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REMARKS
ON THE
LORD'S PRAYER

REV. J. FIELD.

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EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL
REMARKS
ON
THE LORD'S PRAYER.

BY THE

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QUI RECIT VIVERE, DOCUIT ET ORARE.

S. Cyprian.

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EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL REMARKS

ON

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

IGNORANCE and infirmity are consequences of sin; and, perhaps nothing more surely proves man's *fallen* condition than his inability to pray. When our first parents had offended they hid themselves, and felt neither inclined nor able to worship God as they had before done. He graciously promised a Saviour, and through Him they were reconciled; but they required, and no doubt received, further instruction as to how they might worship Him acceptably.¹ Even so now, although

¹ "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them." Gen. iii. 21. We may infer from this that they were taught to offer sacrifices, since, as Bishop Patrick, and others have observed, these were probably the skins of animals slain in sacrifice.

the enmity which all men, through a sinful nature, feel towards God has been taken away in the case of true Christians, who, having been reconciled and renewed in the spirit of their minds, will desire to offer continual sacrifices of prayer and praise; yet, without Divine assistance, they must feel their inability. St. Paul expressed this common feeling when he said, "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought;"¹ and our Church, in a striking manner, leads us to pray, as worshippers convinced of this truth, in the following Collect:—"Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, who knowest our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking; we beseech Thee to have compassion on our infirmities, and those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us, for the worthiness of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."²

We have, then, much cause to be thankful that when our blessed Lord "humbled himself" that he might redeem men from sin and death, and instruct them by his example and

¹ Rom. viii. 26.

² Collect to be said after the offertory.

his precepts, He chose some to be with Him who, as respects their natural inclinations and powers of understanding, were not superior to other men. When Christ called them, they obeyed his voice, and thenceforth they observed his holy life and listened to his gracious words. But they were often slow to believe and to learn of Him. It was necessary that the particulars of their duty should be plainly pointed out, and even repeatedly enforced. Now, without doubt, this was wisely and mercifully appointed or permitted, that the Church in after ages might derive advantage from the clear and distinct teaching thus called forth.

When on two occasions the Lord Jesus gave his disciples that form of prayer which we call by his name, perhaps some may be surprised that He did not previously insist strongly upon the duty and privilege of so drawing nigh unto God with prayer and praise. But, probably, those disciples had already learned these first lessons of a godly life. They were disposed to pray, but required direction. Even so, all who profess and call themselves Christians must feel that to offer the sacrifice of prayer and praise is

their bounden duty, and should be their great delight. If the latter be not felt, its absence may often be accounted for by our not sufficiently considering the nature and perfections of that gracious Being to whom our prayers are addressed, or from our thinking too little of the blessings which He is able and willing to bestow. And, since many repeat the Lord's Prayer with a very imperfect knowledge of its meaning, it is the object of the writer, by comparing it with other portions of Holy Scripture, and with the teaching of the Prayer Book—which is collected from Holy Scripture—to lead all who read these pages to “pray with the spirit and with the understanding also.”¹

If we refer to the two evangelists who record this prayer, it will appear that it is given, first, as a *model*, which we are *always to imitate*, and, secondly, as a *form*, which we are *often to repeat*. In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord, having condemned the ostentation of hypocrites and the vain repetitions of the heathen, commands his disciples to enter into their closets and “*after this manner to pray* ;” thereby teaching what must be the

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

subject-matter of their petitions. Yet since the prayer *then* enjoined was to be in *secret*, a strict adherence on every occasion to the form of words does not appear to be enforced. But when, some time after, a disciple sought from our Divine Master that, according to the custom of teachers among the Jews, which John the Baptist had followed, He would teach him and others to pray, or give them a form of prayer, probably desiring one which they might not merely offer in secret, but also when assembled together, our Lord said, not as before, "*after this manner pray,*" but, "*when ye pray say, Our Father,*" &c. As though enjoining that at times of saying other prayers this be repeated; and we must at least infer from his language that it would be a serious omission if, either in public worship or our family prayers, this form of sound and assuredly acceptable words should not be used.

As we might expect then, the compilers of our Liturgy not only gave due prominence to the prayer thus enjoined, but introduced it after such portions of the public service as tend most directly to promote confidence in God's power, and to encourage the prayer of

faith. Thus we find it inserted immediately after the assurance that "God pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel." And, again, after the Creed, the repetition of which serves to prepare the mind for further asking of God in faith, "believing that *He is*, and that He is a *Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.*" And the observation may apply equally to the occasional offices of the Prayer Book.

Most thankfully, therefore, should we accept, and as fervently offer a prayer which, in our remarks upon it, we shall observe to be entirely adapted to our condition, and expressive of all our wants; whilst the very fact that it was composed and appointed for our use by our Lord Himself, should not only recommend and insure its frequent use, but also excite our faith and hope. Our confident expectations ought, perhaps, to exceed even those of the disciples when first commanded thus to pray, inasmuch as the price of redemption and of all the blessings which result therefrom, has been since paid by the shedding of Christ's most precious blood. And, whereas they "asked nothing in his

name," we now "come unto God through Him" as our Mediator, and trust to his intercession on our behalf. Whilst, then, we offer this prayer according to his command, we may fully confide in his promise, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you."¹ By faith in Christ Jesus "we have therefore boldness and access with confidence"² to our Father in heaven.

"Our Father which art in heaven."

The title of Father is in various senses attributed to God. In our creeds we profess faith in Him as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, so distinguishing the first Person of the blessed Trinity from God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. But in the Lord's Prayer the title more directly refers to God in his relation to us, and we are taught to call upon Him not as *the* Father, but as *our* Father. Now, in some respects the Almighty is the Father of mankind in general; first, as the Catechism teaches us, because "He made us and all the world," so that every man may say with the Prophet: "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?"³ Again, in

¹ John xvi. 23, 24. ² Eph. iii. 12. ³ Mal. ii. 10.

providing for the wants of men, and in protecting them from numberless dangers, God constantly acts as a Parent towards them. But we shall see that it is in a far higher sense the Lord Jesus commands us to call upon God as "our Father." He teaches us that through his atonement and mediation God is the reconciled and ever-loving Father of all penitent sinners and true believers. Observe, that when our Saviour had suffered and risen from the dead, having obtained eternal redemption for us, He said, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father;"¹ thereby intimating that our relationship to God is consequent upon our relationship to Him, and results from his incarnation and humiliation on our behalf. This, too, is plainly declared in other passages of Holy Scripture. "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."² "As many as received Him, to them gave He power (*i. e.*, right or privilege) to become the

¹ John xx. 17.

² Gal. iv. 4—6.

sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."¹ And thus, "we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."² How great, then, is the privilege thus conferred upon believers, and how glorious the prospect! He who has purchased for them by his condescension and death the right to this relationship, and therefore bids them call God their Father, "is not ashamed to call them brethren."³ He even exalts them to share with himself the honour and happiness which are the reward of his own merits; for as the children of God they are "heirs, yea, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."⁴ Hence, St. Peter, addressing the Church in general, as made up of all God's faithful people, and forming one family of adopted children, writes, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto

¹ John i. 12.

² Gal. iii. 26.

³ Heb. ii. 11.

⁴ Rom. viii. 17.

salvation.”¹ Animated by the same glorious hope, St. John exclaimed, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see him as He is.”² Surely, then, the very name by which our Divine Master teaches us to address the Almighty should cause us to “*ask in faith* ;” and whilst, as obedient children, we pray, to *expect* that Father who so loves us, to grant our requests.

But He who has compassion on our infirmities, and looks with forbearance on our want of faith, condescends to reason with us in this matter, and would banish doubt and excite confidence by an argument so plain that all must understand it, and so forcible that it cannot be refuted. “What man is there among you whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or, if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall *your*

¹ 1 Pet. i. 3—5.

² 1 John iii. 1, 2.

Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him.”¹ We must’ also observe that being taught to call upon God as *our* Father, we learn to pray for others with ourselves. He who gave the “commandment that ye love one another,” would have all men “pray one for another.” It was well said by a saint of old, whose words were often worthy of his name :² “He did not bid us say, *My* Father, but *Our* Father,—that being taught we have a common Father, we might show a brotherly good will one toward another.” Moreover, whilst we pray for others, we are cheered by the reflection that they pray for us. The communion of saints is thus in an important manner realized: each has an interest in the supplications of all the rest, and receives a share of the blessings thereby obtained. But, on the other hand, as St. Ambrose once said, “He who prays *for* himself alone, prays *by* himself alone;” so if it were possible that a Christian should thus selfishly “seek his own,” how great the loss he would sustain !

