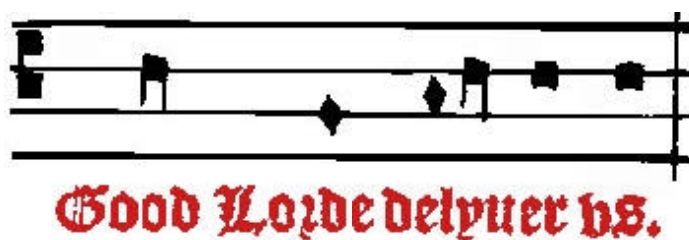


Reflections on the Litany



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THE object of this little book is practical and devotional. It is written simply to encourage a deeper appreciation and more regular use of our Litany, which I believe to be among the noblest and most searching instruments of devotion to be found whether in the Prayer Book or in the whole range of liturgical literature. But by way of introduction it is necessary to say something briefly about its nature and history.

The character of Litanies in general, beginning with the Lesser Litany—the *Kyrie Eleison*—is ejaculatory, consisting as they do of short sharp petitions uttered by an officiant and responded to by the people. This is their general character, whether they occur within the structure of the liturgical service or are sung in procession within or without the church. Our Litany, however, though it follows the lines of the older Litanies, and borrows most of its material from them, is much less ejaculatory in character, because the suffrages are combined into fewer and longer petitions. But it is not on this account less worthy of study and meditation.

The Litany or General Supplication as it stands in the Prayer Book of 1662 (and substantially in the Revised Book) is almost identical with *The Letany* composed in English by Cranmer and issued in 1544, at the bidding of Henry VIII in view of the French and Scottish wars; but there are these differences (among others less important):

I. The invocations of Mary the Mother of God, of the angels in their orders, and of the saints in their classes, which remained in 1544 (as the relic of a much longer list of invocations), followed by ‘Pray for us,’ have been omitted since 1549—also the strange prayer for the Queen ‘giving her increase of all godliness, honour, and children’—and the prayer for deliverance ‘from the tyranny of the bishop of Rome, and all his detestable enormities.’¹

2. The mediaeval prayer ‘for all bishops, pastors, and ministers of the Church’ was altered in 1662 into ‘for all bishops, priests, and deacons’; and the interpretative phrase introduced under pressure from the King into the Lord’s Prayer, ‘*Suffer us not to be led into temptation,*’ was abandoned in 1549. Changes were also made in the final prayers.

Our Litany recalls the processional Litanies of the Middle Ages—for Rogationtide and times of special distress. Indeed, the words ‘procession’ and ‘litany’ were interchangeable, so that you find the strange phrase ‘singing the procession upon their knees’; and there was normally a procession within the church on Sundays before High Mass. But the ‘injunctions’ of the first year of Edward VI directed that processions—properly so called—were to be discontinued, and that ‘immediately before High Mass, the priests with other of the choir shall kneel in the midst of the church and sing or say plainly and distinctly the Litany which is set forth in English with all the suffrages following, and none other procession or litany to be had or used.’ Its use was also ordered on Wednesdays and Fridays in King Edward’s First Prayer Book, and in the later Prayer Books. I think we should deeply regret that this injunction has been, in the Revised Book of 1928, altered into a permission. But the latter book is quite right in drawing a distinction between the Litany down to the end of the Lord’s Prayer and the ‘special supplication’ which follows it, which may be rightly regarded as ‘a second Litany’ appended to the first—with psalm and antiphons, versicles and responses and collects—to be used on occasions.

¹ For the history of the disappearance of this petition see Dixon, *Hist. of Ch. of England*, v. 24.

Whenever the Litany is used, it should never be forgotten that it is properly and originally a prelude to the Eucharist.

And now let us think but little about its history,² but proceed to meditate on its contents. It is not only a priceless possession in respect of the beauty and dignity of its language but also an excellent school of prayer. Let me quote Dr. Dearmer's summary of its merits:³

The Prayer Book Litany, while it combines the two original objects of processions—prayer against evils and dangers, and prayer for the fruits of the earth—greatly extends the realm of intercession, stretching out those touching and melodious phrases, which are now of the very marrow of the English language, to all human needs, dangers, sorrows, aspirations, and efforts towards perfection, and ending with the two beautiful supplications in which the people turn at length to pray for their own necessities. In contrast to the weak and selfish spirit of many popular modern devotions, we think proudly of the English Litany, and have a right to be proud of it; for we can turn to the whole world, Christian and otherwise, and say, 'This is how we pray, this is how we are taught to think of life and death, of God and man; and this is a service we really use, a popular service, known and loved and understood by all.'

I only wish that this last clause were as true as it ought to be, or were even in process of becoming so. But I fear the opposite is the case in very many parishes.

² The details of its history have, however, some bearing on its use and meaning; and historical notes follow each section of the suffrages.

³ *Everyman's History of the Prayer Book* (1912), p. 174.

§I THE INVOCATIONS

O God the Father of heaven: have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

O God the Son, Redeemer of the world: have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son: have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three Persons and one God: have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

Notes—i. Cranmer has amplified these invocations. In the Latin Litanies they ran more simply (after a preliminary ‘Lord—Christ—Lord, have mercy’), O God the Father from heaven, have mercy upon us: O God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us: O God the Holy Spirit, have mercy upon us: Holy Trinity one God, have mercy upon us. We may agree with Dr. Dowden that the shorter form is preferable.

2. The English words ‘*of heaven*’ stand for the Latin ‘*from heaven*’; so in S. Luke 11¹³, ‘How much more shall your *heavenly Father*’ reads in the Greek Testament and the Latin Vulgate ‘your Father *from heaven*.’ Heaven is regarded as the source of the divine action, and perhaps ‘*heavenly*’ would be the best rendering here in the Litany. See Dowden’s *Workmanship of the Prayer Book*, pp. 153-4.

Reflections—i. Worship begins in adoration. The first clause in the Lord’s Prayer is ‘Hallowed be thy name ... as in heaven so on earth.’⁴ Worship is the primary occupation of the heavenly hosts. For us on earth to fall to prayer is to unite ourselves to the occupations of heaven—to its worship, to its fellowship, to its beneficent activities. Thus in the Lord’s Prayer, before we are allowed to express our own wants, we are forced to use the petitions which remind us that adoration holds the first place in the heavenly region: and so in the Litany we begin with the adoration of God under His threefold name.

Dr. Rudolf Otto by his book, *The Idea of the Holy*, has recently startled the theological consciousness of a great part of Europe and North America by the emphasis he lays upon what he calls the ‘numinousness’—that is the mysterious awfulness—of God. Look at the worshipping world all over, he says in effect, under almost all religions, and you find it bowed down under the sense of the tremendous mystery—not the less tremendous because also fascinating. To approach God is to approach something mysterious and awful. ‘Clouds and darkness are round about him.’ But for the Christian, we need to remember, though the sense of awe remains, and a merely lighthearted approach to God is an unreasonable kind of frivolity, yet the awful is no longer the wholly unintelligible. If the disclosure of God in nature does not mitigate the terror, yet the revelation or self-disclosure of God, gradually in the teaching of prophets, and finally in His Son, has restored us to the confidence of sonship. God, the ultimate source and

⁴ Let it never be forgotten that the phrase ‘in earth as it is in heaven’ belongs of right to each of the three preceding clauses. See below

creator of all that is, has manifested Himself, as far as His character and purpose for man is concerned, in His Son, Jesus Christ. He has translated His unintelligible being into the intelligible lineaments of a human character, and through the intelligible words of a human friend. God, the maker of all that is, who guides by His indwelling power or spirit the whole universe, and is finally to come into His own in His whole creation, is purely good. Christ's character, Christ's compassion, Christ's love, is God's character, God's compassion, God's love.

No doubt, considered as an intellectual proposition, the dogma that 'God is love' is difficult of acceptance—some of us feel, the most difficult of all Christian doctrines. But it is not only one element in our Lord's teaching, it is the sum and substance of His whole manifestation of God, whether in His acts, His character, or His words. Without that manifestation we cannot indeed say that we should be bound to deny this fundamental faith in God's goodness, for there would remain strong grounds for believing it. Such grounds would always lie in the witness of the conscience that nothing is so excellent in nature as the beauty of holiness; and what is highest and best in the process of nature must surely be the best image of God. But there would also remain grounds in the facts of nature for denying it. What the witness of Christ does is to bring the scales down heavily on the side of belief. He does not indeed explain the difficulties. But he claims to reveal the fundamental reality. 'No man knoweth the Father save the Son.' And indeed to refuse to believe in God's pure goodness is to do, what very few can manage to do—to turn one's back wholly upon Christ, and disown Him utterly. For, as has just been said, this is the sum and substance of His teaching and the interpretation of all His action. God is Father. So we begin our adoration of God in the first invocation.

2. We are 'miserable sinners.' There is no doubt about that. Man collectively must be regarded as a fallen being, and God not only as our Creator but as our Redeemer. He is restoring us to a lost royalty—lost by our sins. And it is God's aspect as Redeemer that is specially manifest in Christ, His Incarnate Son, though He was as truly the agent of God in creation as in redemption. 'Without him was not anything made that was made.' But He is most obviously the Redeemer—by His teaching; by His miracles of healing, which are facts and also symbols; by His sacrificial death 'for us'; by His resurrection, and glorification of our humanity in God, where He 'now liveth to make intercession for us.' So we adore Christ, the eternal Son and our Redeemer.

3. But all that Jesus Christ did 'for us' would have been in vain, even His sacrificial obedience unto death, if we had been left, so to speak, outside Him, as weak as we were before His coming. Thus our Lord's work *for us* must never be separated from His work *in us*. The forgiveness which He won for us—the loosing off our necks of all the burden of the past—is only granted us that we may be free to 'run the way of His commandments,' the way of the new life of growing holiness in Christ; and all this work within, by which 'Christ is formed in us,' is the work of the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father, and through the glorified humanity of the Son, who incorporates us and sustains us in the Church which is Christ's Body: and so we adore the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier.

4. And these three 'persons'—we have no better word by which to name them—in their mutual interaction constitute the One God as He has revealed Himself. He is no monotonous monad, but contains within Himself the fullness of life—the movement of love and thought and fellowship, though the glimpse we are now allowed of His inner

being falls far short of the fuller vision of God towards which we look forward.

Holy, Holy, Holy! though the darkness hide thee,
Though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see,
Only thou art holy, there is none beside thee
Perfect in power, in love, in purity.

5. This invocation of God under ‘the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost’ forms the basis of our Litany. It was followed in the old Litanies with an abundant invocation of the saints to pray for us. If we accept the exclusion of the direct invocation of saints from our public prayers—and indeed there was no such invocation in the public services of Christendom, as far as we know, for some seven centuries of the Church’s life—yet we must deplore the abandonment of all such prayers as are called ‘comprecations,’ that is, prayers to God that the intercessions of the saints may avail for us. For we should never be allowed to forget that when we betake ourselves to prayer, in public or private, we are not making a fresh beginning, or a solitary effort of our own. There is one prayer that is ever going up to God, that has its fount and centre in the perpetual intercession of our glorified Lord, to which are joined in full volume all the multitudinous prayers of the angels and saints and the whole company of the faithful departed, and the prayers of the whole Church on earth. And when we begin to pray we are only joining in that one everlasting and all-embracing prayer—which is the intercession of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ—which fills up all the breaks in our sadly intermittent attention and enriches all the feebleness of our devotion, merging it in the one rich stream of prayer, which one day is destined to be heard in its full scope when the kingdom of God comes.

