the visible and external means by which the Church on earth takes part in the true and eternal sacrifice offered by Christ the High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.” [H. Edward Symonds, in *Priesthood*, edited by H. S. Box, page 37. Used by permission of The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, London.]

The authors of *Doctrine in the Church of England* summarize well our understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice:

It is noticeable that all over the world, outside Christianity, sacrifice has been prevalent, and has then tended to disappear. Mohammedanism and Buddhism in their purer forms have dispensed with it. A living theology of sacrifice survives in Christianity, and we believe that Christianity has here preserved for mankind something which is of permanent value, resting as it does upon some of the deepest intuitions of the human spirit. For sacrifice is a uniquely vivid expression of profoundly important truths: (1) the absolute claim of God upon man, all that he is and all that he has; (2) the inability of man to meet that claim in his own person, and his need for an adequate and acceptable offering; (3) the necessity upon man's part to express his worship in an outward act of rite; (4) the unity between man and God, and so between man and man, which is expressed in the fellowship meal which is frequently part of the sacrifice. [*op. cit.* Page 142. Used by permission.]

If we are right in assuming that these are the primary tests of true sacrifice, it is clear that the Eucharist meets them all. (1) In it, God claims us and takes us as His own. (2) In it, we come to God not in our own persons – that is, not pleading our own earned right and privilege of coming to Him – but rather we come as members of Christ, acceptable to God in Christ the Beloved of God. (3) The Eucharist is an outward rite, and this satisfies our craving for some outward means of expressing our sacrifice. (4) In the Lord's Supper our unity with God and with one another is duly expressed in the fellowship meal which is so common a feature of religious sacrifice.

The Eucharist is “this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving” because we offer it in grateful remembrance of the inestimable love which has redeemed us and has given to us this and all other means of grace, by which we are raised from the death of sin to life in the heavenly places with the King of love.

71. *A Reasonable, Holy, and Living Sacrifice* – And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee. – Page 81.

Enough has been said in the past several chapters to show that Christian sacrifice is a many-sided activity. In the sentence we are now considering is expressed another aspect of sacrifice: self-offering.

The sentence is an adaptation of St. Paul's appeal to the Romans (Romans 12:1): "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Let us consider these three significant adjectives – *reasonable*, *holy*, and *living*, as referring to our sacrifice of ourselves to God.

It is *reasonable* that we should offer ourselves, our souls and bodies, to God, because to this end we are born, and for this purpose we are made: to live unto God and not unto self. The life of self-offering and self-giving seems fantastically unreasonable to the "natural" man; but we who are in Christ have a new and different mind in us, whereby we see that dying to self and living to God is the only true life. It is as reasonable to offer ourselves to God as it is reasonable to use an axe for chopping wood rather than for slicing bread – because offering ourselves to God is the particular purpose and function for which we are made.

Then, our self-offering to God is *holy*: not because of any holy excellence of our own, but because the Holy Spirit in us is moving us to give ourselves to God. All true self-giving is holy in that it is the very life and movement of God in man.

Finally, our self-offering is a *living* sacrifice. Precisely what St. Paul had in mind when he chose this term to characterize the Christian's self-offering to God is not too clear. Kirk makes this plausible suggestion:

The essence of sacrifice, even in Old Testament times, lay not in the death of the victim, but in the 'offering of the life' to God. With animal sacrifices, this could only be achieved by slaying the beast and presenting its blood. But St. Paul sees that the truest sacrifice that man can offer to God is that of *living* according to His will. [Quoted without identification of the source by John Knox in *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. X, page 580.]

In this last sentence is contained the clue to our right understanding and application of the idea. We are offering to God our whole life, *our souls and bodies*, and we know that God will accept our offering, not by taking from us our life, but by giving it back to us and saying: "Use it in the world, where I place you, in the doing of My will."

72. *Amen* – We beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service; not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom, and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end. Amen – Page 81.

The *Amen* at the close of the Consecration Prayer should be said by all the faithful with a special fervor. All well-instructed communicants have been taught this. The usual reason given is that the recitation of this *Amen* is the layman's way of taking his necessary part in the consecration of the Eucharist: his *Amen* identifies him with what the celebrant is saying and doing at the Altar.

