

would be emptied of their significance. For these reasons, therefore, *Mediator Dei* should be a foundation stone for *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*. And for these reasons the articles concerned with prayer and the Liturgy which had been piling up on the Editorial table for some such occasion are here presented as an earnest of future studies of a like nature based on the Encyclical and to honour the appearance of what must become a classical text for all who read about and try to live the spiritual life.

ERRATA: We very much regret that, owing to unseemly haste in trying to publish the March issue of *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* in time, some major misprints occurred in Fr Graham's article, 'Orthodoxy and Religious Experience'.

p. 401. Line 15 for *gates* read *states*.

p. 405. Delete line 30—'is thus the foundation', etc.
line 34-5. The reference is to I-II. 111. 5.

PRAYER, SILENCE, PEACE¹

BY

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NE of the curious things that you may sometimes hear nuns say is, 'I have no time for prayer', a curious thing for anyone to say. One would suppose that prayer were an exercise like eating, over and done with; as though prayer were an act that began and ended at a certain time. You hear too: 'I didn't say my prayers this morning'. 'No prayers?' 'Oh, yes, but not all'. Curious, isn't it? I look on prayer as a duty to be portioned off. How can I say I haven't time for prayer? Haven't time to raise my mind and heart to God? They mean they haven't time to sit and do nothing else but pray. We have *always* got time for prayer. Constant prayer is the idea of the New Testament, Christ's teaching. Anything is prayer, prayer is anything. It is not an individual thing, it can speak all languages, it is as varied as our life. Prayer is natural to the soul. That we have no time for that is incredible, impossible. We have a number of letters to write, children to teach—can't that be praying? To see the trees, to listen to the birds—all prayer. Don't say you have little time for prayer. Silly, isn't it? One often hears it said, too: 'I do not care to go to an active Order; I can't fit teaching with Religious Life'; blind, aren't

¹ From a retreat preached in Edinburgh, 1932.

they? We come to religion to do more work, not less. Sometimes nuns say: 'Well, you know, I wish sometimes that I was a contemplative with nothing to do but pray'. Contemplatives say they have no time for prayer, the day is so full of Office and little occupations!

Prayer is an attitude of the soul, a state of mind, a consecration of life, and the spirit of prayer is most needed by those who have the most work to do. We seem overworked these days—*no*, not overworked, but we have lost all quietness of spirit, we live with one eye on the clock, anxious not so much about what we are doing as about what we are going to do. The thought of work ahead haunts me. We want the unalterable—divine—contemplative attitude. Quiet of soul, never worried or badgered. We say we can't fit the work in—does it matter? We have only to try, that is all God wants. Is our work very valuable to God? He doesn't care twopence about our work—well, perhaps twopence. He could do it himself by an act of his will. The soul is trying, that is all that matters to him. No use being flustered and saying, 'Well, I have tried to do it all'. Don't try to do it all: you can't play the part of Providence. Doctors tell us that to run never does anyone any harm—to run to catch a train does. Why? Because anxiety, worry, the effort of mind affect the heart. That is not Christian, that destroys our work, the strength, the solidity of it.

The old artists worked as though they had the whole of eternity before them, an immense stillness of heart. We need that peace; how can we find it? In ages past the old religious searched for peace from door to door. The question when the porter opened it was: 'Have you peace to give me?' How could anyone give them peace? *That* is in the heart. It is not found in a cloister, but in a man's heart. Physical peace is found by leaving the world, and so these old religious sought peace by streams and trees, there they built themselves wattle huts. Later they set to work to build their houses, a cloister apart. They sought peace from men, so they cleared spaces around them that they might have the peace of quiet apart even from trees. The desert stood as a symbol of peace in early monasticism. In a way they did find it. And after a little the monastery had grown great and there spring up around it little houses where they that look after the flocks may dwell, and the silent monastery is silent no longer, there is the laughter of the children, the hum of work, the singing of women. The old story—impossible to get away. Why should you get away? You are needed among men, in the streets and the centre of cities. Is there then no longer need of peace? Oh, yes, we still have some sort of enclosure, but it is so difficult to hold out against, not the pressure of the people, but their crying

needs, we shall never find peace by refusing them. Peace broken in on from outside? *Never*—from a man's own heart.