6. The rest of the Litany, down to the Lesser Litany and Lord’s Prayer at the end, consists of suffrages addressed to our Lord. The normal method of Christian prayer is that it should be addressed to the Father, through the Son, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the primitive liturgy all the prayers were so addressed. And there is no doubt that at times the multiplication of prayers and hymns addressed to Jesus has been associated with a disastrous separation in popular thought of Jesus, as the merciful saviour, from the Father as the fearful and tremendous sovereign.⁵ Any such idea must of course be utterly banished. But the Son is ‘of one substance with the Father’— that is, He belongs to the one inseparable being of God, and it must be right therefore to invoke both Him and the Holy Spirit. Such prayers are in fact inevitably by implication addressed also to the Father, for the Three are One; and invocations of the Son, Jesus Christ, have constituted the substance of Church Litanies from the time when their use began in the Church’s hours of special need, and they have their prototype in the prayers of S. Stephen in his agony.

⁵ And, it must be added, associated with a disastrous forgetfulness of the inward companionship and constant aid of the Holy Spirit. The late Abbot Marmion of Maredsous goes so far as to say, ‘Combien pourtant de chrétiens d’aujourd’hui ne connaissent [le saint Esprit] que de nom et ne savent presque rien de ses opérations dans les âmes’ (*Le Christ Vie de l’Ame*, p. 123).

§2 DEPRECATIONS

Remember not, Lord, our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers; neither take thou vengeance of our sins: spare us, good Lord, spare thy people, whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood, and be not angry with us for ever.

Spare us, good Lord.

1. 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.

2. From all blindness of heart; from pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness,

Good Lord, deliver us.

3. From fornication, and all other deadly sin; and from all the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil,

Good Lord, deliver us.

4. From lightning and tempest; from plague, pestilence, and famine; from battle and murder, and from sudden death,

Good Lord, deliver us.

5. 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.

Notes—I. In the Litanies current before 1544, in between the Invocations and the Deprecations, occurred the words ‘Be propitious; spare us Lord.’ In place of this Cranmer inserted ‘Remember not, etc.’ which had hitherto been an antiphon to the penitential psalms, omitting, however, the final words, ‘Give not thine heritage to destruction: forget us not for ever.’

2. The deprecations which follow in Cranmer’s Litany and ours are collections into five suffrages of what had been twelve or more in the Latin Litanies. The mention of ‘mischief,’ ‘hypocrisy,’ ‘envy,’ ‘all other deadly sins and all the deceits, etc.,’ and of ‘murder’ was new. ‘Sudden death’ stands in place of ‘sudden and unforeseen death’ which one would wish had been retained. In the last clause, ‘rebellion’ and ‘schism’ were added in 1662. ‘Hardness of heart and contempt of thy word’ were also new in Cranmer’s Litany.

Reflections—The history of Litanies shows them to be specially penitential exercises. They are the urgent supplications of the people of God suffering under or dreading the incidence of divine judgements and asking to be spared or delivered from calamities which at the same time they confess that they deserve. Surely this form of the ‘fear of the Lord’ greatly needs reviving amongst ourselves. It is specially characteristic of the prophets and psalmists of Israel. And the rejection of it is by no means a sign of a

truer wisdom.⁶ Whatever our increase in the knowledge of nature has been, it remains true that we are in the hands of a Power whose actions cannot be in all respects controlled or anticipated. It remains also true that both our reason and our faith drive us to the recognition that this governing power is a personal God and a righteous God who visits men and nations with judgements on their sins; though we may if we will, blind our eyes to the evidences of divine judgement and neglect that humble and penitent ‘return to God’ which they are intended to stimulate.

But the reality of divine judgements on sin should be evident enough. The famous ‘agnostic,’ Thomas Huxley,⁷ speaks of ‘that fixed order of nature which sends social disorganization upon the track of immorality, as surely as it sends physical disease after physical trespasses,’ and he claims it as the ‘high mission’ of science ‘to be the priestess of a firm and lively faith’ in this fixed moral order. Can it be denied that the great historical collapses of civilizations, empires, and churches are rightly thought of as judgements, because the fundamental causes of them, if we like to think carefully, were moral? The moral tone of the civilization of the Roman Empire, or of the French Monarchy in the eighteenth century, or of Russia in the twentieth, was rotten. To-day can we reasonably deny that the causes which threaten our civilization are ultimately moral as much so as when the Hebrew prophets spoke of old?

‘Money,’ cried Ezekiel over Israel, ‘has been their ruin and their sin’ (Ezek. 7¹⁹, Moffatt’s translation⁸). Again he cries over Tyre, ‘Rich traffic made you rife with violence and you sinned. . . . Your beauty made you proud of heart, your brilliance depraved your wisdom. ... By the greatness of your guilt, by the crimes of your commerce, you have profaned your sacred position; therefore have I made you set fire to yourself, with flames that consume you, and reduced you to ashes on earth in the sight of all who behold you. All who know you among the nations shall be appalled at you—your fate is awful, there is no future for you’ (Ezek. 28¹⁶⁻¹⁹). Again of Sodom, ‘This was your sister Sodom’s crime: she and her daughters lived in pride, in plenty and in careless ease; she never lent a hand to the weak and wretched. Haughty they grew, and they committed detestable impieties before my face. So I swept them off, when I noticed it’ (Ezek. 16⁴⁹⁻⁵⁰).

These passages are taken from one only of the prophets of Israel. But they are the common burden of all the prophets. True, it was not given them always to foresee rightly when and by what means God would judge the social sins of a people or class. But they saw with vivid distinctness the law of the divine action. And our Lord, who at the beginning of His ministry had announced the purpose of His coming in the synagogue of Nazareth only in the ‘comfortable words’ of Isaiah, omitting the final clause about the ‘day of vengeance of our God’ (S. Luke 4^{18, 19}), at the end of His ministry, when the chosen people had rejected Him and His message, finished the quotation, ‘These are the days of vengeance’—divine judgement upon Jerusalem was proclaimed as inevitable and speedily to be accomplished (S. Luke 21²²).

⁶ See below.

⁷ See *Evolution and Ethics* (Macmillan, 1903), p. 146.

⁸ I do not doubt that Dr. Moffatt’s translation is open to much criticism in detail. But I know nothing so capable of reopening our eyes to the meaning of the prophets and psalms by its use of very modern phraseology.

There are such realities as ‘economic laws,’ but their effect in human society, that is, in the common life of rational man, depends on the way in which we use them—whether in accordance with the moral purpose of God or in violation of it. We are living in days when, as we are constantly told, the whole fabric of our industrial civilization is threatened. And it is really blindness to ignore that our industrial system, in the centuries that lie immediately behind us, was rooted and based on false values and on principles directly anti-Christian—on ‘the love of money which is a root of all kinds of evil’ (I Tim. 6¹⁰), on remorseless individual competition in all commercial pursuits, which becomes the negation of love whether between classes or nations or individuals. Can it be denied that the self-sacrifice which was evoked by the exigencies of the war, has found no conspicuous exhibition in our ‘business’ either before the war, or during the war, or after the war? Can we deny that the extremes of luxury and poverty side by side which have characterized our society grossly violate that equality of spiritual worth which our Lord ascribed to all human souls? Can we palliate our sensuality and wild love of pleasure? Ought we not then to expect divine judgement? But is not this expectation markedly absent alike from learned reflections on ‘the crisis’ and from popular feeling? Truly we need to put our whole heart into this prayer, ‘Remember not, Lord, our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers; neither take thou vengeance of our sins.’

We have heard good people saying, ‘What is the use of confessing other people’s sins, and denouncing our forefathers.’ But certainly in His government of the world, though not in the judgement of individuals, God visits ‘the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.’ And what He asks of those who fear Him with a holy fear, such as our Lord would have us entertain, is that we should recognize corporate responsibility for the sins which have been so prevalent as to be really national, and to leave none of us free from responsibility. For a transformed society can be built only upon a deep repentance, and that again is sure to begin only with the ‘faithful remnant’ who are free from moral blindness.

And though we expect judgement and know that we deserve it, yet, weak and frail as we are, it is right we should plead for mercy, as in this suffrage, or pray to be exempted from ‘all those evils which we most righteously have deserved’ as we are instructed to pray in the last collect of our Litany, just as it is also our duty not to wait passively but to act vigorously in order to remedy the condition of things which we now see to be so threatening to our national life and our international connections. For if we accept and even welcome divine judgements,⁹ which are meant to humble us and bring us again to the feet of God, we are never allowed to forget that the judgement is not intended to destroy but to recreate. It is that God is ‘consuming the impurity out of us’ (Ezek. 22¹⁵), if at least we will suffer Him to do so, so that we may stand again humbled but renewed, in all the glory of a social life now redeemed and based on the principles of righteousness and brotherhood, as the prophets and our Lord have taught them to us.

Finally, we must not be disheartened if it is seemingly only a few who have eyes to see. It was in such circumstances that our Lord established His new Israel, to carry on in the world the mission of the old, now with a fuller understanding; and established it on the basis of a very few men and women. In the history of many nations, at many epochs,

⁹ It is to be noticed that the ‘comfort’ or ‘consolation which the Babylonian exiles were to expect, as they were called to contemplate the ruin of Jerusalem, was to be found in the conviction, which experience would force upon them, that God had not acted without cause (Ezek. 14^{22, 23}).

social salvation has been due to minorities; and certainly conversion or reconversion to God, which we so sorely need, can be wrought only in the souls of individuals.

With these thoughts in our mind let us proceed to consider the five 'deprecations' of our Litany.

I. The first is a general appeal for deliverance or redemption: but it assumes that there is present to our imagination, what is often in our days not there at all—the sense that we are engaged in a great conflict, which is being carried on also in the invisible world, with the forces of evil, the devil and his angels. 'Our wrestling is not [i.e. not only] against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.' So writes S. Paul (Eph. 6¹²). 'Wherefore take up the whole armour of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.' The world into which our Lord came was a world profoundly impressed and depressed by the haunting sense of evil spirits, to escape from whose terrible influence men and women were eagerly seeking all the baser forms of religion—'mysteries,' charms, amulets, and magical formulas. Our Lord had no need to teach the reality of spirits good and bad. What He had to teach men was that there lay in Himself, and in faith in Him, a power well able to defeat the spirits of evil and render them helpless.

The same dread of evil spirits is still in many parts of the world a prominent, even the most prominent, motive in religion. There is always a great deal of superstition and mere fraud attached to this sort of lower religion, and our intellectual world has agreed to treat it with contempt. So did our Lord treat it with contempt, in one sense but not in another. He despised the diabolic world and trod it under-foot. But He certainly assumed the real existence of spirits good and bad, and would have His disciples believe it.