¹ Matt. vii. 9—11.

² St. Chrysostom, which, in English, is Golden Mouth.

But whilst we are thus graciously encouraged to draw nigh unto God “in full assurance of faith,”¹ and with all the affection of beloved children, and having through Him who so directs us, “access unto the Father,”² are therefore bidden to come “boldly to the throne of grace,”³ yet such mercy must not render us unmindful of the infinite *Majesty* of Almighty God. He is our *Father in heaven*. Everywhere indeed present to hear our prayers, for though dwelling in the heavens yet “the heavens and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him ;”⁴ still, there He reigns higher than the highest, before whose throne angels veil their faces, and glorified saints fall down and worship.⁵ The prayer of faith must therefore be offered “with reverence and godly fear.”⁶ Vanity and pride too often prompt long prayers full of unbecoming expressions, but destitute of humble faith, whereas humility is strikingly enforced by the preacher’s admonition—“God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.”⁷ This entirely accords

¹ Heb. x. 22.² Eph. ii. 18.³ Heb. iv. 16.⁴ 1 Kings viii. 27.⁵ Rev. iv. 10.⁶ Heb. xii. 28.⁷ Eccl. v. 2.

with our Lord's instructions: "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him." ¹

And yet whilst the hypocrite, the impenitent, and the presumptuous are warned, let no sincere penitent, cast down under a sense of sin and conscious of unworthiness, be discouraged. Rather let him be animated by the heart-cheering declaration, "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word." ² Nor should these words fail to remind us that, whilst as a tender Father the Lord pitieth his children, having his ear open to their cry, and ever willing to supply their wants, so as "our Father *in heaven*," he is Almighty to help, and has power to satisfy our utmost desires. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask or think." ³

But before we proceed an inquiry suggests itself. Since self-examination should commonly

¹ Matt. vi. 7, 8. ² Isaiah lxvi. 1, 2. ³ Eph. iii. 20.

go before, as it ought always to be followed by, earnest prayer, so this introductory title of the Lord's Prayer should surely lead each of us to ask himself, Am I really a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus, and therefore one of those who, having received the spirit of adoption, do *truly* call God their Father? Does the Spirit, as the apostle further says, "bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God"?¹ Now, if such be the inward conviction, the outward conduct must correspond with it. Holy obedience must give evidence of our right thus to call upon God. "A son honoureth his father: if then I be a Father where is mine honour?"² is God's inquiry by his prophet. And to the same effect the Lord Jesus reasoned with the Jews, proving himself to be the Son of God because he obeyed the will of his Father and performed his works; but showing them that so far from their having a right to call God *their Father* whilst they lived in disobedience, their evil deeds proved that the devil, whom they served, was their spiritual parent.³ None, then, at the present time who profess and call themselves Christians, any more than the

¹ Rom. viii. 16.

² Mal. i. 6.

³ John viii. 44.

Jews of past days, can with sincerity say the Lord's Prayer if they indulge "iniquity in their heart,"¹ or are God's "enemies in their mind by wicked works."² But as, on the one hand, the thought of being reckoned amongst the children of the wicked one is most dreadful, so on the other hand, blessed indeed is the privilege, and bright the expectation of all who, having been reconciled unto God through Jesus Christ, are now his beloved children ; to whom in this world are given all things that pertain unto life and godliness, together with exceeding great and precious promises,³ that hereafter, and that ere long, they shall enter into the joy of their Lord and shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of *their Father !*⁴

It may be that the reader is a backslider and one of God's "rebellious children ;" who, though baptized in his name, confirmed in his Church, and perhaps even admitted to holy communion, has forsaken the "household of faith," abused the privileges and rich provision of his Father's love, and by self-indulgence or sinful neglect has justly forfeited the favour

¹ Ps. lxxvi. 18.

² Col. i. 21.

³ 2 Pet. i. 4.

⁴ Matt. xiii. 43.

of Him whom he has so offended? Oh let the title by which the Christian is here taught to draw nigh unto God incline you to return! Perilous indeed is your condition, but not hopeless, if to-day you will hear the voice of Him who saith, "Turn, O backsliding children, only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God."¹ "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord."² Still are you permitted, and even thus persuaded, to call God your Father, but let it be first, like the prodigal, with language of penitence and confession, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son."³ And however unworthy, yet again may you call Him Father in the language of prayer and faith, which He who hath purchased your pardon, here commands you to offer.

"Hallowed be thy Name."

In this and the two following petitions the Christian is taught to desire the honour of his God and Father, before seeking that his own necessities may be supplied. The practical lesson agrees with the precept given by

¹ Jer. iii. 13, 14. ² Hos. xiv. 2. ³ Luke xv. 18, 19.

St. Paul and enforced by the strongest reasons, "Ye are not your own ; for ye are bought with a price : therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." ¹

God's Name, which we pray, both with reference to ourselves and others, may be hallowed or sanctified, that is, thought upon and treated with holy reverence, may be understood to refer either to the various titles by which He is distinguished from all created beings, or as denoting God himself, including his attributes of love, justice, holiness, and all other perfections which pertain to Him. And those who endeavour to "give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name," will also, as the Psalmist proceeds to say, "come into his courts, and worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness ;" ² showing therefore becoming respect to his Word, his Sabbaths, his ministers, and the ordinances of his Church. We ask then our heavenly Father, as the catechism explains this petition, for "grace that we may worship Him, serve Him, and obey Him, as we ought to do." We desire that He may give us the disposition and the power to

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

² Ps. xcvi. 8, 9.

“sanctify the Lord God in our hearts,”¹ and so to honour Him in our words, actions, and conduct, that “others seeing our good works may themselves glorify God in the day of their visitation.”² As this then is our daily prayer, so it should be our daily practice in “whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God.”³ “Holy and reverend is God’s Name;”⁴ therefore, “as He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”⁵

But, alas ! with what solemn mockery some are chargeable, who, whilst they repeat this prayer, yet with their lips and in their lives profane and pollute that holy Name. The blasphemer or the rebel against God’s law must resolve to forsake his wickedness, or he will add to the weight of his guilt and punishment as often as he ventures either thoughtlessly, or with hypocrisy, to offer up this petition. Let every such offender take warning lest, “when he is judged, he be condemned, and his prayer become sin.”⁶ Forewarned as he is by God Himself that “the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 15. ² 1 Pet. ii. 12. ³ 1 Cor. x. 31.

⁴ Ps. cxi. 9. ⁵ 1 Pet. i. 15. ⁶ Ps. cix. 7.

vain," let him at once seek forgiveness, and with repentance pray sincerely, "Hallowed be thy name."

"Thy kingdom come."

That this petition should be thus early enjoined accords with another admonition of its Divine Author, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." As God is the Creator, so He is the rightful "King of all the earth," a truth which with the Psalmist we acknowledge with *praise*. But we are here taught to *pray* for his dominion in another and a higher sense, namely, that dominion which Daniel foretold "the God of heaven should set up, and which should never be destroyed:"¹ that the sceptre of Christ's kingdom, which is the "sceptre of righteousness,"² may be swayed over all the world; and that He may "receive the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession."³ And since God the Father, in the accomplishment of his purpose and the fulfilment of prophecy, "hath purchased to himself a universal Church by the precious blood of his dear Son,"⁴ we not

¹ Dan. ii. 44.

² Heb. i. 8.

³ Ps. ii. 8.