How shall we find and safeguard monastic peace? they questioned. *Silence* was the answer, more enduring than anything like vast tracts of country. We will get the better of this encroachment of men and live under the silence, peace secured not by walls but by something more subtle than walls or locked doors. No sound shall be heard. Do you think that is going to solve the difficulty? Never one Founder that has not insisted on silence. What is silence? Material silence is only a help, a condition. Silence is deeper, more like prayer, an attitude of the soul, stillness of soul—'Sit still, my daughter'. Sit still doesn't mean doing nothing. In stillness of heart we hear the whisper of God's voice. If we are anxious there is no silence, only the law. 'I will not speak', no tranquillity. Silence is something much deeper, much more. It is a perfect dependency of the soul on God. Do you think that silence was broken when the Master spoke, when he tramped backwards and forwards to Pilate and Herod? In the tumult of the jeering crowd his soul was in *perfect* peace. Was his soul more silent when he did not speak? No, there was silent dignity in his speech. What matter what he did, peace was in his soul always. We don't want the silence of rest, of being past work, but the silence while we are talking, even while we are teaching busy minds. We want to be full of vigorous, intense silence, tranquil in this world, not out of it.

An ideal, this concept of our blessed Lord. We never shall get there perfectly. Only in heaven where there is that eloquent stillness of souls—'Thy will be done as it is in heaven'—unquenchable, unbroken silence which springs from the inner depth of a man's heart and has nothing to do with the external law. It would not be worth while coming to a religious house if that external law were all. We are up against God again. Our Lord was conscious of the Everlasting Arms, why should he fight or struggle, he was always tranquil. The less care we take of ourselves the greater care he will take of us. Cast all your care upon the Lord. He will care for you. A hard lesson, yes, but worth while, isn't it? At Mass I will make myself conscious of the great act of sacrifice and bow my will to the will that he bowed to. The sacrifice of Isaac, of Melchisedech, the absolute subjection of man to a will greater than his own. Perfect stillness. He stands as the link between us; beholding him we touch God, and in him is the spirit of silence.

No more silly remarks. The more we bring God into life the busier it is and the more peace God gives us. 'Though I go down into the Valley of the Shadow of Death I will not fear for thou art with me.' We must conquer fear and nerves, not giving way. It is an attitude

of heart, leaving self to be in the hands of God. 'Into thy hands I commit my spirit.' A tranquillising prayer not only to be made at the day's end, but during our work. I must clamber up out of the world up to a greater sense of God's will, not as it is done on earth but in heaven. We just want to do what God wants, no less, no more, safe in the shelter of his hands. Sometimes in a wood we come to a deep unused quarry. The wonderful stillness affects us even as we stand and watch the still water in its depths. There is always something so restless about the sea, always restlessly stretching out its arms, but in the quiet waters there is something of peace. (God is the clear pool, tranquillising our souls. Looking in that deep well and finding silent peace, may he help us.

Mass and our meditation will help us also to find that peace—untroubled and clear, in the world held by him and his unmoved strength finding peace. Silent in the heart we shall hear him speak and so silent *shall* we hear.

LITURGICAL PRAYER

BY

W. J. STIBBS



It is almost a truism to say that a creature's primary duty is to glorify its creator, a duty fulfilled by the creature's being itself to perfection. The Lauds canticle, *Benedicite*, is an expression of this idea, the whole of creation singing a hymn of praise to God. But man occupies a special position in this choir, in that, of all its members, he alone is free in offering his praise. All carry out this work by living according to the nature God has given them—the animals, the trees and flowers, the very sticks and stones—but it is of their nature to be incapable of anything else. It is of man's nature to be free, and so his praise of God must be voluntary, if it is to be truly human. He has only two alternatives, either to glorify God by choosing to worship him, or to insult him by refusing. That is why man's service of God is meritorious, and his neglect blameworthy.

No human act need be excluded from this idea of worship. As St Paul says: *Therefore whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God.* (1 Cor. 10. 31.) But although there are in every part of life possibilities of Godward living, man's purest worship must be offered by those faculties which are peculiar to him, the intellect and the will. These faculties, indeed, can be used in different ways for God's glory. But man reaches his greatest perfec-