His allusions to it are simple and realistic. So it is with all the New Testament writers. Certainly science has no legitimate ground to deprive us of this faith. It seems indeed absurd to suppose that this vast universe should contain no rational spirits except the human race upon this tiny planet. And if there be hosts of spirits inferior or superior to men, who presumably were created with some degree of free-will like rational men, there is no reason why they should not, like men, have misused their freedom and become 'the adversaries'; and no reason why they should not be marshalled in organized battalions on a definite and age-long plan to defeat the good purpose of God in the world. To some of us there seems to be in fact too good evidence of this sort of organized and continuous power and purpose in evil to enable us to doubt its existence, just as there are moments of our personal experience when we seem to be almost palpably confronted with Satan. So we will accept the encouragement of our Lord to conquer superstition and panic at the thought of evil spirits, but not be so foolish as to deny their existence.

There is another assumption which this suffrage takes for granted—the assumption of 'everlasting damnation.' If this was intended to mean, as we cannot doubt, everlasting torment for those condemned, our conscience rebels. We cannot reconcile the idea with divine goodness or justice. At least we would substitute the words 'eternal condemnation,' for 'eternal' is not the same thing as 'everlasting.' We have in our present state no power to imagine whether, or in what sense, the eternal world exists or will exist under such conditions of time as belong to our present experience.

Further, S. Paul's language about the state of the condemned suggests rather destruction than continual torment: and such an expression for the eternal world as

‘where God shall be all in all’ seems quite incompatible with a universe in which one great ‘tract’ (so to speak) would be in everlasting hostility to God, only kept under compulsory restraint.

Again, such a phrase as ‘the unquenchable fire . . . where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched’ (followed by the words ‘for every one shall be salted with fire’)¹⁰ does not really, if we think of it, suggest everlasting continuance in pain for those subjected to it.

Finally, we find no decision of the Church on the subject to bind our consciences, though in the early centuries a powerful tradition sought to transform hell into purgatory. On the other hand we cannot take refuge in any kind of universalism. However much stress we may lay on the hope of further opportunity beyond death for those who in this life have had little or none, yet our Lord Himself does in unmistakable language warn us that we who have the opportunity of vision may so blind our eyes as to lose the capacity for seeing, that we may lose or destroy our own souls and reach a state than which it had been better not to be born. We have, if we will, the making of our own hell. I do not think any universalist argument can successfully controvert the late Dean Church’s solemn sermon on *Sin and Judgement*.¹¹

Nor do I think we can make a positive assertion of ‘conditional immortality.’ Surely the wisest attitude is a confession of ignorance of the meaning to be attached to the awful phrase ‘eternal punishment.’ But if we accept our Lord as a true teacher on the ultimate realities of human life, we must not exclude from our imagination the possibility of such a destiny for ourselves or for others.

2. The second ‘deprecation’ is against what we call ‘spiritual sins,’ but what we had better call ‘respectable sins’—such sins as do not imperil our standing in society. Our Lord certainly found in the religious world, of which the Pharisees were the leaders, a society which was intensely religious and which sacrificed much to religion, but which was exceedingly prone to such sins as are here enumerated: and it is not possible to deny that one main purpose of His teaching was to force on men the conviction that these respectable sins are at least as bad as fornication or violence or any of the sins which outrage society and make men ‘disreputable.’ When He said that ‘the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you’ (the respectable Pharisees) He would even have us recognize that there is in respectable sinning something more clinging—something harder to get rid of—than in sins which destroy our reputation. We may be thankful, therefore, that in our Litany they are put first. And the catalogue which Cranmer gave us is a wonderful catalogue. We should indeed contemplate the items steadily, so we may with all diligence devote our attention to their extirpation in ourselves.

Blindness of heart is terribly common. It is the refusal or the neglect to come into the light and see ourselves as we really are in the sight of God. ‘How can ye believe,’ said our Lord, ‘who receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not?’ (S. John 5⁴⁴). What a judgement on the spirit which is content to measure itself by public opinion! *Pride* is forgetfulness of God—the foolish and insolent attempt to ignore our absolute dependence on Him. *Vain-glory* substitutes for the duty of making

¹⁰ S. Mark 9^{43–49}. There is only one text in the New Testament which clearly expresses the idea of everlasting torment—Revelation 20¹⁰: and there its subjects are chiefly imaginary figures, Hades and the Beast and the False Prophet. Also the temporal expressions in the Apocalypse are consistently symbolic.

¹¹ In *Human Life and its Conditions* (Macmillan).

the best of ourselves, so that we may the better serve God's purpose in the world, whether in higher or lower place, the ambition to shine and be 'superior to other people.' It fills our imagination with foolish and unreal day dreams. It makes us self-centred and selfish. *Hypocrisy* is the spirit which allows our outer life before men to make a profession not warranted by our inner mind: so that 'the day of judgement' for us must be not the unveiling of a hidden glory but the exposure of a hidden shame. *Envy, hatred, malice, uncharitableness*. These need no explanation. But it is well to note the immense stress which our Lord laid on the duty of forgiveness—unlimited readiness to forgive—constantly making it the condition of our being ourselves forgiven, because God deals with us as we deal with our fellow men.

I think we must recognize that unforgiving-ness, like sexual lust, is a sin which is very uneven in its distribution. There are those who are quite firm against sensual sins who seem to find forgiveness almost impossible. And there are those who can resist no sensual temptation to whose natures envy and malice seem foreign. Some experience of this kind often lies behind the complaint that religious people are so much less likable than the irreligious. It is certainly necessary to recognize that, though very likely in the long run we are all tempted equally, and to the limit of our endurance, yet we find our most searching trial in very different forms, and it is as we find it that we must meet it. We must never excuse ourselves for not combating our besetting sin by pleading freedom from those we have less mind to. Goodness is one; and 'he that shall keep the whole law and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all.'¹²

Goodness is one in principle and it is a positive quality. In asking to be delivered from vices, we must recognize that the only available method of this deliverance is to set ourselves with all zeal to cultivate the really Christian character as a whole. No successful fight against particular sins can be waged except by setting our whole hearts to aim at the likeness of Christ: and the Christian preacher of 'the way' should be always insisting—not on negations but on the inspiring vision of Christian excellence, on the character of which the dominant qualities are charity and humility.

Nor must we ever forget that the power to 'seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness' lies primarily in the will and the reason, not in the feelings. The summarizing of Christian excellence as the love of God and the love of man is an appeal to our wills, not our feelings. The Greek word for 'love' in the New Testament does not describe an emotion but a settled disposition of the will. 'To love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength' means in other words—deliberately to put God first in your whole life; to cultivate all your faculties for His service; studiously to think right thoughts about God; and to make constant fresh beginnings in the life in accordance with God. And 'to love your neighbour as yourself' means—deliberately to form the habit of thinking of all men of all kinds as equal with oneself in God's regard, and to act towards them without selfishness or narrowness. Our determination must be 'to love the people we don't like.' And the victory lies in finding

¹² What is meant by saying that 'charity (or love) covers the multitude of sins'? It is easy to understand what it means in Proverbs 10²². There it is the opposite of the spirit of malice which loves to disclose them. But what does it mean in I S. Peter 4⁸? To *cover* seems a poor substitute for *destroying at the root*. But in S. James 5²⁰ perhaps we get the clue. To convert an erring soul and set his feet on the way of life covers a multitude of sins, just as divine forgiveness does (Ps. 32¹). But it covers them only as the first step towards annihilating the disposition to commit them. Perhaps that is the sense in S. Peter.

that, if we deliberately and persistently think rightly and act rightly towards others, we end by 'liking' them also better than we imagined possible.

3. This 'deprecation' takes the place of the short petition against 'the spirit of fornication' in the Latin Litanies. It was objected to by Puritans as introducing the distinction between mortal and venial sins. It was explained (in the Savoy Conference) in such a way as to refer to 'all wilful and deliberate sins.'¹³ There certainly must be a real distinction, such as S. John refers to, between 'sins unto death' and 'sins not unto death,' corresponding to the Jewish distinction between sins of inadvertence and sins done with a high hand.¹⁴ But in the administration of Church discipline this distinction between sins of weakness or forgetfulness and 'highhanded' or deliberate sins is apt to be confounded with a different distinction—that between sins of which the Church must take cognizance, such as idolatry or apostasy, and murder or violence, and fornication in its various forms, and other sins, which may indeed involve equal guilt in God's sight but cannot be the subject of public or human discipline. The former class of sins are public scandals; and we must remember the warning already referred to that disreputable sinners (the publicans and the harlots) may find thorough repentance, and thus access to the kingdom of heaven, more easily than the highly respectable with their pride and love of money.

But in this 'deprecation' there is no doubt that what was chiefly in Cranmer's mind was sins of sexual lust such as were enormously prevalent in his day and are so in ours. There is a very widespread demand for 'free self-expression' in sexual relations both in America and England, and it is only too abundantly illustrated in our contemporary literature. The demand is based on a complete mistake—on the idea that we are born with a ready-made 'self' which can demand expression. But in fact we are born with a bundle of feelings and capacities which can only by severe self-discipline be welded together into a coherent self, by bringing all our appetites under the control of our will and reason, and our will and reason under the control of God.¹⁵ Our Lord teaches us that true liberty can only be won by sharp repression: 'In your endurance ye shall win your souls.'¹⁶ In this He is in accord with almost all the great moral teachers of the world: and indeed there is a whole mass of common experience summed up in Shakespeare's tremendous verdict on lust (*Sonnet* 129):

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action . . .
A bliss in proof,—and proved a very woe;
Before a joy proposed; behind a dream:
All this the world well knows; yet none knows well
To shun the heaven which leads men to this hell.

Truly we do well to pray this 'deprecation' with heartfelt earnestness, but always

¹³ See Bright in Blunt's *Annotated Book of Common Prayer*, p. 50.

¹⁴ cf. my *Epistles of S. John*, p. 209.

¹⁵ In the Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus 6²⁻⁴, which had not been recovered when our revised version of the Apocrypha was made, there is an excellent admonition: 'Fall not into the power of thy soul [i.e. Be not a slave to thy passions], lest thou consume thy strength. It will devour thy leaf and destroy thy fruit, and will leave thee as a dried up tree. For unbridled passion destroyeth the possessor thereof, and maketh him the joy of his enemy.' (See Oesterley's *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, S.P.C.K.).

¹⁶ S. Luke 21¹⁹. cf. S. Mark 9⁴³⁻⁴⁷, 'If thy hand ... foot ... eye cause thee to stumble, cut it off ... cast it out.'

with the recollection that the prime remedy for lawless lust lies not in mere prohibition. It lies in letting all men see the real beauty and liberty and attractiveness of a 'life in accordance with God.'

But it is very necessary also to attend to the latter part of the deprecation. There is a great deal which, if it is not yet mortal sin, yet leads up to it. The New Testament constantly warns us of 'the deceitfulness of sin.' It takes us in with false promises. It offers us a 'bait, on purpose laid to make the taker mad.' It is so with 'the lust of the flesh' and also with 'the lust of the eyes' and 'the pride of life.' We elders should not seek too peremptorily to suppress the passion of the young for a kind of liberty which we see to be false by counsels of mature wisdom over-glibly given. But without doing this it is only fair to let them have the opportunity, which is found abundantly in history and literature, of seeing that 'sin' is a very fraudulent antagonist and that 'things are not what they seem.'