⁴ Collect for Ember week.

only pray for the welfare of its present members, but that their number may be multiplied. Thus in our Liturgy we “more especially pray for the good estate of the Catholic Church,” but likewise, “beseech God for all sorts and conditions of men; that He may be pleased to make his ways known unto them, his saving health unto all nations.” Again, we beseech Him “to have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics, and to take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of his word,” that they too may be subjects of his kingdom, as believers in Christ Jesus and obedient to his laws.¹ And whilst we are thus taught to pray, we are further instructed that the Almighty is pleased to employ human agency

¹ Campbell, in a valuable Dissertation (Prel. Diss. v., pt. 1), on the phrase “the kingdom of heaven,” observes that ἡ βασιλεία answers to the Latin *regnum*, which expresses both our terms *reign* and *kingdom*; and that whenever motion or time is spoken of it, as in the Lord’s Prayer, the former word should be used. This distinction has been marked by French translators who say, “Ton *regne* vienne,” not *Ton royaume*. Of the term οὐρανοὶ Campbell remarks that it is sometimes a metonymy of God. Thus Daniel says, “the *Heavens* do rule” (ch. iv. 26) as synonymous with “the *Most High* ruleth,” in ver. 26.

rather than miraculous power to effect his purpose. If "the harvest be plenteous, but the labourers few," He bids us pray that more labourers may be sent into his harvest.¹ Nor let us be unmindful that if the Gospel must be preached and propagated amongst all nations as the appointed means for promoting his kingdom, the sincerity of our prayer must be proved—if not by personal ministrations yet by some self-denial, and some gifts of our substance in such a service of love.

Again, we offer this petition in a more limited, but to us individually not less important sense, whilst bearing in mind our Lord's admonition, "The kingdom of God is within you:"² the meaning of which we learn from St. Paul, who tells us, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink,"—that is, not a matter in which the body is chiefly concerned,—"but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost."³ We pray then that all our vicious desires may be subdued and our unruly passions restrained: that our spiritual enemies may be overcome, and that, as faithful soldiers and servants of the King of kings,

¹ Matt. ix. 38.

² Luke xvii. 21.

³ Rom. xiv. 17.

we may be humble and obedient, and therefore peaceful and happy.¹

Further, the kingdom of our Lord shall be not only universal, but *everlasting*. The Gospel dispensation, or his present kingdom of grace on earth, must be followed by a kingdom eternal in the heavens. John the Baptist, as the forerunner of our blessed Lord, preached saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," that by repentance men might be prepared to believe, welcome, and value the Gospel of the grace of God. But when our Divine Redeemer, having overcome the sharpness of death, opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, He com-

¹ Bishop Pilkington tells us (see Works, p. 501, Parker Soc. Ed.) that "the common rude sort in all the far north parts of the realm, have ever used the Lord's Prayer in English metre;" and in a metrical paraphrase of the "Pater Noster by Bishop Coverdale," this sense of the petition is thus expressed:—

"The kyndome of Thy grace drawe nye,
That Thou mayst dwell alwaye in us
With Thy Holy Spirite continually,
That we remayne not vicious:
But as Thou hast given us Thy Spirite,
So let us ever do good thorowe it."

—*Coverdale's Remains*, p. 548.

missioned his apostles, and those who should follow them, to "preach the Gospel to every creature," with the promise, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."¹ They were "to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus." Thus God's believing and obedient children are "delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son."² And all who are the subjects of such grace at present, must earnestly desire and are here taught to pray for the arrival of that time, when Christ shall sit upon the throne of his glory and call them to "inherit a kingdom," thenceforth to reign with Him for ever and ever. In solemn and most appropriate language does the Church "pray after this manner," when, enlarging upon this petition, she beseeches Almighty God, "That it may please Thee, of thy great goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom; that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of thy holy name,

¹ Mark xvi. 15, 16.

² Col. i. 13.

may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in thy eternal and everlasting glory.”¹

But in the use of this petition what caution is required, lest some, whilst saying, “Thy kingdom come,” ask thereby an earlier condemnation. Dreadful to the impenitent sinner must be the coming of that day when the Lord against whom he has rebelled shall recompense him according to his iniquity. In awful words does the Almighty, by his prophet, forewarn men thus presumptuous:—“I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins. Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you?”² Let us, then, be careful to prepare for the kingdom of our Lord, whilst we pray for its approach.

“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

This petition is connected with the former, and naturally follows it. We have prayed that the kingdom of our Father may be advanced; that we may be faithful subjects of his kingdom of grace; and that, as soon as it shall please Him, we may be “partakers

¹ Burial Service.

² Amos v. 12, 18.

of the glory that shall be revealed.”¹ We are here, then, reminded of our Lord's admonition, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *doeth the will* of my Father which is in heaven.”²

Now, that will of God, to which we not only profess submission, but which we pray may be accomplished in and by us, consists in our suffering afflictions with patience, and performing his commands with faith and love.

Since, in this mortal life, all suffer as the consequence of sin, and man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward,³ and evil spirits, leagued with ungodly men, oppose and persecute the children of God, they “have need of patience.” But forasmuch as all this occurs by Divine permission, or appointment, and there is no “son whom the Father chasteneth not,”⁴ He is honoured when, being thus dealt with, we cheerfully acquiesce in his will, and neither “despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when rebuked of Him.” This reflection comforted the poet Milton, when afflicted with blindness, and tempted to com-

¹ 1 Pet. v. 1.

² Matt. vii. 21.

³ Job v. 7.

⁴ Heb. xii. 7.

plain that he could not be *active* in the service of God :—

* * * “Patience, to prevent

That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man’s work or his own gifts ; who *best*
Bear his mild yoke, they serve Him best.”

But we have higher examples of the exercise of this grace, which should lead us heartily to offer this petition. “Take, my brethren,” says St. James, “the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example of suffering afflictions, and patience.”¹

Even so, Eli,² and David, and Job,³ and Hezekiah,⁴ when chastened and grieved, all acknowledged the justice, wisdom, and goodness of God, and all profited by their patience and faith. Above all, let us ever consider and humbly imitate the Author of this prayer himself, who, in an agony far exceeding the utmost sufferings of others, “prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ! Nevertheless, *not as I will, but as Thou wilt*” ! And, in the anguish of his soul, a second and a third time prayed, repeating, “*Thy will be done.*”⁵

¹ James v. 10. ² 1 Sam. iii. 18. ³ Job i. 21 ; ii. 10.

⁴ 2 Kings xx. 19.

⁵ Matt. xxvi. 39, 42, 44.

But the Lord Jesus now “sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied.”¹ And all his faithful servants who have departed to be with Christ now esteem their afflictions—however long and painful they once appeared—to have been light, and to have endured but for a moment, since they are counterbalanced by “an eternal weight of glory.”² Surely, then, whenever we have prayed, “Thy kingdom come,” with faith, we may well be animated to add with sincerity, “Thy will be done.” To this effect is the exhortation of St. James, “Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts ; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”³ St. Paul, too, in like language, enforces the duty, and confirms the hope :—“Ye have need of patience, that after ye have *done the will of God* ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come *will come and will not tarry.*”⁴

But, as we have before observed, a desire that what God commands may be faithfully, and with love, performed by ourselves and others, is implied in this petition. And since

¹ Isaiah liii. 11.

² 2 Cor. iv. 17.

³ James v. 8.

⁴ Heb. x. 36, 37.

we pray that the will of our Divine Father may be “done on earth *as it is in heaven*,” it is probable that this *active obedience* is chiefly intended ; because, although amongst angels and glorified spirits there is perfect submission to, and cordial acquiescence in, God’s will, yet as there is the absence of everything which might cause pain, or provoke displeasure, or in the least dissatisfy, so there is no opportunity for the exercise of patience. It is, then, a petition which should lead us to imitate those blessed inhabitants of heaven whose knowledge is perfect, whose motives are pure, and every one of whose actions God approves. It obliges us to resemble those “angels of God that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word : those ministers of his that do his pleasure.”¹ Do we object to this that those “angels excel in strength,” and further ask, who amongst the fallen and imperfect children of Adam is capable of rendering the service required ? The reply must be, God alone can impart the power : it must come from Him whose “strength is made perfect in weakness.”² Far, indeed, are the most obedient and best of men from being “already perfect.” Their

¹ Ps. ciii. 20, 21.