This conventional modern interpretation of the *Amen* is entirely sound in itself, but it is strictly modern: It is not the original, primitive, Christian understanding of the *Amen* after the consecration of the bread and wine. It may deepen and enrich our own use of it if we examine the early Christian *Amen*. [I am indebted to Dom Gregory Dix's treatment of this matter in *The Shape of the Liturgy*, page 128f.]

The word itself is Hebrew, and the Christians who were devising a liturgy in Greek decided to leave this Hebrew word as it stood, without trying to translate it. From that day to this, we have kept this Hebrew word in our Christian vocabulary, untranslated for the reason that its full meaning cannot be expressed in Greek, Latin, English, or any other Western tongue.

We commonly try to explain *Amen* by saying that it means "So be it!" This is so misleading as to be practically incorrect. This misunderstanding goes back to the Greeks who translated the Old Testament into Greek in the pre-Christian era, and who mistakenly rendered the *Amen* in the Hebrew text by a Greek word, *genoito*, which means, "Would that it might be so!" This misconception of the primary sense of the word has passed from those Greek translators down through the ages to us.

Our only way of avoiding this error is to go behind it to the Hebrew original, which is a root that means "fixed," "settled," "steadfast," hence "true". From this it follows that *Amen* properly implies not so much the wish or hope "Be it so!" as the triumphant proclamation "It *is* so!" The New Testament writers, being Jews themselves, clearly understood this as their Gentile successors did not. No less than sixty times in the Gospels, Jesus is quoted as saying "Amen, Amen, I say unto you ..." The word on

the Lord's lips means this: "What I now declare to you is true as God is true, for the words you hear from me are the words of God."

If we use the *Amen* with its original sense, we shall use it primarily as an affirmation of the truth of God. We are saying, not simply *Be* it so; we are saying, *It is* so: God be praised.

So here in the consecration: We offer this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit; and we are not saying, "Would that the Father might hear us and receive us; would that Christ's intercession for us might avail for our pardon and acceptance; would that we might be enabled by the Holy Spirit to offer our prayer and sacrifice in such a way that God in heaven might hear and heed!" An *Amen* which means no more than this is a poor, weak thing. But we pray that it might be so, knowing that it already *is* so, for He who is rightly called the *Amen* of God* Himself assures us that it is.

*[Revelation 3:14: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness."

The reference is to Christ. To understand what is meant by calling Christ the everlasting Yea of God is to understand what is meant by calling Him the *Amen*. God's *Amen* to us is His manifestation of Himself to us; our *Amen* to God is our response of adoring acknowledgment. It is, normally, our last word of answer and response – of "talking back" to God, and most fittingly: for what more can we say than this word which is itself practically above and beyond the range of human discourse?]

73. *Bold to Say* – And now, as our Saviour Christ hath taught us, we are bold to say, Our Father. – Page 82.

In the Anglican rite of Holy Communion, the Lord's Prayer is prefaced by some words that puzzle many: "We are bold to say, Our Father. ..." Why are we *bold* to say it? Because we have no natural right to say it at all. We are not God's children by nature, but only by adoption and grace. The only child of God who is that by virtue of His being "begotten, not made" is Christ. In this miracle of adoption which takes place at the baptismal font, we are taken into God's family as brothers of Christ Himself. [This paragraph is taken from my fuller treatment of this subject in *Living the Lord's Prayer*, page 31f, published by Morehouse-Gorham Co., New York.]

Sixteen hundred years ago, St. Ambrose of Milan meditated upon this mystery of our adoption and spoke these wise words:

For by grace are ye saved, says the Apostle. Therefore there is no arrogance here, but faith; to proclaim what thou hast received is not

pride, but devotion. Therefore raise thine eyes to the Father who has redeemed thee through the Son, and say *Our Father*. A good boldness that, but modest. Thou callest him “Father” as a son; but do not claim anything specifically for thyself. He is the Father of Christ alone specially, he is Father of us all in common, because he begot him alone, us he created. Therefore say thou also through grace, *Our Father*, that thou mayest deserve to be a son. [*St. Ambrose on the Sacraments and on the Mysteries*, trans. By T. Thompson, ed. By J. H. Strawley, page 101. Used by permission of The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, London.]