4. This 'deprecation' deals with physical calamities. Let us be quite bold in praying for physical blessings, as we are taught in the Lord's Prayer, if only we put them in the right place. The Lord's Prayer forces us to realize that our prayers must be directed first to the sanctifying of God's Name, the realizing of His kingdom, and the doing of His will; only then to the supply of our physical needs: and then too not freely to what we want, but strictly to what we need. 'Give us day by day the bread for the coming day.' But, granted this, we know much too little about the government of the world to make it superfluous to pray for physical blessings or the removal of physical scourges. It is often remarked in a scoffing tone that in former days of ignorance men encountered physical scourges with processions and litanies, but now we with our better knowledge improve the drainage or the methods of agriculture. It is no doubt quite right that we should diligently use all the resources of advancing science: and that 'God helps those who help themselves.' But we are in the hands of a power whose ways we are far from comprehending; and the fullest use of scientific preventions leaves us still helpless enough to make prayer for the supply of our physical needs both instinctive and right.

It has been already noted that we should have preferred to retain the old form of intercession against 'sudden and unforeseen' death instead of Cranmer's merely against 'sudden' death; we can hardly any of us wish for a lingering death, but on the other hand it is hard to understand how any reverent soul can fail to ask to be allowed to know when he is approaching the awful moment of transition between the world we know so well and the world of which we know almost nothing except that there 'God is all in all.' I think the pressure of so many modern doctors to prevent their patients being told when they are in serious danger of death is nothing less than spiritual cruelty and should by no means be yielded to.

5. It is felt by very many that our Prayer Book is antiquated in mixing up prayers for Church and State as if they could be regarded as one society: and those of us who feel this regret that this fault is but little remedied in the Revised Book. So in this deprecation, 'false doctrine, heresy, and schism' are appended to 'sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion' as if the two classes of perils were closely allied, instead of being very widely distinct. However, taken apart, both groups of evils are always to be prayed against. Only we need to remind ourselves, when we pray against sedition, conspiracy, and rebellion that it is almost always the sins of the rulers or the injustice of the government which stirs the people to rebellion. That is the constant lesson of history. And it is equally the lesson

of history that schism is bred of the corruptions of the Church, and that heresies are generally due to a one-sided exaggeration of some doctrine on the part of ecclesiastical authority.

Nevertheless there is a 'pattern of sound words,' 'a faith once for all delivered' to the Church, a 'tradition' both moral and doctrinal which it is the Church's sacred duty to guard. We need indeed to restrict the use of the word 'heresy.'¹⁷ We must desire with Erasmus to keep the points of necessary affirmation as few as possible. We should cling to the demand of the Fathers that nothing should be required by the Church in the matter of doctrine which cannot be 'proved in Scripture.' That is the safeguard of liberty. Nevertheless, there are articles of belief binding on those who would speak and act as officers of the Church. And we need to insist upon the reality of the positive creed. For there was never a time when 'hardness of heart and contempt of God's word and commandment' have been more prevalent than to-day—hardness of heart meaning the opposite of meekness and contrition, a callous impenetrability to the very idea of a divine voice constraining us to obedience.¹⁸

¹⁷ In writing to J. B. Mozley in 1856 with reference to his book on Baptismal Regeneration, which the Tractarians resented, Dean Church regrets that the latter had 'stuck up for so much dogmatic certainty, and drawn so narrowly the limits of liberty of thinking.' 'In the Middle Ages, and much more in the early times of the Church, there was infinitely more speculation than seems compatible with Church views now. I think it must be we who are wrong.' Again, 'I am very glad you worked the point well about our ignorance. . . . The idea of perfect and absolute knowledge, which is involved in so much that is said and taught on all sides, becomes daily more and more unendurable to me' (*Life and Letters of Dean Church*, pp. 173 f.).

¹⁸ We should note with regret that among the sins enumerated in these deprecations avarice or the love of money is not mentioned.

§3
OBSECRATIONS

By the mystery of thy holy Incarnation; by thy holy Nativity and Circumcision; by thy Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation,

Good Lord, deliver us.

By thine Agony and bloody Sweat; by thy Cross and Passion; by thy precious Death and Burial; by thy glorious Resurrection and Ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Ghost,

Good Lord, deliver us.

In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our wealth; in the hour of death, and in the day of judgement,

Good Lord, deliver us.

Note—These three clauses are a compression of fourteen in the Latin Litanies, but are otherwise a simple translation, save that in the Latin the Ascension has its own adjective—‘admirable,’ and ‘the Holy Ghost’ is also called ‘Paraclete.’ The English ‘by’ stands for the Latin *per*, i.e. ‘by means of.’ The Mysteries named correspond generally to those of the Rosary which are classed as ‘joyful,’ ‘sorrowful,’ and ‘glorious.’

Reflections—These importunate prayers addressed to our Lord may be regarded as recalling to His mind all that He has done for us so that He may not fail to carry to its full issue what He has begun in us.

Recordare, Jesu pie,
Quod sum causa tuæ viae
Ne me perdas illa die.

Quaerens me sedisti lassus,
Redemisti crucem passus;
Tantus labor non sit cassus.¹⁹

Such appeals to God not to forget how great a salvation for His people He has undertaken are familiar in the Old Testament and are occasionally suggested in the New. The spiritualized intelligence interprets them of course not as if God was liable to forget, but as a fashion of speech to remind ourselves of the infinite value which God has set upon us. Was it worth while that God should do so inconceivably much that I might live the casual kind of life that I am in the habit of living?

But this is not the right approach to these petitions. Rather they are based upon the

¹⁹ Think, kind Jesus, my salvation
Caused thy wondrous Incarnation;
Leave me not to reprobation.

Faint and weary thou hast sought me,
On the cross of suffering bought me;
Shall such grace be vainly brought me?
[Let not such labour on my account be in vain]

idea that the atoning work of Christ—though it found its consummation in the self-sacrifice of His death and the self-presentation of the Lamb ‘as it had been slain’ in the heavenly places—yet was not limited to the act of death upon the Cross or the shedding of the precious Blood. It lies in the whole drama of His earthly life and obedience. ‘Lo, I come to do thy will, O Lord.’ ‘He was obedient . . . unto death, even the death of the cross.’ This obedience had its beginning in the momentous ‘self-emptying’ by which, ‘being originally in the nature [or ‘form’] of God, he counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the nature of a servant and being made in the likeness of men.’

Thus we pray for our deliverance through the redemptive efficacy of the whole cycle of events: and first through the mysterious Incarnation and holy Nativity. There is the foundation of the atoning Sacrifice. Thereafter Jesus entered upon a life of obedience of which the Circumcision and the Baptism were in different ways the initial stages. Thus it ‘became him to fulfil all righteousness.’ Then the threefold temptation and the threefold victory, in the power of the Holy Spirit of God and of His written word, is a further stage in the mediatorial work, for as His Incarnation is our new birth, so His victory under temptation is our victory—the victory of the new manhood incorporate in Him. Once more, in the actual moment of His Passion and Crucifixion our Lord shows no terror and no shrinking: all is a majestic calm and self-forgetfulness. How much is added to our apprehension of the reality of the sacrifice when we see Him in the agony of the garden, ‘offering up strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death’! Truly the deliberate self-offering for death in the institution of the Eucharist and the shrinking agony and prayer of the garden are stages of the one great Sacrifice, as ‘the precious death’ is its consummation. Each stage of the holy process has its own ‘virtue’—its own mediatorial value. So also the burial gives the final verdict of accomplished death, and the glorious Resurrection and Ascension reveals the meaning of the whole sacrificial life. So in the Collect for Easter Eve we are taught to pray that ‘as we are baptized into the death’ of the Blessed Son of God, ‘so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with him, and through the grave and gate of death, may pass to our joyful resurrection, for his merits, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us.’

Finally we remind ourselves, as we pray for deliverance ‘through the coming of the Holy Ghost,’ that neither the example of Christ, in all its glorious perfection, nor the fullness of the reconciliation of our manhood to God wrought out in His ‘obedience unto death,’ would have been of any avail, if His work for us had ended in His heavenly glorification and had left us alone, as weak as we were before. But the ‘other paraclete’ (that is, the other ‘agent’ or ‘representative’ of God), the Spirit of the Father and the Son, is sent down out of the glorified humanity of Jesus, not to supply His absence but to accomplish His presence: not now as Christ *before our eyes*, the perfect example; nor as Christ *for us* the ‘full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice’; but as Christ *in us*, renewing us inwardly into the likeness of the pattern which He showed us outwardly.

Nothing shows a greater ‘shortness of thought’ than the common objection that to believe the divinity of Christ destroys for us mere men the force of His example and the reality of His temptation. Taken by itself His temptation is a singularly special and individual temptation, a temptation which in each of its incidents postulates one who knew Himself to be endowed with miraculous powers, which He might, if He would,

misuse. It moves on too high a plane for us. And His whole life is free from any apparent fear of sin or consciousness that He might fall. As a mere example, moreover, His life bears throughout characteristics of moral genius which are too high for us. But what makes His example in fact a spring of perpetual power throughout the generations is the consciousness that He, whose example is set before our eyes in the pages of the Gospels and who is alive in the heavenly places, is also, by His Spirit, present in the heart of every one of the members of His Body, to mould them inwardly into the likeness of the pattern which He has shown them outwardly. Thus we can for ever repeat the collect in the old Latin offices for the Octave of the Epiphany: 'O God, whose only-begotten Son appeared in the substance of our flesh, grant, we beseech thee, that, through him whom outwardly we recognize as akin to ourselves, we may have the grace to be inwardly remade in his likeness.' It is only one who is Himself divine who can thus become the soul of all men's souls.

Finally, as we consider the dismal history of controversies about the Atonement, let us recognize with a sigh of relief that the source of all the mistaken judgements which have so sharply divided Christians in their intellectual appreciation of this doctrine has lain in the separation of Christ *for us*, our atonement, from Christ *in us*, our new life, and that we are not likely to go far wrong if, while we glorify the free gift of forgiveness by belief in Christ our sacrifice, we never forget that such forgiveness is only a means towards that inward assimilation to Christ, which is 'Christ in us the hope of glory.'

The obsecrations conclude with a petition which goes to the hearts of all of us. There are, we know, in human life moments of special temptation—a time of 'tribulation' so overwhelming as to darken the whole heaven above us, and almost to annihilate our faith in God: or a time of 'wealth' (that is, prosperity²⁰) when life is so full of the enjoyments and occupations of the world that God is left out of sight. These temptations belong to present experience. There is also, we know, on the horizon, the hour approaching when we must die, and the day of judgement beyond; and 'we must die alone.' All the comfortable associations of friendly society, all the indulgent estimates of us current in kindly family life, will pass quite away and be forgotten as we pass out of this familiar world into another which we know so little, but where we are certainly to find ourselves bare and naked, exposed to the judgement of infallible truth. It is in the expectation of these experiences of this life and of the great transition that we summon to our aid all the knowledge granted to us of the character and purpose of God and pray for 'deliverance' from the evil which haunts and threatens.

²⁰ *Felicitas* is the Latin word.