² 2 Cor. xii. 9.

holiest endeavours and highest attainments prove them to be feeble followers of God's ministering spirits, and must leave them at an immeasurable distance from their Divine Father himself, who, in some respects, is their proposed Exemplar.¹ Still, as well in the performance of duty as in progressive wisdom, we must "go on unto perfection,"² seeking, as St. Peter teaches us, to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour,"³ and "always labouring fervently in prayers that we may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."⁴ Are we then ignorant? He can make us wise, so that like "an angel of God we may discern good and bad,"⁵ filling us with "the *knowledge of his will* in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."⁶ Are we sinful, and little disposed to obey his will? He can sanctify us, and incline us to say with David, and even with David's Lord, "I *delight* to do thy will, O God, thy law is within my heart."⁷ Are we weak, irresolute, and encompassed with infirmities? It "is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of

¹ Matt. v. 48.

² Heb. vi. 1.

³ 2 Pet. iii. 18.

⁴ Col. iv. 12.

⁵ 2 Sam. xiv.

⁶ Col. i. 9.

⁷ Ps. xl. 8; Heb. ii. 13.

his good pleasure,"¹ and who is able to "make us perfect in every good work *to do his will.*"² Let then a sense of our incapacity excite us more earnestly to beseech Almighty God, "that we who cannot do anything good without Him, may *by Him be enabled to live according to his will.*" And as holiness is essential to happiness, so it is just in proportion as the prayer, "Thy will be done," is faithfully offered, and therefore as the object prayed for is effectually obtained, that earth must resemble heaven, and its inhabitants, as respects their purity and enjoyment, become "like unto the angels," and "the spirits of just men made perfect."

"Give us this day our daily bread."

If in the foregoing petitions we have sought with sincerity the glory of God, we may now ask, with the certainty of obtaining, whatever is needful to our own welfare. "Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." "Therefore," said our Lord, "take no thought saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need

¹ Phil. ii. 13.

² Heb. xiii. 21.

of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." In this, then, and the following petitions, we pray particularly that our temporal wants may be supplied, that our past transgressions may be forgiven, and that future temptations may be either prevented or overcome.

These requests form a prayer adapted to man's present condition, as having a body to sustain, and a soul to save. It comprehends all things needful for life and godliness; and whilst dictated by Him, who although free from sin, can be "touched with a feeling of our infirmities,"¹ it is addressed to our heavenly Father, who "knoweth that we have need of these things before we ask him."²

In praying for "*bread*," although we are accustomed to speak of that food as "the staff of life,"—and should God bestow only what may support life, even that would exceed our deserts, and should be received with thanksgiving—yet our thoughts and desires are not confined to one kind of sustenance, but we ask God to give us those things in general, which He has provided as "good for food." The prayer of Agur, "*Feed me with food*

¹ Heb. iv. 15.

² Matt. vi. 8.

*convenient for me,"*¹ so far corresponds with what our Lord here inculcates. But we believe the petition implies more than this, and that all temporal necessities, since they are not referred to in other petitions, are included in this. We require suitable clothing and some habitation ; and we are assured that He who clothes and provides shelter for inferior creatures, bestows them upon his children who call upon Him. We pray then, as the Catechism explains, that our heavenly Father may " send us *all things* that be *needful* for us."²

And remembering that our spiritual welfare depends on our feeding by faith on that Saviour who is the " Bread of Life;"³ and that we must also " inwardly digest God's holy Word," in order to grow in grace ; some understand this prayer to include bread for the soul as well as body. It may be doubtful whether such sense was originally intended, yet such an application of the words can

¹ Prov. xxx. 8.

² " Not only those things that minister us food and apparel, but also all other things universally that are needful to the maintaining and preserving of our life, and leading it in quietness without fear."—*Dean Nowell's Catechism.*

³ John vi. 48.

scarcely be disapproved of by their Divine Author, and may be most profitable to the petitioner.¹

But whilst we are encouraged to ask for all necessary things, we are taught moderation,

¹ Although modern critics have not thought this sense to be included, yet several of the Fathers, and some of our own Reformers, considered it chiefly intended. Thus Tertullian says, "..... spiritualiter *potius* intelligamus. Christus enim panis noster est, quia vita Christus et vita panis." De Oratione S. vi. S. Cyprian also writes, "..... Quod potest et spiritualiter et simpliciter intelligi, quia et uterque intellectus utilitate divina proficit ad salutem. Nam panis vitæ Christus est, et panis hic omnium non est, sed noster est." De Oratione Dominica, S. xviii.

Our Catechism describes this as a petition for "all things that be needful both for our souls and bodies." Becon, in his Catechism of Prayer, says: "By an *allegory* it may be used unto this end. For as it is godly and our bounden duty to desire of God meat, drink, and all other necessaries for the conservation and maintenance of this our frail and needy life; so likewise is it *most godly* and our *most bounden duty* to crave at the hand of our Lord God, that he will give us his Son Christ, which is the true food of the soul, to feed upon by strong faith."

Again, in the "Institution of a Christian Man," we read, p. 192, "By this bread, which our Saviour teacheth us to ask, is principally meant the Word of

and that we must be content with whatever God bestows in answer to this petition.

We are not to “seek great things for ourselves,” but just as much as our Heavenly Father knows to be requisite or profitable for us. Dangerous both to body and soul must it always be to desire aught beyond this; and presumptuous indeed would he show himself who should ask for more. The Israelites God, which is the spiritual bread that feedeth the soul. For as the body is nourished, brought up, groweth, and feedeth with bread and meat; so needeth the soul, even from our youth, to be nourished and brought up with the Word of God, and to be fed daily with it. And like as the body will faint and decay, if it be not from time to time relieved and refreshed with bodily sustenance; even so the soul waxeth feeble and weak towards God, unless the same be continually cherished, refreshed, and kept up with the Word of God, according to the saying of Christ, man liveth not with meat only, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.”

To the same effect is the metrical version of Bishop Myles Coverdale:—

“ And geve us ever oure dayly bred,
 Both for oure body and soule also;
 And let us with thy worde be fed,
 That we be never kepte therefro,
 Lord sende us true shepherdes therefore,
 To fede us thy shepe evermore.”

offended in this respect when, dissatisfied with the daily manna which God gave them, they provoked the Most High in the wilderness, "and tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust." Their sinful request was granted in judgment, and how immediately was their murmuring punished! "He gave them their desire; but while the meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel."

Our Lord commands us to pray for "*daily bread.*" The word which is translated *daily* means that which is necessary for our present being and support. And since a further limit to our requests is prefixed by the words "*this day,*" or "*day by day,*" it is a repeated warning against covetousness, and against seeking too earnestly an increase of riches, whilst we are also taught to rely upon the constant providence of Almighty God. This world is not our rest. Heaven is the only abode in which all good things may be possessed and enjoyed without hindrance to our duties or danger to our souls. We are at present only pilgrims thither, and our wants on the way are supplied by that gracious Father who,

whilst He watches our progress, observes our weakness. Our daily bread, therefore, is given as a staff to support us, not an encumbrance to be carried. And just as a traveller on a dangerous road, if overladen with luxuries, or even burdened at once with all that might be really necessary throughout his journey, might soon fall and perish, or would certainly be tempted to indulge himself, and to loiter when he should be hastening onwards; so He who desires not only that our souls may be preserved and prosper, but that we may persevere and finish our course with joy, and thenceforth be "abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house,"¹ with equal wisdom and goodness bids us seek for and be content with a present sufficiency. "Therefore having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." "For they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition."² This petition, then, is taught by Him who is not willing that we should so perish, and the moderation it inculcates is enforced by other most instructive and solemn lessons. Thus we are admonished

¹ Ps. xxxvi. 8.

² 1 Tim. vi. 8, 9.

to "take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life"—either as respects its comfort or its continuance—"consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." And well, indeed, on the one hand, may even a poor man who, being rich in faith, prays and receives a portion only sufficient for the day, but has the promise of "the kingdom which God hath prepared for them that love Him,"¹ be satisfied and thankful; whilst, on the other hand, all who "trust in uncertain riches rather than in the living God"² have cause to tremble and be dismayed when they consider the parable by which our Lord illustrates his precept. It represents one, in his folly, calculating upon length of days and self-indulgence, saying to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God."³

This prayer further serves to impress upon

¹ James ii. 5.

² 1 Tim. vi. 17.