I know of no modern statement of the mystery which is simpler and clearer than the following, from the pen of C. S. Lewis, who says this about our speaking of God as *Our Father*:

Those words mean quite frankly, that you’re putting yourself into the place of a *son* of God. To put it bluntly, you’re *dressing up as Christ*. If you like, you’re pretending. Because, of course, the moment you realize what the words mean, you realize that you’re *not* a son of God. You’re not a being like *the* Son of God, whose will and interests are at one with those of the Father: you are a bundle of self-centered fears, hopes greeds, jealousies, and self-conceit, all doomed to death. So that, in a way, this dressing up as Christ is a piece of outrageous cheek. But the odd thing is that He has ordered us to do it. [*Beyond Personality*, page 33. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company, New York.]

By putting ourselves in this role of a son of God addressing God as our Father, we are “dressing up as Christ” who is *the* Son of God; and it is through this make-believe on our part that God has His chance to convert our pretense into reality, by making us into real “little Christs”. This is the divine strategy of our redemption, and we are “bold to say” *Our Father* because Christ instructs us to do so.

An English bishop of the last generation, Dr. F. J. Chavasse, expounds in one of his published sermons the true meaning of our adoption into the family of God. His words are worth quoting in full:

God calls us to grace, and that is love. He places us where we can obey that call in an atmosphere of love and receive His priceless gifts and privileges. Take an illustration. An outcast child who has never realized the blessedness and power of love is adopted by a man of large heart and placed in his household. The child at first does not

realize his position. He deems himself a servant. He trembles in the presence of his master, and performs wearily and heartlessly his appointed work. He is on his best behaviour for fear of incurring punishment. He is daily haunted by the dread that some day, on account of some negligence, he will be ejected and become an outcast as before. Suddenly or gradually he is led to see his mistake. His position in the family is that of a son, not of a servant. The head of the house is his father and bears towards him a father's love. At once all is changed. New light is shed upon everything. Trembling gives place to reverential confidence. New motives sway his will, reason, conscience, heart. He lives in a home. His companions are brothers, and his work allotted by a father's hand assumes a new aspect under the moving power of love, and his lately constrained and chafed spirit expands in the warm sunshine of trust and joy.

My brothers, many who have been placed by Baptism in God's Household have still the hearts of slaves. They do Him mechanical and joyless service. But when the Spirit of God opens the eyes of the heart to see what is the hope of their calling – the Fatherhood of God, the atoning work of Jesus Christ, the Presence of the Holy Spirit to help them to do God's will – then they enter upon a new state of existence; and realize what St. Paul meant when he said, "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption whereby we cry 'Abba, Father'." (Romans 8:15) [*The Sermons of Bishop Charvasse*, Vol. I, page 84. Used by permission of The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, London.]

74. *Preserve Thy Body and Soul Unto Everlasting Life* – The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ ... The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. – Pages 82–83.

In His sermon, "On the Body of the Lord," St. Thomas Aquinas reminds us that the Holy Eucharist

restores vigor to the weak, health to the sick; it gives increase of virtue, makes grace to abound, purges away vices, refreshes the soul, renews the life of the ailing, knits together all the faithful in the union of charity. This Sacrament also inspires hope and increases charity. It is the central pillar of the Church, the

consolation of the dead, and the completion of Christ's Mystical Body.

Since it is all these things, and more, the Eucharist is best thought of as a means whereby we take the Life of Christ into our own lives in such a way that we are "made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him."