§4

SUPPLICATIONS (OR PETITIONS) FOR THE CHURCH

I. *We sinners do beseech thee to hear us, O Lord God; and that it may please thee to rule and govern thy holy Church universal in the right way;*

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

2. *That it may please thee to illuminate all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, with true knowledge and understanding of thy Word; and that both by their preaching and living they may set it forth, and show it accordingly;*

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

3.*²¹ *That it may please thee to bless thy servants at this time [to be] admitted to the Order of Deacons or of Priests, and to pour thy grace upon them; that they may duly execute their office to the edifying of thy Church, and to the glory of thy holy name;*

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

4.* *That it may please thee to further the work of thy Church in all the world, and to send forth labourers into the harvest;*

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

Notes—I. In the earlier Latin Litanies the ‘supplications’ were preceded by the single phrase—singularly haunting in its rhythm—*Peccatores, te rogamus, audi nos*, and were replied to by *Te rogamus, audi nos*. Cranmer joined the first phrase, slightly augmented, to the first supplication for the Church, and made the response slightly longer.

2. We have already noticed the tendency in our Litany to carry to its furthest point the identification of Church and State, and with this goes the tendency to heap up prayers for the sovereign and royal family. I have dared to put the prayers for the Church apart and in the first place, and to add the new supplications given us in the Revised Book of 1928 to make them less meagre. I have dared to separate the prayers for the Church—partly because in our day it is unreal to couple the clergy with the Privy Council and the nobility (or with the Parliament and Cabinet) as if both were part of one secular-religious hierarchy—partly also for convenience in commentary.

3. The phrase ‘Church universal’ is of course a translation of the Latin *ecclesia catholica*. In the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI and in Elizabeth’s Book ‘universal’ was altered into ‘universally,’ but the alteration was reversed in 1661, for which indeed we may be grateful.

4. There can be no doubt that the change of *bishops, pastors, and ministers of the Church* (which stood in the Latin and earlier English Litanies) into *bishops, priests, and deacons*, dating as it does from 1661, was intended to make evident who were and who were not the proper ministers.

Reflections—i. In the last of the ‘deprecations’ we have already noted the prayer

²¹ The supplications marked with * are from the Revised Prayer Book. No. 3 is of course intended for use at Embertides.

‘from contempt of thy Word . . . deliver us.’ Here we have the prayer for the clergy that they may be ‘illuminated with true knowledge and understanding of thy Word.’ Later on we pray for grace for all God’s people ‘to hear meekly thy Word, and to receive it with pure affection,’ and, again, ‘to amend our lives according to’ it.

There is no doubt that, though ‘the word of God’ admits of a wider interpretation, what is intended by the expression in all these cases is the Bible, considered as the written word of God, which it was the special glory of the Reformation to translate into the language of the people, and which it sought to make familiar to them by insisting on its public reading becoming a most important part of divine service. Further, though the doctrinal tradition of the Church as contained in the Creeds and other formulas was maintained and insisted upon in the Anglican Church, yet it was constantly emphasized that nothing could be regarded as a necessary matter of faith among Christians but what could be proved out of Scripture. If the Church was authorized to teach, it was the Bible that was to prove or verify.

All this insistence on the Bible was thoroughly justified by the appeal to the ancient Church. There too nothing could exceed the zeal of the Fathers in the explanation of the Bible to the people, and the encouragement given them to possess a Bible or part of it for themselves; and the spirit of all the Fathers is summed up in S. Cyril’s warning to his catechumens that they are to take nothing from their teachers for truth except what is confirmed in Holy Scripture.

Nobody, then, can question the enthusiasm in England after the Reformation for the Bible. The English Bible, both among Puritans and among those more loyal to the Prayer Book, became the standard of belief and practice, and the very fountain of English religion. And so it has remained down to quite recent times. But there has been within the last two generations a great change in our attitude towards the Bible, and it cannot be denied that the change has been in great part justified. That the Bible is the Word of God had been interpreted through many centuries to mean that everything in the canonical books, though they were written by various authors, was written under the dictation of the Holy Spirit in such sense that every statement, on whatever subject, must be taken as infallibly true.

But that, it appears, is quite certainly not the case. The new science of historical criticism applied to the Bible has made this evident. Not only were the books of the Bible derived from various sources which are not always in agreement, but they contain, like other national literatures, narratives of all kinds. There is folk-lore and legend and tradition and moral tale as well as strict history. And it is quite plain that the writers, in what they say about nature and its processes, have no scientific knowledge but only the knowledge common to their ages, and that the archaeological information they give us is by no means infallible. Again, in the New Testament, though we are there throughout on properly historical ground, yet it is evident there are differences in detail, which cannot be reconciled, even in the Gospels. Among the Gospels, again, it is evident that the foundation narrative is S. Mark’s, and that his narrative lies behind the other three: but it is also evident that the other Evangelists could not have treated S. Mark as freely as in fact they do, and correct him as they do, if they had thought that his narrative was dictated by the Holy Spirit and infallible. It is evident, again, that S. Luke, in his preface to his Gospel and the Acts, makes no claim which any careful historian could not make. In the old sense of literal infallibility (which mercifully never became embodied in any

binding dogma) plainly the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament cannot be said simply to *be* the word of God.

This has been a great shock to traditional religion. And a large part of the ‘critical’ treatment of the Bible has been such as to make the shock as great as possible. A great number of the critics have plainly delighted in ‘exposing the false pretences’ of the Bible. But it cannot be denied that the critics have up to a certain point won a final victory over the Fundamentalists.

Any one who reads the Revised Prayer Book will notice a change in the Service for the Ordination of Deacons. The question used to be put to them: ‘Do you unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament?’ And the answer demanded of each was: ‘I do believe them.’ Very likely (though in modern days it had been admitted to bear a freer interpretation) this question was phrased originally so as to bear the full sense of the old idea of Biblical infallibility. At any rate, to guard against this assumption, the Revised Book, retaining the old question, adds an interpretation, much to be thankful for, thus: ‘Do you unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament, *as given of God to convey to us in many parts and in divers manners the revelation of himself which is fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ?*’; and the answer asked for is: ‘*I do.*’

Now all the history of human thought teaches us that it is liable to more or less sudden reactions, and that new sciences have a tendency to be extreme in their self-confident repudiation of the older wisdom. Certainly the spirit of rebellion against the traditional reverence for the Bible has possessed in great part the new criticism, especially as it came from Germany; but the reaction has been exaggerated and extreme. And we may confidently believe that the mediating position expressed in the revised question and answer just quoted is the true position. The ‘new critics’ were quite right in declaring that, whatever inspiration means, it was certainly not the gift of infallibility in respect of science or archaeology; quite right, again, in laying stress on the evidences of gradual progress in religious perception in the Old Testament, so that once familiar assumptions due to man’s savagery are only gradually corrected; quite right, again, in emphasizing that the different books or parts of books are ‘inspired’ in very different degrees or senses; quite right, finally, in discerning folk-lore, legend, uncertain tradition, and moral stories, which are not historical, in different parts of the Old Testament. But, on the other hand, nothing has tended to invalidate and weaken the assurance of the Epistle to the Hebrews that ‘God having in old times spoken unto the Fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us by his Son.’

There may have been prophetic inspiration vouchsafed to a Zarathustra, outside Israel, but there is nothing in the world resembling what you find in the Old Testament—that is, the gradual education of a rough and even barbarous people in the knowledge of God and the spiritual life through the lips of prophets who succeed one another over many centuries, and leave a deposit of glorious truth which finds its ultimate fulfilment in Jesus the Son. Certainly Israel was through its prophets, as Athanasius claims, ‘the sacred school in the knowledge of God and the spiritual life for all mankind.’ Certainly also, though the prophets were the main inspired instruments of this Gospel of the kingdom, yet their influence was assimilated in the Law, and the Wisdom Books, the Psalms, and

the Histories.²² Some touch of the same inspiring Spirit is apparent in the whole collection of books.

Now 'the Bible must be read in the same spirit in which it was written.' And no one whose main interest is to know of what sort God is, how mankind ought to live if they would be in fellowship with God, and what is the divine purpose in creation and redemption, can doubt of the inspiration of the Old Testament. Nor, if we turn from the Old Testament in its imperfection, to the New wherein we find its consummation, have we any real cause for doubting that we have in the Gospels the true picture of the historical Jesus, and in the New Testament generally the doctrine which gives true expression to the self-revelation of God in His Son. The same Spirit of Truth is everywhere apparent.

This is a great subject which cannot here be treated in any detail: but one who for fifty-five years has read the Bible from the 'critical' point of view may bear his witness that its interest is greatly enhanced and its spiritual value undiminished. It may still be 'our daily bread,' of a value not less than that of the Sacraments; and the prayers of the Litany that the clergy may be illuminated with the 'true knowledge and understanding' of that Word of God which the Scriptures convey to us, and that the people may be delivered from all contempt of it and may have their ears opened meekly to hear it—to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it—are still prayers we need devoutly to pray.

We of the clergy, moreover, have need specially to have in mind the solemn warning that those whose business it is above all else to 'set forth the Word of God' can only do so with any effect if their lives 'show it accordingly.' We should never preach a sermon without the recollection that, just so far as it is a faithful message which we deliver, it is we ourselves who first of all are to be judged by it.

2. Before the additions to our Common Prayers had been made in the Revised Book, the references to the evangelization of the world—to what we commonly call 'mission work'—were very meagre. The slightness of the references only reflected the mental background of the English Church. For a thousand years after the martyrdom of S. Boniface the mind of the *ecclesia Anglicana* was so much preoccupied with its national character and interests as almost to forget the divine injunction to carry the Gospel into all the world. The place of evangelistic zeal was taken in the Christian world in general by the military enthusiasm of the Crusades, in spite of the protests of S. Francis and Raymond Lull, but even that did not touch England as it touched countries for whom the Mohammedans were a daily terror. When the conquest and commercial exploitation of the New World began, still the idea of the spiritual equality of all human souls and the meaning of the universal Gospel and universal Church was hardly present to men's minds at all.²³ We owe its revival amongst us to the Evangelical Movement, in which it still finds its main support. We must be grateful for the new clauses on behalf of world-evangelization introduced into the Litany of the Revised Book and into the Prayer for the whole state of Christ's Church in the Liturgy and also for the additions to the Occasional

²² The books of Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs hung in suspense on the border of the Canon in New Testament days, and are never referred to in its pages. They are in different ways very interesting books. But they seem to be hardly touched by the prophetic inspiration; while we find it obvious enough in some of the books which we call 'apocrypha.' But we cannot pursue this subject here.

²³ Some measure of expression it did find in the beginning of the Prayer for all Sorts and Conditions of Men and in the last Collect for Good Friday.

Prayers; much more we must be thankful for the larger spirit of evangelization which animates the Church as a whole and in which each member is called to share.

3. It is strange that, while a fresh zeal for the cause of Christian unity is expressed in the Revised Prayer Book, there is still no echo of it in the Litany.