³ Luke xii. 19—21.

our minds that our Divine Father is the giver of whatever we obtain or possess ; “ He giveth life, and breath, and all things.”¹ Without his blessing the earth would be barren, the strength of the labourer would fail, or, should the sower scatter seed, it could not increase. Nay, should bread be eaten, it would prove a deadly poison unless God rendered it nutritious and gave us power to digest it.² “ It is the gift of God,” says Solomon, “ that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour.” Our food and other necessary things come not less from his bounty because second causes may conduce to their bestowal. These are all under his control. “ He maketh his sun to shine,”³ and “ with showers softens the earth.”⁴ He alone “ giveth us rain from

¹ Acts xvii. 25.

² “ In vain shall we cram meat into our stomach, unless God’s power, by which we are rather fed and sustained, than by nourishments of meat, do give both to the meat power to nourish and to the stomach ability to digest it. For which cause even *after supper* we pray to have the daily meat which we have already received to be given us of God—that is to say, *to be made lifeful and healthful to us.*”—*Dean Nowell’s Catechism.*

³ Matt. v. 45.

⁴ Ps. lxxv. 10.

heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”¹ And as St. Paul taught the heathen idolaters that they should therefore “turn to the living God,” so likewise the Prophet Jeremiah leads God’s people to pray from a remembrance of the same mercies. “Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? Art not thou He, O Lord our God? Therefore will we wait upon thee, for thou hast made all these things.”² With what entire confidence, then, should God’s children depend upon Him, who not merely provides all things needful, and invites them to ask that they may receive them, but has given special promises to increase their faith, and by the testimony of experience would confirm their hope. “He,” saith Isaiah, “that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.”³ And David testifies—“I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.”⁴

But let us not suppose that either com-

¹ Acts xiv. 17.

² Jer. xiv. 22.

³ Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16.

⁴ Ps. xxxvii. 25.

mands to pray, or the promises of God, or the proofs that He is faithful, afford any sanction to improvidence or waste. Although distrust, and such anxiety as might distract the mind and unfit us for present duties, are forbidden, yet prudence is commended; and alike foolish and sinful would be the conduct of a man who, if God prospered him, should act the part of a spendthrift, instead of laying by in store both for the relief of others and for any time of need which sickness or some calamity might occasion to himself. The "ant provideth her meat in the summer and gathereth her food in the harvest," and we are to consider her ways and be wise.¹ Nor

¹ Prov. vi. 6, 8. Since no species of ant has been discovered which makes a store of provisions, it is objected by many that a lesson of industry rather than of providence, is here intended. But, as observed by Kirby and Spence ("Introduct. to Entomology," vol. ii., p. 47), "These words may very well be interpreted simply to mean that the ant, with commendable prudence and foresight, makes use of the proper seasons to collect a supply of provision sufficient for her purposes. There is not a word in them implying that she stores up grain or other provision. * * * Till the manners of exotic ants are more accurately explored, it would, however, be rash to affirm that no ants have

must we presumptuously imagine that God will supply our wants if we are idle. Our Holy Father *gives* “*daily bread,*” and it becomes “*ours*” by honest industry.¹ Neither prayers nor promises set aside God’s precepts or appointed means ; and He who decreed, “*In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread,*”² and long afterwards by an inspired apostle, “*commands that if any would not work, neither should he eat,*”³ must not be magazines of provisions ; for although, during the cold of our winter they remain in a state of torpidity, yet in warmer regions, during the rainy seasons, a store of provisions may be necessary for them.” It is remarkable that the Septuagint, as though anticipating the objection, adds, *ἡ πορεύθητι πρὸς τὴν μέλισσαν*—“*Or go to the bee,*” &c., which does feed on its store during winter.

¹ “*Master.* How dost thou call bread *thine* which thou prayest to have given thee of God ?

“*Scholar.* By God’s gift it becometh ours when He liberally giveth it us for our daily uses, though by right it be not due to us.

“*M.* Is there any other cause why thou callest it *thy* bread ?

“*S.* By this word we are put in mind that we must get *our living by our labour, or by other lawful means,* that being therewith contented, we do never, by covetize or fraud, seek anything of other men’s.” — “*Dean Nowell’s Catechism.*”

² Gen. iii. 19.

³ 2 Thess. iii. 10.

expected to answer the petition for daily bread if offered by the idle and dishonest. Our Heavenly Father will not allow his children to abuse his bounty, as did the inhabitants of Sodom, who, dwelling in a land fertile "as the garden of the Lord,"¹ were "corrupted with pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness."² Rather has God, in great mercy, determined that "an idle soul shall suffer hunger ;"³ but graciously promised, "he that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread."⁴

One more remark is suggested by this petition. It has been well said that "when we ask bread from God, we ought not to accept it from the devil," wickedness of which surely all are guilty who dare thus to draw nigh to God with their lips whilst they endeavour to provide for themselves by fraud, violence, theft, or by the profanation of the Lord's-day. Such evil-doers insult the Most High when they address Him as their Father ; and whereas they are really children of the wicked one, they seek a curse, and not a blessing. He, as the prince of this world, may be permitted to supply them with pleasant

¹ Gen. xiii. 10.

² Ezek. xvi. 49.

³ Prov. xix. 15.

⁴ Prov. xxviii. 19.

· food for a short season, and they may find that "bread of deceit is sweet to a man," but they will as surely prove that "afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel."¹ Soon will they "eat of the fruit of their own ways."² Asaph has described the condition and the doom of these in the seventy-third Psalm, showing us that, if they fatten upon the spoil, they perish quickly; and that when, in their prosperity, "they say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape."

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

Having asked for what is needful to support life, we next pray that our souls may prosper, and, therefore, that life may be well spent. To this end, first of all, it is needful that our sins be pardoned.

In consequence of our first parents' transgression, all are "born in sin," and are "by nature children of wrath;" and although, through the sacrifice of Christ, original sin be forgiven, "the infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated;"³ and innumerable sins have been the fruit it

¹ Prov. xx. 17. ² Prov. i. 31. ³ Art. of Religion, ix.

has constantly produced. For these, then, we are here taught to ask forgiveness.

We have before observed that our Heavenly Father has a right to our obedience as our Creator, and that having made known his will, and given us a law, He claims submission to it, and requires that it be fulfilled. We know also that, on account of redemption, we are bound to “glorify God with our body and our spirit, which are his.” But we have failed in rendering to God his due; we have “come short of the glory of God,”¹ and have thereby incurred “debts” which we can never pay, and for which we are most graciously directed to seek remission. More than this, we have not only failed in the performance of duty, but offended by doing things forbidden; and we have thus “transgressed against the Lord.” This petition, then, implies a confession that “we have left undone the things we ought to have done, and that we have done the things which we ought not to have done.”

Now, when confession is made—whether thus expressed, or implied as in the Lord’s Prayer—with humility and penitence, it may be well accompanied with that prayer of faith

¹ Rom. iii. 23.

which finds a warrant in the promises of God. Of these promises Holy Scripture affords many—"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."¹ "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."²

A plain illustration may, perhaps, lead us to some profitable reflections on this petition. Let us suppose, then, a man to have committed a trespass (according to the common meaning of that word), in which he is discovered, and, being brought before a magistrate, he confesses his guilt. The law decrees a certain penalty for the offence, but the criminal is unable to pay that penalty, and is therefore sentenced to a punishment which the magistrate cannot remit without violating the law and treating justice with contempt. But let us further suppose the magistrate, moved with pity towards the helpless criminal, to provide a friend for him, who comes forward and undertakes the payment of the penalty, thereby satisfying justice and honour-

¹ Prov. xxviii. 13.

² 1 John i. 8, 9.

ing the law. The offender then, ashamed and sorry for his crime, pleads guilty to the charge, but, thankfully accepting and trusting to his surety, asks for his liberation ; and his benefactor, now entitled to act as his advocate, appeals not to Mercy only, but to Justice, and obtains for him a full and free discharge ; while the magistrate himself rejoices in his deliverance, and all the innocent and compassionate attendants in the court are filled with admiration, joy, and praise.

Now, let us remark a few particulars in the case we have supposed which bear some comparison, although necessarily imperfect, with God's procedure towards offenders.