Since Christ is eternal, to receive His Life is to receive His immortality. From this it follows that if a Christian goes to his Communion with a faithful heart and an understanding mind, there is this mind in him as he communicates:

"I know that as a moral creature I am here today and gone tomorrow. This body I bring to the Altar is a frail creature of dust, and feeble as well as frail. As for my soul: Lord have mercy on it – what a soiled mess it is! Yet the Lord has taught me that this fragile body of mine is the seed of the greater body which is to be; and that He can prepare even my poor soul for a glorious and eternal destiny. Christ has ordained this wonderful sacrament for His own loving purposes, which I can now see and know only in part. But this much is shown to me: that as I come to His Table to receive Him who is the Bread of Life, He is preparing me, shaping me, for the glory which is yet to come – for the everlasting life. In this eternal life I am a participant even now, but only as an infantile beginner. What the Lord does for me in my Communion this morning, through the simple creatures of bread and wine which are now His body and Blood, is the beginning of what He will finish in me, in eternity.

"It is not what I see and comprehend of all this that matters; it is what He promises."

75. *Good Works Prepared for Us to Walk In* – And we humbly beseech thee, O heavenly Father, so to assist us with thy grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in. – Page 83.

This is a most necessary prayer for all Christians in their pilgrimage: for the grace to *continue*, to *stay* in the blessed company of the companions of Jesus, and as Christ's servants to do those works which the Father has "prepared for us to walk in."

First, we need the help of divine grace to keep us in this holy fellowship. For our heavenly environment in Christ is not our natural

environment. We are not comfortably at home with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, with the spirits of just men made perfect before the throne of God; we are not even comfortably at home with the more advanced Christians in the Church on earth. They all put us to shame. They travel at a pace too fast for our comfort. We are constantly tempted to chuck it all – this enterprise of the holy fellowship. Unless we receive abundant grace to keep us in this company – traveling along this way which seems to us too heroic, for earth too hard – we can only sink back to what we consider our natural level, “where we belong”.

The grace to persevere, for which we here pray, is the grace to keep pace in our living with those who are our betters in the company of Christ.

So much for this first point of our petition. Now the next: We ask the help of God’s grace to do “all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in.” There is no use trying to do any good thing without God’s help. This is taken for granted here, and calls for no further comment. There are two points which are more unusual: first, the suggestion that God has specially planned and prepared certain good works for each one of us to do; and second, the suggestion that most of our work for God consists, so to speak, of *walking* chores. We shall now consider these two things in turn.

The first point is, after all, a fundamental Christian premise: that your life is planned. It contains many surprise turns and twists to you, but these are not surprises to God. The habitual awareness of this can give you a strong, calm stability and a deep contentment at all times: Your Father in heaven knows the way to take, for He has planned it.

Our times are in his hand
Who saith, “A whole I planned,
Youth shows but a half; trust God: see all,
nor be afraid!”

[Robert Browning, *Rabbi ben Ezra*.]

The second noteworthy thing in this prayer is its recognition that most of the good works which God gives us to do are to be *walked* in.

Most of the good works God gives you to do cannot be done at sprint pace. It is largely working, and waiting, and long marches on which you spend your time slapping mosquitoes rather than slaying dragons, But the

ability to *walk* for your Lord is the supreme test of a good soldier and servant of Jesus Christ.

The word “walk” appears very frequently in the New Testament, in connection with the Christian life: “Walk in love,” “Walk in the light,” “Walk in newness of life.” It was recognized by those who gave these admonitions that we all prefer the quick and glorious conquest to “the trivial round, the common task.” But God needs, above all, servants who are willing to do the humdrum but necessary chores for Him. And it is to the doing of whatever He wants us to do that we pledge ourselves in the Eucharist.

76. *The Peace and the Blessing of God* – The Peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord: And the Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always. – Page 84.

If we have come to the Altar in faith, love, and sincere seeking of the gift of God, we come away from the Altar fed and fortified by “the Peace of God, which passeth all understanding ... and the Blessing of God Almighty.”

These two exalted gifts are two sides of a single coin, and they are ultimately inseparable. Yet we may examine them separately.

The Peace which God gives to His faithful people is not at all as the world giveth. By “peace” the world means absence of strife and conflict, freedom from struggle, exemption from pain. But when Christ says to His friends, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you” (St. John 14:27), He knows that Judas is about to betray Him, that in a few hours He will hang on His cross despised and rejected of men, that His friends will be scattered and routed by terror. He knows that they to whom He is giving His Peace will undergo horrors innumerable before they enter the final Peace of heaven. Clearly, the Peace which Christ has to give us is not the peace of ease in Zion the peace of temporal tranquility, of finding everything perfectly satisfactory.