§5
SUPPLICATIONS (OR PETITIONS)
FOR THE NATION AND
ALL NATIONS

1. That it may please thee to keep and strengthen in the true -worshipping of thee, in righteousness and holiness of life, thy Servant George, our most gracious King and Governor;

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

2. That it may please thee to rule his heart in thy faith, fear, and love, and that he may evermore have affiance in thee, and ever seek thy honour and glory;

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

3. That it may please thee to be his defender and keeper, giving him the victory over all his enemies;

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

4. That it may please thee to bless and preserve our gracious Queen Mary, Edward Prince of Wales, and all the Royal Family;

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

5. That it may please thee to endue the Lords of the Council, and all the Nobility, [the High Court of Parliament, and all the Ministers of the Crown]²⁴ with grace, wisdom, and understanding;

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

6. That it may please thee to bless and keep the Magistrates, giving them grace to execute justice, and to maintain truth;

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

7. That it may please thee to bless and prosper the forces of the King by sea, land, and air, and to shield them in all dangers and adversities;*

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

8. That it may please thee to bless and keep all thy people;

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

9. That it may please thee to give to all nations unity, peace, and concord;

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

Notes—I. To pray for the king before the bishops was not quite a novelty in England, though it is contrary to what one may call Catholic custom. But the bulk of the petitions for the king and royal family was greatly increased in Cranmer's Litany, and the first petition was again enlarged in 1661. Till then it had run, 'That it may please thee to keep . . . thy servant our King and Governor.'

2. In the Sarum Litany there had been a petition 'that it may please thee to preserve the whole Christian people redeemed by thy most precious blood.' This is a petition for the whole Church. In Cranmer's version it becomes apparently a petition for the English people, which is followed by a petition for peace among all nations.

²⁴ The words in brackets are given as an alternative in the Revised Prayer Book.

Reflections—I. There is little to comment on in these supplications. But one comment may be made. Considering the Prayer Book as a whole it is distinguished among liturgies by the abundance of the prayers for the King and the exuberance of the language used in them. This may have suited the temper of the nation in the sixteenth century and again in the latter part of the seventeenth century. But it has undoubtedly, since Hanoverian days, savoured of officialism. Public prayers should aim at catching the sympathy of those who are called to join in them, as undoubtedly most of the Litany and the Prayer Book generally do excellently well. And we can remember how, when Edward VII was stricken with dangerous illness, the Archbishop of Canterbury caught the sympathy of the nation by ordering the use of the prayer in the Visitation of the Sick intended for all persons in danger of death. What are called ‘the State Prayers’ have failed to do this—not because the nation was lacking in loyalty but because the language has seemed unreal and excessive. This fault has been remedied in the Revised Prayer Book by providing alternative prayers and allowing omissions. But, to return to the Litany taken by itself, there would have been more sincere praying if its revisers had been allowed to content themselves with one prayer for the King and royal family such as may be found in the older Litanies. Excess has tended to extinguish fervour. Further, it would have been surely better if the revisers, instead of the petition only for ‘the Forces of the King,’ had inserted one for all who serve their King and country in whatever capacity.

Taking things as they stand, we shall do well to remember that the ‘enemies’ of the King, over whom we pray that he may have victory, are not so much other nations, as the vices and class-selfishnesses which threaten us with ruin.

2. We may safely say that there was never a time when the need of the last supplication in this section was so widely or deeply felt as to-day. At many periods when wars have desolated the earth, prophets have foreseen a happy time when, under the rule of God, wars shall be no more, and men shall ‘beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks,’ when ‘nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.’ S. Athanasius takes it for granted that as nations accept the Christian religion, they must perforce cease to make war with one another. At the Renaissance many minds were busy with projects for the ending of wars. But all such scheming has been in vain. Never till now has the idea so gripped mankind that civilization must perish if an alternative to war is not discovered and accepted: and the League of Nations is the fruit of this universal terror. It is still a rather feeble instrument, but its formation is a great step forward; and the prayers of all mankind can be directed to no worthier object than the realization of this ideal of peace.

§6 SUPPLICATIONS FOR A GENERAL RETURN TO GOD

1. *That it may please thee to give us an heart to love and dread thee, and diligently to live after thy commandments;*

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

2. *That it may please thee to give to all thy people increase of grace to hear meekly thy Word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit;*

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

3. *That it may please thee to bring into the way of truth all such as have erred, and are deceived;*

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

4. *That it may please thee to strengthen such as do stand; and to comfort and help the weak-hearted; and to raise up them that fall; and finally to beat down Satan under our feet;*

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

Notes—I. We find the source of these excellent and moving petitions (except the first) in Luther's Litany.²⁵ But the phrase 'increase of grace' is Cranmer's only.

2. The habitual misquotation of Galatians 5²² as 'the fruits of the Spirit' instead of 'the fruit of the Spirit' has its source here. But there is meaning in S. Paul's contrast between the 'works' (plural) of the flesh and the 'fruit' (singular) of the Spirit. For the former are many and incoherent, but the latter is one consistent character in many relations.

Reflections—i. Any return to God on the part of an individual or a people must be not only a movement of love responding to His love but also a movement of awe and dread in the presence of His holiness. S. John tells us that 'perfect love casteth out fear.' True, no doubt: but the sort of love which is not rooted in fear is a weak sentiment which does not correspond to reality. Who can read our Lord's words to His 'friends' (S. Luke 12^{4,5}) and not recognize that we cannot dispense with fear? Our Lord Himself is said to have been 'heard for his godly fear' (Heb. 5⁷). There is no spectacle more irrational or more terrifying than the spectacle of the insolence of the creature flaunting itself, unashamed, in the presence of its creator and its judge. 'I am horribly afraid for the ungodly.'²⁶

2. We pray for an 'increase of grace' in God's people to appreciate His Word. What do we understand by grace? The Greek word so translated described any beautiful or 'gracious' object, quality, or action, and the reciprocal gratitude or thanks which it inspires. In the Greek Old Testament it was used to describe especially the favour or goodwill of the superior to the inferior, and therefore of God towards man. In the New Testament it becomes the word (specially loved by S. Paul) to describe God's universal

²⁵ See Brightman's *The English Rite*, Introduction, vol. if p. xzxiii.

²⁶ This is a right feeling, even if 'hot indignation hath taken hold upon me' is the correct translation of Psalm 119⁵³.

goodwill breaking down all barriers between Jew and Gentile, as it is manifested in Jesus our Lord—‘the grace of God’ which ‘hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men’ (Titus 2¹¹), the ‘grace’ which came by Jesus Christ.

But in Church history ‘grace,’ especially in the Latin translation (*gratia*), came to have a slightly new meaning. It expressed that supernatural power—hardly distinguishable from the activity of the Holy Spirit—which is the special endowment of the Church to enable it to live the new life. So we speak of the special grace of baptism, the grace of confirmation, the grace of the eucharist: and we hear also of the grace of humility, the grace of perseverance, and so on. This involves a distinction between the sacramental gifts, given us, as it were, from outside, which in themselves are always the same in their rich fullness, and the receptive qualities of individual Christians which render the sacramental gifts of so much or so little value in each case; indeed, men may be so unfit to receive them that they may even eat and drink the sacramental food to their condemnation or ‘turn the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ into lasciviousness’ (Jude 4). It is plain then that when we pray, as here in the Litany, for an ‘increase of grace’ what we are thinking of is not any increase in the gift of God, which is impossible, but an increased receptivity on our part.

Moreover, the grace of God is found as much in His Word as in His Sacraments; and there too the value of the Word to each individual depends upon the welcome he gives it. So Cranmer’s Litany teaches us to pray for an ‘increase of grace, to hear meekly God’s Word and to receive it with pure affection’—that is, an increased receptivity. Something has been said about the value of God’s Word given us in the Bible (which is what is here referred to) as it is in itself. But we do well to meditate also upon the immense differences between one man and another in respect of receptivity—in respect of the welcome they give it.

Of course it is natural that, when one has persuaded himself that belief in God and His revelation of Himself is a superstition and an obstacle to his free development—it is natural he should have no taste for the Bible, especially no taste for it as friend and guide, as ‘a lamp unto his feet and light upon his path.’ But even among believing Christians the differences in affection for the Bible are immense. And yet there is no surer test of spiritual progression than the growth of a ‘pure affection’ for the Word of God.

What are the chief causes, then, which hinder good people from this affection for the Bible? Partly (1) it is that they find it difficult to understand. But the answer to this objection is easy. Most of the Bible any one of ordinary intelligence can understand. If, after thinking about it and praying about it, you cannot understand a passage, mark it and leave it. The marked passages will tend probably to become fewer as your study grows longer. But even at the beginning it can hardly be a quarter of the contents of the Bible that will be marked. Of course there is an abundance of modern helps to understanding the Bible: but our own conscience is enough to make us understand all that is most important in it.

But probably (2) what hinders people more is ‘difficulty’ of another kind. They are still obsessed with the false idea that everything in the Bible is to be taken on the same level and supposed to be equally true or equally valuable. That false assumption has to be expelled, however often it appears. When James and John were angry with a Samaritan village which refused to receive our Lord, and quoted the precedent of Elijah for calling fire from heaven to come down and consume the people, Jesus turned and

rebuked them. ‘Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man came not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.’²⁷ How much savagery in the Old Testament, both of act and desire, does not our Lord’s rebuke cover! Probably we should in the main begin our study, and cultivate the true affection for the Bible, in the Gospels: and go on to the Epistles and the Acts; and then go back to the Old Testament with a true appreciation—that is, expecting to find there how the people of Israel, chosen for their incomparable tenacity, and taken as they were in their half savage state, were trained till their conscience had become luminous enough to accept the word of Jeremiah or the Second Isaiah, and their spirit of prayer as admirable as we find it in the Psalms—though even there we shall see cause to refuse the curses on the enemies of Israel or of the individual psalmist.

But there remains (3) one other obstacle—one most formidable—to loving the Bible and especially to loving the New Testament—an obstacle which, we cannot doubt, diverts many people to books of devotion of a weaker kind—and that is the tremendous claim which it makes upon us. Certainly Jesus in the Gospel claims of us a service of unlimited liability: certainly there, and in the Epistles equally, one must die to life, if one is to rank as a disciple. It is a claim, we feel instinctively, which, if not strictly ascetic, is yet certainly heroic. This is not the place to seek to interpret special difficulties inherent in our Lord’s proverbial method of teaching. The fundamental difficulty is the absoluteness of the claim made upon all who would call themselves disciples: but when it was said just now that there is no better test of spiritual progress than the growth in us of a pure affection for the Word of God, the meaning intended was just this. If God is God, His claim on us must be absolute and to trust Him utterly must be our supreme wisdom. And the more this is believed and carried out in our life, the purer will be our affection for the word of God in the Bible and especially through the lips of Jesus Christ.

3. The third supplication (as numbered above), worded as Cranmer worded it, refers not so naturally to pagans or others outside the Christian fold as to those who having been within have wandered outside or are bewildered and misled. There were many such in Cranmer’s time, and certainly in our time they are a vast multitude. Mercifully it is not for us to judge or to condemn them. But it does matter exceedingly that in our prayers for their recovery we should remember to how great an extent it has been the Church’s fault, of one sort or another, or its indolence and neglect, that has alienated them; and that it is not, in the main, argument that will bring them back, but the spectacle of a Church so reformed as that it shall truly be, whether small or great, the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and a city set on a hill. Meanwhile, we as individuals can best serve God and help our brethren by letting our lives show the strength and love and invincible hope which we draw from the treasures of a true faith.