As, then, man's life in this world is often compared to a journey, so his conduct is frequently described by the term *walking* ; and the law of God shows us "*how we ought to walk and to please God.*"¹ It provides and points out a straightforward course of duty we ought always to pursue. But "sin is the transgression of the law ;" that is, he who acts contrary to the will and word of God, passing over or out of the bounds He has fixed and turning aside from the right way,

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 1.

thereby commits a sin, or a *trespass*. And since "the eyes of the Lord are upon the ways of men, and He seeth all their goings,"¹ no accuser is required, no other evidence is called for. The offender is convicted before God, and condemned by that law which saith, "The soul that sinneth it shall die,"² and which again declares, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."³ Dreadful indeed is that curse, involving eternal banishment from God and from everything good, and that everlasting torment of which our Lord has forewarned the wicked! (Matt. xxv.) From the execution of that sentence the law provides no escape, nor can the Judge cease to be just or set aside its claims. Helpless, then, and hopeless would be the condition of the transgressor if left to himself. But God, moved with infinite compassion and lovingkindness, "sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to *redeem* them that were under the law."⁴ Thus the Lord Jesus became surety for the sinner. He paid the full penalty which had

¹ Job xxxiv. 21.

² Ezek. xviii. 4.

³ Gal. iii. 10.

⁴ Gal. iv. 4, 5.

been incurred, "gave his life a ransom,"¹ and by shedding his most precious blood upon the cross "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."² In Him, therefore, "we have redemption through his blood, even the *forgiveness of sins*, according to the riches of his grace."³ Moreover, by the interposition of such a surety, God not only "commends his love towards us,"⁴ but equally "declares his righteousness," that is, "that He can be *just* and the *Justifier* of him that believeth in Jesus."⁵ The law, too, is honoured and *magnified*. It demanded that man should die for his disobedience, but it has received compensation by the death of Him who was both God and man.⁶ "He was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification,"⁷ thus affording proof that the debt was discharged and the offering of himself once for all accepted. Having thus "obtained eternal redemption,"⁸ He now "appears in the presence of God for us."⁹ "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,

¹ Matt. xx. 28.² Gal. iii. 13.³ Eph. i. 7.⁴ Rom. v. 8.⁵ Rom. iii. 26.⁶ Acts xx. 28.⁷ Rom. iv. 25.⁸ Heb. ix. 12.⁹ Heb. ix. 24.

and He is the propitiation for our sins.”¹ Nor does He there intercede with a stern Judge, unwilling to forgive, but with a “Father who himself loveth us,”² who “retaineth not anger, because He delighteth in mercy; who pardoneth iniquity and passeth by transgression.”^{3*} Let, then, the penitent sinner draw nigh with faith to a reconciled and most gracious Father in words provided by such an ever-prevailing Intercessor, and he shall experience the blessedness of him “whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered,”⁴ whilst angels in God’s presence will exalt their voice of praise, and rejoice alike at his repentance and the success of his prayer.⁵

With good reason, then, and a sure warrant do we express our belief in “*the forgiveness of sin,*” and expect our own pardon when, in obedience to our Lord we pray, “forgive us

¹ 1 John ii. 1, 2.

² John xvi. 27.

³ Micah vii. 18.

* It is surprising and painful that our Heavenly Father should ever be represented as though *reluctantly* conceding that for which our Lord intercedes. The writer has referred more particularly to this subject, in his “University and other Sermons,” p. 208, *et seq.*

⁴ Ps. xxxii. 1.

⁵ Luke xv. 7, 10.

our trespasses." But "shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid." The penitent believer learns that holiness must be the result of well-founded hope; that fruits meet for repentance afford an evidence of pardon, and that all who are "justified by God's grace," are also sanctified by his Spirit. Being adopted and received into God's family, he aims to be like his Divine Lord; "and every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself as He is pure."¹

But we are further taught, that when we pray for forgiveness we must forgive; and most strongly does our Lord insist upon this, in the words which immediately follow the prayer itself, as recorded by St. Matthew. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses."² And let us not suppose that the condition was less intended when our Lord on a subsequent occasion taught this prayer without repeating such declaration.³ The change of one word in the petition itself may perhaps account for this. In the prayer,

¹ 1 John iii. 3. ² Matt. vi. 14, 15. ³ Luke xi.

as described by St. Luke, Christ bids us say, "Forgive us our trespasses, *for* we forgive." Here, then, the duty of our forgiving others is distinctly implied, and it seems to be taken for granted, that none presume to ask for pardon of God, but those who forgive their fellow men. But let none suppose these words to imply that any such forgiveness can be the cause of our pardon, instead of being that without which no man receives the boon. Such a notion would be contrary to the whole tenour of the New Testament, which teaches us that we are justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ;¹ and not by this or any other "works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."² And it would be alike opposed to the doctrine of the Church, that "we are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and not for our own works or deservings."³ Yet happy is the man who, whilst renouncing all merit in himself, after self-examination, can appeal to the heart-searching God, and pray for pardon with the assurance that he is

¹ Rom. iii. 24. ² Tit. iii. 5. ³ See Art. XI.

not disqualified, and incapable of receiving it, through any unforgiving or revengeful spirit, and who therefore can truly say, "Forgive me, *for* I forgive all."

On the other hand, shocking is the thought that he who with malice and guile presumptuously offers the Lord's Prayer, in which he asks to be forgiven *only as he forgives*, does in effect ask for vengeance, and can only provoke the indignation of God !

Few indeed have been the offences committed against us for which even an apology is due ; but who can number his own transgressions, or calculate his obligations to Almighty God ? No figures can express these. If Peter then supposed that granting pardon seven times might be the utmost which Christ's religion required, we learn from our Lord's correction of his mistake, that seventy times that number of injuries, if it were possible that any one man should inflict upon us so many, must not hinder or lessen our readiness to forgive. More than this, we learn from the parable by which the precept is enforced, that no extent of wrong of which we may be the subjects, can bear comparison with that vast debt of obligation we owe to

God, or with the amount of that penalty to which through numberless transgressions we are liable. Nor must we be unmindful of the majesty of Him whom we continually offend ; and since our guilt is in proportion to his infinite glory and greatness, it follows that any one of our countless iniquities exposes us to an everlasting punishment. Surely these thoughts must prevent our making any single exception in the trespasses against us, when we pray to be forgiven *as* we forgive.¹

Again, as we seek to be freely and entirely forgiven, let us take care that on our part pardon be not grudgingly and as of necessity conceded. If Satan cannot altogether prevent the performance of this duty, often does he contrive to mar such performance by some mixture of malice. We have been too ignorant of his devices ; hence that cold, heartless, and too common phrase, " I forgive, but cannot forget." It sounds like a pardon with the Devil's drawback. It betrays a

¹ " In case we do not fulfil this condition, then we pray God that He shall never show mercy unto us, nor never forgive us our sins, but suffer us to be damned perpetually."—*Institution, &c.*, p. 198.

" If thou prayest that God would forgive thee as thou forgivest others, thou either *cursest thyself*, or else thou must forgive them."—*Bishop Hopkins, in loc.*

lurking wish for revenge, it certainly is not a manner of forgiving which can be pleasing to God, or profitable to him who adopts it. We must forgive as God forgives, endeavouring to banish the sense of wrong as well as the desire to retaliate ; being merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful ;¹ and however imperfectly, yet with sincerity, we must imitate Him who saith, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."² Whilst, then, we present this petition, let us heartily pray for grace to "put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, with all malice ; and to be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us."³ Instead of cherishing a remembrance of injury, let the precept of Christ, "love your enemies," lead us to take his prayer as our pattern, "Father, forgive them ;" and let us be further induced cheerfully to forgive by the example of Him who thus "made intercession for transgressors," and endured the cross for the joy set before Him ; when, having purchased their

¹ Luke vi. 36. ² Jer. xxxi. 34 ; Heb. viii. 12, 17.

³ Eph. iv. 31, 32.

pardon, He should receive them to a participation of his own inheritance.

“ Yes, ransom'd sinner! would'st thou know
How often to forgive,
How dearly to embrace thy foe,
Look where thou hop'st to live.

“ When thou hast told those isles of light,
And fancied all beyond
Whatever owns, in depth or height,
Creation's wondrous bond.