Hawthorne rightly remarks that “the world owes all its onward impulses to men ill at ease.” We should be poor soldiers of Jesus Christ if we could view the evils that infest our world with a fatuous equanimity and

turn not a finger to make things better. The Lord Jesus comes to deliver us from such a “peace” as that.

The Peace of God given to us in the Eucharist is essentially Peace *with* God. It is reconciliation, harmony, at-one-ment, with Him. Once we were enemies of God, because of our sin. Then we arose and came to our Father, saying, “I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” [In the Story of the Prodigal Son (St. Luke 15:11–24) we have our Lord’s matchless description of what happens when a Christian goes to his Communion in true penitence and lively faith.] And God pardoned us, received us, restored us to filial favor as His beloved children. Such is our drawing near to God in Holy Communion, and such is the nature of our reception and treatment by God in this sacred Mystery.

A great Swedish bishop and theologian, Dr. Anders Nygren, describes the Peace of God in these words:

God’s peace is that existence-form in which our lives as Christians, in all their totality, are set. We like to imagine that peace is a delicate thing, which we must lock up within ourselves, and protect, and hide in the depths of our hearts, so that it may not be lost or be evaporated. But in the Scriptures peace is spoken of in an utterly different way. There it is said that God’s peace is a mighty power, which of itself can keep our hearts and our thoughts. God’s peace is a mighty fortress, in which we are well defended and safe against all hostile powers of destruction. It is not we who are to protect peace, but rather it is peace which is to protect us. [From *The Gospel of God*, by Anders Nygren, translated by L. J. Trinterud, copyright 1951 by W. L. Jenkins. Used by permission.]

The Peace of God is, first, our experience of being forgiven by God and received and restored as His own dear children. But it then becomes in our lives, as Bishop Nygren (following St. Paul) points out, a kind of might fortress within ourselves which *keeps* us in the knowledge and love of God. [*Philippians* 4:7.] So long as we know God and love Him, and we are vitally aware that we are known and loved of God, we have a peace which does indeed pass all understanding – the peace which is our invincible assurance that God is our refuge, and that underneath us are the Everlasting Arms.

There is God’s Peace, and then there is God’s *Blessing* which we carry away from the Altar. We have let the verb “to bless” degenerate into a tame by-word of emasculated conventional piety. But originally the word meant something which it can still mean for us if we will let it be so.

“Bless” comes from the Old English *bloedsian*, which means “to bind with blood”. [I owe this valuable point to Bernard Iddings Bell, who develops it in *The Altar and the World*, page 130, Harper & Brothers, New York.] When two men of old wanted to make a binding covenant and agreement between them, they sealed their pact with their own blood; they “blessed” each other in this original sense. The ritual of the blood meant that they were becoming actual blood brothers, and that each was giving his own life, represented by his blood, to the other.

In this sense are we to understand the Blessing God gives to us through the Eucharist. The Holy Communion is, as St. Paul describes it, “the fellowship of the blood of Christ.” [1 Corinthians 10:16.] Christ’s blood represents His life given for us, and mystically given *to* us when we receive the sacrament of His Body and Blood. Thus He blesses us. But it is a two-way exchange, for in this Holy Sacrifice we have offered our selves, our souls and bodies – our blood, our life, to God; and He has received us and entered into this blood covenant with us.

What then? We go out into the world as blood brothers of Christ who have pledged ourselves to take up His cross and to follow Him daily and to the end. Christ’s blood now courses in our veins, by virtue of this sacramental Mystery in which He pours His life into our lives. The unspeakable Blessing is this: that not only do we have peace with God, thanks to His pardoning love; we have God Himself in us, to go with us on our trivial round and common task and to be our Strength, our Joy, and our Life until He calls us to the Church above. Then sacraments will be perfected in us, when we shall see His Face and be infinitely satisfied in Him.