4. We shall notice that the prayers in the New Testament are not to any considerable extent prayers for the conversion of those outside or of wilful sinners. They are prayers for the perfecting of the faithful. The converting influence is to be the drawing force of the Christian community, and, there again, its life rather than its doctrines or its arguments. The order of the petitions in the fourth supplication is instructive from this point of view. And it would not be possible to find an intercessory prayer worded with more spiritual insight into the stages of moral progress or collapse.

²⁷ S. Luke 9⁵⁴. If the words put within inverted commas are not actually S. Luke’s, they may represent a true tradition. At any rate they are a true and invaluable interpretation of our Lord’s rebuke.

§7
SUPPLICATIONS FOR ALL SUFFERERS

1. *That it may please thee to succour, help, and comfort, all that are in danger, necessity, and tribulation;*

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

2. *That it may please thee to preserve all that travel by land, [* or air,] or water, all women labouring of child, all sick persons, and young children; and to show thy pity upon all prisoners and captives;*

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

3. *That it may please thee to defend, and provide for, the fatherless children, and widows, and all that are desolate and oppressed;*

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

4. *That it may please thee to have mercy upon all men;*

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

5. *That it may please thee to forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and to turn their hearts;*

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

Notes—These supplications again follow Luther's Litany, and also in part the Litany in the Byzantine Liturgy of S. Chrysostom. In the Liturgy of S. Basil our Lord is thus addressed: 'Sail thou with the voyagers, travel with the travellers, stand forth for the widows, shield the orphans, deliver the captives, heal the sick, remember all who are in ... mines or in exile ... or in any affliction or necessity. . . , be all things to all men, thou that knowest each man, and his petition.' The Sarum Litany has: 'That it may please thee to look upon and relieve the miseries of the poor.'

S. Chrysostom's Liturgy has also a prayer for our enemies: 'For those who hate and persecute us for thy name's sake . . . that thou wouldest convert them to what is good and appease their wrath against us.' Such a petition (as No. 5 of those we are now considering) follows we may suppose on the others, because, while a very large proportion of the sufferings of men is due to the carelessness and hardness of heart of their brother men, it is the duty and privilege of Christians to 'love their enemies and pray for them that despitefully use them and persecute them.'

Reflections—I. These supplications appeal naturally to the hearts of all of us. The world to-day is full of distress and misery. We have only to think of China, of Russia, of India, of the unemployed in all lands, of persecuted minorities in not a few, of the contempt of stronger for weaker races, of the sick and destitute everywhere. Thus any one who prays at all must be willing enough to pray for the poor and suffering. Moreover, we have always before our minds the image of our Saviour's pity. 'When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd' (S. Matt. 9³⁶).

But our Saviour's pity was never only an emotion. It was an emotion which moved to action. God, in Him, declared His almighty *power* most chiefly in showing mercy and pity. He healed the sick. He cast out the devils. He 'set at liberty them that

were bruised.’ It was He who first taught the world the *power* of pity, which philosophers had been in the habit of regarding as a disturbing emotion, incompatible with philosophic calm. So much of our pity is very far short of Christ-like pity just because it is only emotional, and does not proceed to remedial action.

Thus we should never pray for those who are in misery or want without immediately asking ourselves how we can help. Christ’s judgement is terrible on those to whom suffering makes no practical appeal. ‘Inasmuch as ye did it not . . . depart ye cursed.’ History is full of examples of how much can be done even by one person in removing the burdens which drag our humanity down. Let us think only of two women just dead. What a vast and permanent work Constance Smith did for women in factories:²⁸ and Margaret McMillan²⁹ for our sickly school-children. In each case we wonder to see how wide-spreading and permanent a remedy could proceed out of a single life. But on the other hand, it is deeply humiliating to reflect how apathetic the established Churches have been through long centuries in face of human miseries: or if they have not been apathetic, how content they have been to provide small comforts and remedies when they should also have been assailing the strongholds of injustice and cruelty whence so much suffering proceeds.

For ourselves, some of us with the best intentions still must tremble whenever they read or hear Christ’s words of judgement—‘inasmuch as ye did it not.’ We seem to be set under conditions where we can do—not perhaps nothing, but so little, to help or comfort the miserable or to set the captives free. Still, if the work in which we are engaged and in which we find our vocation leaves us little leisure time for works of philanthropy, and we are bound to do what we can mostly by giving support to the agency of others, let us at least see to it that our giving is not merely an emotional response to appeals but is based on trustworthy knowledge of the society or agency we contribute to. ‘Blessed is he that considereth³⁰ the poor and needy’ may be fairly interpreted to mean that we are to consult our heads as well as our hearts, and certainly there is a great deal of ‘charity’ which does more harm than good through careless administration; and a great deal which is not charity at all, if its motive is to acquire merit with God or reputation in the world.

Before we pass to other subjects we do well to remember how deeply God’s care for the poor and miserable had sunk into the heart of Israel through the teaching of their prophets. We have only to think of the latter part of Psalm 146:

Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help,
Whose hope is in the Lord his God:
Which keepeth truth for ever;
Which executeth judgement for the oppressed;
Which giveth food to the hungry:
The Lord looseth the prisoners;
The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind;
The Lord raiseth up them that are bowed down;
He upholdeth the fatherless and widow;
But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

²⁸ See Memoir of Constance Smith by Gertrude Tuckwell (Duckworth, 1931).

²⁹ A memoir of Margaret McMillan by Albert Mansbridge is to be published shortly by Messrs. Dent.

³⁰ See Perowne’s note, ‘Acteth circumspectly towards.’

That is the message of the Old Testament, maintained in the New, and some day to be justified to the full.

2. The religious literature of the Reformation period is full of slander of Protestants by Catholics and Catholics by Protestants. And in our own time there is a great deal of it, alike in the political, journalistic, and religious worlds. We must be ready to bear slander patiently.

It is to be remembered that when the witnesses at our Lord's trial accused Him of saying, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands,' they were bearing false witness. But He *had* said something which would have sounded like it. 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up'—that is, 'If you destroy this temple as in fact you are doing in your rejection of me, I will in three days raise up its spiritual counterpart.' But Jesus did not explain Himself. He 'held his peace and answered nothing.'

That at the moment was no doubt the truest wisdom, but involved the greatest measure of self-control. Slander that is quite wide of the mark is easy to bear. Slander that sounds as if it were true is the slander that hurts, and we must be ready to bear it. But whether the truest wisdom at the moment lie in explaining or in remaining silent, at any rate the right response lies in the petition we are considering for the forgiveness of the slanderer and the turning of his heart.

The slanderer, we may notice, is a familiar figure in the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament. This may serve as an example: 'The fire goes out when the wood fails, and quarrels cease when slanderers are away. . . . The words of a slanderer are like dainty morsels, swallowed and relished to the full.'³¹

³¹ Prov. 26^{20, 22} (Moffatt).

§8

CONCLUDING PETITIONS AND FERVENT EJACULATIONS

1. *That it may please thee to give and preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth, so as in due time we may enjoy them;*

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

2. *That it may please thee to give us true repentance; to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances; and to endue us with the grace of thy Holy Spirit to amend our lives according to thy holy Word;*

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

Son of God: we beseech thee to hear us.

Son of God: we beseech thee to hear us.

O Lamb of God: that takest away the sins of the world;

Grant us thy peace.

O Lamb of God: that takest away the sins of the world;

Have mercy upon us.

O Christ, hear us.

O Christ, hear us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done; In earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. Amen.

Notes—I. The first of the two concluding petitions is for the supply of our physical needs, the second for the supply of those that are spiritual. They are both perfectly worded. The first is based on the Sarum Litany, the second is original in Cranmer's. After them follows, reduplicated, the *Fili Dei, te rogamus audi nos* which, as we saw, stood in substance at the head of the petitions in the Sarum Litany and is repeated at the end. The *Agnus Dei* is also from Sarum, though there it was three times, not twice, repeated. The 'O Christ, hear us' (repeated) comes from some of the older Latin Litanies. And the following *Kyrie* and *Lord's Prayer* come from Sarum. Here of course we are no longer appealing to our Lord alone but addressing first all the three persons of the Holy Trinity and then the Father.

2. Just as above we noted that S. Paul's expression, 'the fruit of the Spirit,' becomes 'the fruits of the Spirit,' so here S. John's 'the sin of the world' (S. John i ²⁹) becomes 'the sins of the world.' S. John, however, uses the plural in I S. John 3⁵. The

singular 'sin' regards the world as a great corporate unity, together held in bondage to sin. The plural regards the multitudinous sins of individuals. And our Lord's redemptive action regarded both humanity as a whole and as a collection of individuals.

Reflections—i. The petition for the supply of our physical needs has largely changed its meaning. When Cranmer wrote it, those who prayed it in each parish church were asking in the main for good local crops such as would secure cheap food for themselves. Now the local crop is of little account. Those who pray are dependent on world-crops and world prices; and it may be that crops are superabundant and prices still high, or even populations starving, because crops are being held up till prices rise. The meaning of the petition has become much more complex, but the need is the same: and it is a grievous failure in our international arrangements if people can be hungry while provisions abound.

2. The petition for the supply of our spiritual needs lays stress on forgiveness, and teaches us to pray for forgiveness not only for our positive sins and negligences but for our ignorances. Real unavoidable ignorance is, in itself, an effective plea for forgiveness. 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' appears to be a prayer in the first place for the ignorant soldiers who were simply doing their grim duty. But S. Peter and S. Paul both extend the plea of ignorance—S. Peter (Acts 3¹⁷) to the people of Jerusalem as a whole whose 'repentance' he hopes for: and S. Paul to the 'rulers of this world' (i Cor. i⁸). But ignorance becomes guilt in proportion as it is wilful or the result of negligence. The religious ignorance of nominally Christian, even of educated people, is portentous, while the means of information abound. Truly we need to repent of our ignorances; and also to remember that no absolution for the past is possible which is not responded to with a steadfast purpose to 'amend our lives.' In the parable of the Unmerciful Servant the valid absolution, 'signed, sealed, and delivered,' is wholly obliterated because it is accompanied by no change of disposition in the recipient. 'I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou hast set my heart at liberty.'

3. The series of petitions for specific blessings has been very long, and we weary easily. But at the end of the petitions we pass to short, urgent, repeated appeals to the compassionate Redeemer without any mention of particular needs. This is the right method. When we tire of detailed petitions we should often do better to concentrate our mind simply on the merciful God in inarticulate and reiterated cries. Our Lord lays great stress on importunity in prayer (S. Luke 18¹⁻⁸). That is the sign of a faith that repeated disappointments cannot quench. One day God will answer. The kingdom will come. But our Lord sees that the strain on the perseverance of faith will be very great and sadly asks, 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find the faith on the earth?' May He find it in us!