“ Then in their solemn pageants learn
Sweet mercy's praise to see :
Their Lord resign'd them all to earn
The bliss of pardoning thee.”¹

Perhaps a question may arise from this petition, as to whether we should always suffer wrong rather than seek redress, and so pardon as never to punish those who trespass against us. Many of our Lord's admonitions certainly enforce what may be considered the extreme of forbearance; but we must not forget that they chiefly refer to those persecutions to which believers were then exposed. His disciples were neither to take the law into their own hands, nor to seek satisfaction in those courts in which justice was little regarded, and an appeal to which would, in

¹ “Christian Year.” Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.

general, but aggravate their grievances. But times and circumstances have changed since those precepts were spoken ; and, although an unforgiving spirit which prompts revenge must be ever hateful to God, and is as much now as formerly forbidden by the command, "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath" ;¹ yet neither a recourse to appointed means for the recovery of lawful debts, if resorted to without harshness, nor the restraining of those who would do us damage, is contrary to the spirit of Christ's precepts.² Still less can we think it opposed to God's will, that when laws framed for the welfare of society have been broken, the transgressor should not suffer for his crimes. Nor can we doubt that it is the duty of those who are the subjects of fraud or violence to prosecute the offender ; not, indeed, from

¹ Rom. xii. 19.

² "A wreakful mind and revengeful of injuries, the Word of God doth surely condemn. Let contenders at law, therefore, look well to it with what mind they sue any man. But the laws and ordinances of common right, and their lawful use, that is to say, such use as is directed by the rule of justice and charity, are not taken away or condemned by the Gospel of Christ."—*Dean Nowell's Catechism.*

feelings of private malice, or to avenge personal injury, but, for the safety of the community, the correction of the offender, and that others, when tempted, may be forewarned. The magistrate is "the minister of God, a revenger, to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."¹

The reader may possibly be one to whom a word of warning is suggested by this petition. We have spoken of the injured as in some cases bound to punish ; we would not say that the offender is forbidden to pray ; and yet, if his punishment, instead of leading to repentance, should only stir up anger, hatred, or revenge, no prayer could be accepted.

More than this, let none suppose if they have either contracted debts which they have no means to discharge, or if in any manner, by fraud or dishonesty, they have wronged their neighbour, that they can expect "forgiveness at God's hand," until, as is further expressed in our Prayer-book,² they are ready to make restitution and satisfaction according to the uttermost of their powers. Hopeless as the condition of any man must

¹ Rom. xiii. 4.

² Exhortation Com. Ser.

be who, by indulged sin, debars himself from drawing nigh unto God, yet what is declared concerning those who come to the Holy Communion with such iniquity in their hearts, is certainly, in a measure, applicable to the prayer of the impenitent; it "doth nothing else but increase their damnation." Let, then, a sense of the awful danger which attends separation from God's ordinances, whether as respects the sacrifice of prayer and praise, the holy sacrament, or other divine services, constrain us at once to act in accordance with our Lord's command,—“If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; *first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*”¹

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Having prayed for the pardon of past sins, we now seek to be preserved from future offences. The lessons given by our Divine Master were always consistent one with another; but in some cases we trace this con-

¹ Matt. v. 23, 24.

sistency more distinctly than in others. It has been observable throughout the Lord's Prayer, and is remarkable in this last petition. We may notice one or two instances.

There was an impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda, to whom Jesus restored health and strength. Finding him afterwards in the temple—in the house of prayer and praise, where every man who has received a cure ought to be first met with—He said unto him, "Behold, thou art made whole : sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."¹ Why that infirmity from which, after thirty-eight years he was thus released, had been sent upon him, we are not told ; but we know that all suffering is the consequence of sin, and that sometimes particular sins are punished with special inflictions. The votaries of pleasure and those addicted to sensuality "provoke God to plague them with divers diseases ;" and, indeed, merciful are such chastisements if they lead men with penitence to offer first the foregoing petition for the pardon of sin, and this for preservation from it. On another occasion our Lord's precept equally accords with this prayer. There

¹ John v. 14.

were very good reasons why He should not gratify the malicious desires of those who sought how they might accuse Him by obtaining sentence against the woman taken in adultery, and for which reasons he might say, "Neither do I condemn thee." "Condemning the sin," as St. Augustin says, "but not the sinner." Now without giving credit to some stories of this woman becoming a remarkable saint, we may well hope that when she heard our Lord convict others, she herself became convinced of sin, and that whilst she witnessed his wisdom and forbearance, she also received grace from Him who came to call sinners to repentance. She would then ask pardon of Him who had "power on earth to forgive sins;" and pardon thus obtained would surely be followed by prayer against future temptations, and so lead to obedience of our Lord's command, "Go, and sin no more." "The only cause," says the martyr Bradford, "why any are overcome and led into temptation is for that they forget what they desire in the petition going before this, which should never be out of their memory, to provoke them to be more thankful to Thee, and more vigilant and heedful here-

after for falling into like perils : for which to be avoided Thou dost graciously set forth a remedy in commanding us to pray, after pardon for our sins past, for Thy grace to guide us, so that we be not led into temptation, but might be delivered from evil.”

What has been said concerning the entire consistency of our Lord's teaching is alike true of Holy Scripture throughout. There are indeed some passages which *seem* to contradict others, but none which really do so. The apparent contradiction often arises from the same word having different meanings, or from its being applied to different things. It is so with the word which is translated *temptation*, the first and simple meaning of which is *trial*. A man when tempted is *proved*. His principles are called into practice. It brings out what is in a man. In this way then he may be tempted or tried as to whether he will act according to God's will or contrary to it. Now after the former manner God is said to have tempted Abraham when He put his faith to the test, and proved it by his obedience. (Gen. xxii.) And so some afflictions which God may send, or persecutions which He may permit, although painful,

are profitable, inasmuch as they bring into exercise the grace which He gives, and establish the believer in faith and holiness. They yield those "peaceable fruits of righteousness" which shall receive an everlasting reward. Hence the admonition of St. James, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." It is not then against such trials that we are taught to pray, for as the apostle afterwards says, "Blessed is the man that endureth *temptation*: for when he is *tried* he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."¹

But although our Heavenly Father thus chastens and proves men to do them good at their latter end,² yet as St. James further tells us, "God cannot be tempted with *evil*, neither tempteth He any man."³ It is therefore against temptations to *evil*, or *sin*, that our Lord commands us to pray. But it may be asked, if God never so tempts any man, why are we to pray to Him, "Lead us not into temptation"? Now we might point to many passages in the Bible in which according to the manner of speaking in Eastern

¹ James i. 2, 12. ² Deut. viii. 16. ³ James i. 13.

languages, the Almighty is said to do things when it evidently means only that He permits them to be done.¹ For instance, we read that the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and *He* moved David against them to say, Go number Israel and Judah (2 Sam. xxiv. 1), whereas if we turn to another Scripture we learn that "*Satan* stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel." (1 Chron. xxi. 9.) So that, just as God, for the punishment of Israel, is said to have moved David to offend, when He allowed Satan to provoke, or call

¹ In the "Primer set forth by the King's Majesty and his clergy, A.D. 1545," this petition was, "Let us not be led into temptation." And in his "Corrections of the Institution of a Christian Man," King Henry VIII. proposed to substitute for "lead us not," the words, "suffer not us to be led." But Archbishop Cranmer objected that "Christ taught us thus to pray:—'Lead us not into temptation.' And we should not alter any word in the Scripture, which wholly is ministered unto us 'by the Ghost of God' (2 Peter i.), although it shall appear to us in many places to signify much absurdity: but first, the Scripture must be set out in God's own words, and if there be any ambiguity, absurdity, or scruple, after it would be declared, according to the true sense thereof."

forth, that offence, so when we use this petition we do not charge God with tempting us to sin, but we pray that, instead of permitting, He will either prevent temptation or that "He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it."¹

But the world is full of ungodly men who entice to sin; and Satan, from whom, as "the evil one," we especially implore God to deliver us,² and one of whose names is "the Tempter," with numberless wicked spirits

¹ 1 Cor. x. 13.