4. As to the meaning which John the Baptist can have attached to an address to our Lord as 'the Lamb of God' (S. John I ²⁹ and ³⁶), or as to the meaning which the Evangelist attached to it, we can consult the commentators on the text. But there can be no doubt that when the Church used the phrase with such devotion there were three Old Testament references in its mind: First, there was Abraham's reply to Isaac, 'God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering' (Gen. 22⁸), interpreted to mean that the great propitiation was wholly of God's own provision without any contribution of ours: secondly, there was the image of the patient sufferer in Isaiah 53, 'as a lamb that is led to

the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb': thirdly, there was the paschal lamb, the sacrifice of redemption for Israel. There was also the vision in the Apocalypse of the 'lamb as it had been slain' standing in the midst of the throne of God in heaven (Rev. 5⁶). These references give the phrase a rich background. And we may be indeed thankful that the present tense 'takest away' is retained from the Gospel. No doubt the redemptive action finds its base and centre in a unique action—the shedding of the Blood of the Redeemer on the Cross: but it is continuous in its process and effects to the end of time. Nor in the case of the mass of men can we doubt that it is carried on beyond death—that 'he who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.'

5. The Lord's Prayer has two places where it is specially appropriate—at the culmination of the Liturgy, where 'we are bold to say' it with the full right that Christ has won for us of approach to the Father; and at the conclusion of any long series of supplications, summing up all in one, as here at the end of the Litany. It should never be forgotten that the Lord's Prayer is not so much one prayer among many as the mould and summary of all Christian praying—'after this manner therefore pray ye.'

Would we could repent of the carelessness with which we say the Lord's Prayer in our public services—a carelessness which is partly due to the over-great frequency with which its repetition is enjoined in the Prayer Book, a frequency which we may be thankful the Revised Book has retrenched. (Its saying is now only enjoined once at Mattins and Evensong and twice in the Litany and Eucharist taken together.) But it is still lamentable and quite unaccountable that those responsible allow choirs to gabble this most sacred form of words, so that it is almost impossible to follow it with any degree of thoughtfulness. For, most of all prayers, this one demands thought and deliberation.

It is most important that we should teach our choirs and our people to use the punctuation of the Lord's Prayer in the Revised Book, so that it should be plain to our minds that the phrase, 'in earth as it is in heaven,' refers to all three previous clauses. This is the Church tradition, and the Council of Trent enjoins all pastors to see that their people understand it: it is also the conclusion of modern scholars. It is therefore not a mere unimportant matter of punctuation. It is a means of impressing upon our minds that after we have invoked the heavenly Father, before we go on to express our human needs, we should have before our minds the true life—the life of adoration ('hallowed be thy Name'); the life of fellowship and order ('thy kingdom come'); and the life of joyful fulfilment of the divine will ('thy will be done'). That true corporate life of worship, fellowship, and service exists already in heaven. It is the life of the New Jerusalem, the heavenly Zion of which we, even here on earth, are the enrolled citizens, and which it is our highest patriotism to glorify. And the Church on earth was instituted in order to exhibit here, imperfectly no doubt but really, that heavenly order. That it should do so must be our first care and our first prayer, 'hallowed be thy Name as in heaven so on earth: thy kingdom come as in heaven so on earth: thy will be done as in heaven so on earth.' And only when thus we have exalted God's glory above man's need, and merged our little schemes in God's great purpose, and bent our stubborn wills into harmony with His great will, as is done in heaven, only then are we allowed to express our own needs, and that so restrictedly—not 'give us what we want' but 'give us to-day the bread for the coming day'—enough, that is, to enable us to live our life out in God's service: and then because we cannot serve God unless we are in His peace, 'forgive us our trespasses,' and

that not anyhow, but according to that deep law by which God deals with us as we deal with our fellow men, 'forgive us our trespasses as we also have forgiven': and finally because we are weak and frail, 'lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

That is indeed a wonderful prayer. A child can understand it, but it is the discipline of a lifetime to enter into its richness of meaning. Let us with all our spiritual strength set ourselves to appreciate it, and to insist that it shall be so said in church and elsewhere as to show that we appreciate it.

§ 9 THE 'SECOND LITANY'

The Revised Prayer Book has wisely divided the Litany into two parts, the latter, beginning after the Lord's Prayer, being described as 'a supplication which may be used after the Lord's Prayer in the Litany, also on the Rogation Days, at penitential seasons, and in times of trouble.' The structure of this penitential supplication represents what was probably the original form of the out-of-door Rogation Litanies, as distinguished from the Litanies recited within the Liturgy—that is to say, it consists of a psalm (or fragment of a psalm) enclosed within antiphons and preceded and followed by versicles and collects; though the psalmody and the collects have been much abbreviated and reduced in number. This 'second Litany' is here presented in the improved form which is given it in the Revised Prayer Book.

*O Lord, deal not with us after our sins;
Neither reward us after our iniquities.*

Let us pray.

O God, merciful Father, that despisest not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as be sorrowful: Mercifully assist our prayers that we make before thee in all our troubles and adversities, whensoever they oppress us; and graciously hear us, that those evils, which the craft and subtilty of the devil or man worketh against us, be brought to nought; and by the providence of thy goodness they may be dispersed; that we thy servants, being hurt by no persecutions, may evermore give thanks unto thee in thy holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Antiphon.) *O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for thy name's sake.*

(Psalm-verse.) *O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works that thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them.*

(Antiphon.) *O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for thine honour*

(Gloria belonging to the Psalm.) *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost.*

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

(Antiphon.) *O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for thy name's sake.*

(Versicles and responses.)

V. From our enemies defend us, O Christ;

R. Graciously look upon our afflictions.

V. Pitifully behold the sorrows of our hearts;

R. Mercifully forgive the sins of thy people.

*V. Favourably with mercy hear our prayers;
R. O Son of David, have mercy upon us.
V. Both now and ever vouchsafe to hear us, O Christ;
R. Graciously hear us, O Christ; graciously hear us, O Lord Christ.
V. O Lord, let thy mercy be showed upon us;
R. As we do put our trust in thee.*

Let us pray.

We humbly beseech thee, O Father, mercifully to look upon our infirmities; and for the glory of thy name turn from us all those evils that we most righteously have deserved; and grant, that in all our troubles we may put our whole trust and confidence in thy mercy, and evermore serve thee in holiness and pureness of living, to thy honour and glory; through our only Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer of S. Chrysostom.

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: Fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. Amen.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.

Notes—i. The whole of this, down to Graciously hear us, O Lord Christ, comes from Sarum—the first collect from the Mass ‘in tribulation,’ the rest from the Rogationtide prayers and the Prayers in Time of War. (It will be remembered that it was because Henry VIII was engaged in two wars that he required the English Litany of Cranmer.) The final collect in 1544 and 1549 consisted only of the first half of our present collect, translated from the Sarum, with the omission of the request that we may be helped by the intercessions of the saints. But the latter part of our present collect also has its origin in other Sarum collects which Cranmer at first included, but which were omitted or put among the Occasional Prayers in later prayer books. The ‘Prayer of S. Chrysostom’ was put at the end of the Litany by Cranmer in 1544. This (so-called) Prayer of S. Chrysostom is a translation of a prayer which occurs in the Liturgies called after S. Chrysostom and S. Basil. The use of 2 Corinthians 13¹⁴ as a benediction occurs in the Byzantine Liturgies. In the form of a prayer it was added here in 1661.

2. The appeal in the response, ‘O Son of David’ (*Fili David*) represents *O Son of the living God* (*fili Dei vivi*) in the Latin, and is probably only a copyist’s mistake made easy by contractions in the Latin.

Reflections—I. There is a tone of fervour in all this ‘second Litany’ which represents the deep anxiety of a people either in calamity or fearing calamity—in parts, calamity at the hands of foreign foes. (The Latin word, however, for ‘persecutions’ in the

first collect is *insectationes* which is used alike of military attacks and malicious invectives.) At any rate it is for times of crisis.

2. The first versicle and response is from Psalm 103¹⁰. The antiphon (now thrice repeated) is the last verse of Psalm 44 slightly varied, and ‘the psalm’ itself is the first verse (with the *Gloria* added) of the same psalm. Alike the versicle and response and the antiphon and the psalm are petitions typical of the Old Testament—the first expressing the feeling of the pious Israelite that his people richly deserves judgement, against which nevertheless he appeals to the mercy of God; the second being a protest against God’s apparent inaction (cf. ‘Awake, why sleepest thou?’ ‘Why standest thou afar off and hidest thy face?’ ‘How long wilt thou forget me?’ ‘Stand up!’ ‘Wilt thou be altogether as a liar and as waters that fail?’—Jer. 15¹⁸); the last expressing the deep sense of the great redemptive acts of God in the past. All those attitudes of mind towards God and His dealings with us need to be fused into one: the penitence for widespread and continuous neglect of God and revolt against His will—the awestruck recognition of the great redemptive acts of God manifested in history—the bewildered cry of the almost despairing soul when God seems to be doing nothing. The last of these is repeated with extraordinary audacity—with almost blasphemous insistence—in the Old Testament. God, however, loves to hear it, and it is represented in the amazing use by our Lord Himself on the Cross of the initial question of Psalm 22: ‘My God, my God, why didst thou desert me?’

Nothing can be done either for or by any soul which can calmly acquiesce in a world where God does not seem to count. And these strange cries must have for their motive the consciousness of the great things which God has done and must surely mean to do again for His people, and for their explanation the consciousness that God’s inactivity, or seeming inability to save, lies in the unfitness of His chosen instruments. The three, penitence, admiration, and bewilderment, are but three sides of the same state of mind, and are the exact opposite of the worldly mind—that is, a tolerant satisfaction with the world as it is and with oneself—without any living consciousness of those startling occasions in human history when God has shown His face and bared His arm in destruction and salvation, and certainly without any desire to experience any such disturbance of the customary order of the world to-day.

Bishop Lightfoot is credited with having said that ‘history (and specially Church History) is the best cordial for drooping spirits.’ That is quite true in a sense: there were moments in history which could always rekindle in the mind of the thoughtful Israelite all the fervour of exulting patriotism, such as the redemption from Egypt, or from Babylon, or from all-absorbing Hellenism in the days of the Maccabees. And there are like moments in the history of the New Israel—the joyful revivals in the life of the Church which cheer the hearts of the faithful.

But there are long periods when God seems to do nothing, whether under the Old or under the New Covenant, and when the only and the all-too sufficient explanation lies in the unworthiness of the Church and its inability or refusal to respond to the offers of God. So it is that the right state of mind for the Christian in a world such as ours is a compound of penitence, of almost agonizing prayer and of confident faith. It is the faith that must be dominant. ‘The history of God’s past mercies is a fountain of hope for those who own Him as the Rock of Ages.’ But our Lord warns us of the intense strain to which faith is to be subjected—before the final revelation of victory. ‘When the Son of Man

cometh, shall he find the faith on the earth?’

3. ‘The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you’ or ‘with your spirit’ is S. Paul’s common salutation at the end of his Epistles. At the end of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians he adds ‘and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost.’ This order in naming the threefold Name corresponds to the order of revelation. ‘Grace . . . came by Jesus Christ’: that is, in Him first God’s active goodwill is revealed in all its intensity and universality: through that revelation we learn the nature of God (the Father) as love: then finally by the coming of the Holy Spirit, since our Lord’s withdrawal from earth, we are taken by Him into the fellowship of the Church which is the ‘sharing together’ in the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (i S. John i³).

We have reached the end of our meditations on the Litany. Is it not indeed the case that this excellent form of prayer provides us, if we pay attention to it, not only with memorable phrases in which to express our desires but also with a deep and thorough schooling in the divine art of prayer?