² In the former part of this petition we pray to be preserved from temptations in general, or that we may be strengthened to resist them; as the catechism explains, "That it may please God to save and defend us in all dangers ghostly or bodily;" but in the latter part we pray to be delivered more particularly from "the evil one" or our "ghostly enemy." "This *evil*, the writers take it for the devil; for the devil is the instrument of all ill; like as God is the fountain of all goodness, so the Devil is the original root of all wickedness. Therefore, when we say, 'Deliver us from evil,' we desire God that He will deliver us from the devil and all his crafts, subtilties, and inventions, wherewith he intendeth to hurt us."—*Bishop Latimer on the Lord's Prayer.*"

like himself, is ever active in tempting us to offend ; and the flesh, that is, our own sinful and depraved nature, is always inclined to evil and craves indulgence. Hence we cannot expect to be *kept from* all temptations, rather must we pray to be preserved *amidst* them. And whilst we thus seek for protection amidst enticements in general, if there be any to which particular times, or places, or our own natural inclinations give especial power, these should be remembered and form the subject of special prayer. Are we allured by the pomp or the vain pleasures of this world and longing to be rich that we may partake of them ? then calling to mind our baptismal vows and the solemn warnings of God's Word, let us pray for grace to subdue this desire. "For they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition."¹ Are we threatened with losses, and liable to the temptations which attend distress and destitution ? then, without coveting wealth, we may pray against want ; and in either case we have supposed, the use of this petition may further suggest to us the

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 9.

prayer of Agur, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." He desired to be kept from temptations arising from either cause, and therefore adds, "Lest I be full (or rich) and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."¹ Are our passions strong and our corrupt inclinations powerful? then, lest the lusts of the flesh prevail against us, we may well add the words of David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."²

But never is Satan more subtle, and never are his devices more dangerous, and therefore our prayers to be preserved are never more needful, than when he assumes the appearance of an angel of light. He can sometimes pervert the conscience and misapply the very words of God. "If he cannot prevail as a devil," writes Bishop Hopkins, "he can shift his shape; he can disguise his temptations into impulses of the Holy Spirit, persuade us that what he prompts us to is our duty, head his fiery darts with Scripture sentences, wrap up his poison in the leaves of the Bible, and wound our souls by our consciences. . . .

¹ Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

² Ps. li. 10.

Now, if God did not appear to deliver us from these subtle wiles of the devil, how soon would he make fools of the wisest and most experienced Christians."

Whilst then we are exposed to temptations from so many sources, and are conscious that we have not power of ourselves to withstand them, how encouraging is the assurance that He who commands us to pray after this manner, has "Himself suffered being tempted, and is able to succour them that are tempted."¹ "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."² He then who, in compassion to our infirmities, has taught us to pray, can even now sympathize with us, and by his intercession ensure the acceptance of our prayers, and thus render our resistance of temptations successful; making us "more than conquerors through Him who hath loved us."³ Thus the sorest trials and the strongest enticements, occurring under God's control

¹ Heb. ii. 18. ² Heb. iv. 15, 16. ³ Rom. viii. 37.

and counteracted by his grace, so far from proving hurtful to the Christian, shall surely promote his everlasting happiness and honour.

“For were there no temptation, then no fight,
 And if no fight, no victory could be :
 No victory, no palmes nor vertues white ;
 No crosse, no crowne of immortality :
 So from great illis more goods to vs redound,
 As oft most sicknesse maketh vs most sound.”¹

Yet these cheering truths must not render us unmindful of our Lord's command, “Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.”² The Christian soldier must not be drowsy in the midst of danger, nor neglect his own duties whilst he asks for God's defence. Let none then presumptuously expose themselves to temptation whilst they express a desire to be preserved. Alas, there are many who say the Lord's Prayer whose careless lives or vicious habits too plainly show they have no wish it should be answered. How many stand in the way of sinners, or even “sit in the seat of the scornful,” and so court enticements to further transgression ! For instance, how truly is this the case with all who for mere self-

¹ “Nosce Teipsum,” by Sir John Davies, A.D. 1599.

² Matt. xxvi. 41.

indulgence frequent scenes of dissipation and excess ! Nor is it less so with the Sabbath-breaker, who, when the church bell calls him to the worship of his God, turns aside to seek his own pleasure, and so, departing from the Divine presence, seems to *invite* Satan to accompany him, and to “take him captive at his will.” In the same class must the slothful be included,—

“ For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.”

—A simple rhyme of our childhood most worthy of lasting remembrance ; but our very familiarity with which tends to prevent due reflection upon the serious warning it conveys. What solemn mockery is it for persons like those we have described to say, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” whilst they despise the admonition, “Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.”¹

And if the unwatchful, the idle, the presumptuous, and the profane, rather increase their sin than obtain safety by repeating this petition, even greater guilt must attach to those who,

¹ 1 Pet. v. 8.

whilst thus asking protection and deliverance for *others*, as well as themselves, not only rush into temptation and consent to sin, but are also tempters of their fellowmen, and so take part and are accomplices with Satan in his endeavours to ensnare and destroy those for whom they profess to pray !

But whilst in our warfare against temptations we watch and pray, we must as Christ's faithful soldiers, fighting under his banner, "put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand." What that armour is, the apostle describes particularly Ephesians vi. Whilst, therefore, we look for wisdom and strength to the "Captain of our salvation," who himself contended against and overcame temptation, we must be careful in all our conflicts to use the weapons which He has appointed. Moreover, we learn from our Lord's example, when tempted, how we must wield some of those weapons. Let us observe how He withstood and warded off all the Devil's attacks by "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Even so it becomes us by a careful and constant study of Holy Scripture to get forearmed against temptations, and then with holiness, faith, and

hope, unflinchingly to resist, with the remembrance of what is "*written.*"¹ David knew by sad experience the force of various temptations, but he was taught how to withstand them. "Thy word," says he, "have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee;"² and, again, "by the words of his lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer."³ And just as the apostle, after admonishing us to take the "sword of the Spirit," again bids us "*pray always,*" thus enforcing the use of this petition, so we find that the psalmist, distrusting his own prudence and power, earnestly asks support and guidance from God, exclaiming, "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." Such desires to be stedfast in duty, accompanied by a sense of weakness, and both exciting to fervent prayer, with entire dependance upon Almighty God, have been the characteristics of his faithful people in every age. Hence our Church leads us in one of her beautiful collects thus to enlarge upon the petition her Lord has taught: "O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the

¹ Matt. iv.² Ps. cxix. 11.³ Ps. xvii. 4.

frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright, grant to us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

“*For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.*”

We are thus taught that our prayer should end with praise. We ascribe to God all authority as King of kings, whose *dominion* is everlasting; we adore Him as the Almighty, “ruling by his *power* for ever;”¹ and whilst He thus “reigns clothed with majesty and strength,”² we endeavour to “give unto the Lord the *glory* due unto his name.”³

As the Lord Jesus here teaches his faithful people to offer praise, so David was before inspired to use similar language when he said, “Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art

¹ Ps. lxvi. 7.

² Ps. xciii. 1.

³ Ps. xxix. 2.

exalted as head above all.”¹ And this privilege of access to God, not merely in prayer, that our wants may be supplied, but in that higher act of worship, praise for blessings bestowed, whilst it increases faith, hope, and love, is also a preparation for, and some foretaste of, that fulness of joy which glorified saints shall feel when, with united voices before the throne, they will for ever say, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power.”²

“*Amen.*”

This Hebrew word, which has been adopted into the English language, occurs frequently in Holy Scripture, and although it branches out into somewhat different meanings, yet the root of it, or that which expresses the original idea, denotes *truth* or *certainty*. It is in this sense a title of God himself. Thus we read, “He that sweareth in the earth, shall swear by the God of truth,”³ that is, by the God, **AMEN**. And so our Lord declares himself to be “the **AMEN**, the faithful and true Witness.”⁴ Again, it was a word by which the

¹ 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12.

² Isa. lxxv. 16.

³ Rev. iv. 11.

⁴ Rev. iii. 14.

truth of any statement was solemnly affirmed, and it was often so used both in the Old and New Testament, where it is now translated *verily, i. e., truly*. In this sense, then, amongst others, we use it at the end of our prayers, declaring that we are honest and truthful, that we sincerely believe what we have said, and heartily desire that for which we have asked. But more than this, it is an expression of confidence and hope: as we begin by addressing God as our Father,—a name which should excite us to offer the prayer of faith, so we conclude with a term which, reminding us “He is faithful that promised,”¹ should confirm our hope, and assure us of a gracious answer to our prayer. In accordance with this is the explanation of the Catechism, “This, I trust, He will do of his mercy and goodness, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore I say, Amen, so be it.”

¹ Heb. x. 23.

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