

February 2008 Newsletter

S. CLEMENT'S CHURCH

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A Sermon from the Rector

Jesus Christ, the Saviour of All

“Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.” *Ephesians 5*

It is difficult to open a paper or journal these days without seeing rants from fundamentalist Christians against Harry Potter or the *Narnia Chronicles* of C.S. Lewis or Tolkien’s *Ring Cycle*.

The fundamentalists concentrate on the imaginative inventions of these authors, on wizards and elves, magic spells and dragons, talking animals and walking tress, and condemn them as being anti-Christian, against the message of the Bible. They counsel parents not to allow their children to see such movies or to read such books.

But what these Bible-bashers have failed to realize is that such works of imagination all show the great cosmic battles between good and evil. And in every one of them good wins out. But not without much suffering, and the greatest suffering of all is the spirit of self-sacrifice and love which inspires the heroes.

In other words, Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and J.K. Rowling and many other writers are presenting in fantastic and imaginative forms the old, old story of Jesus and his love (I promised not to sing that last line!).

The first chapter of S John’s Gospel, our Last Gospel at most Masses, says of Jesus, the Word of God: ‘In him was life, and the life was the light of men . . . That was the true light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world.’ *All men, all human beings of every age are given light by the Logos, the Word of God. Not just Christians, but all men. This is the voice of conscience and the awareness of good and evil that is in us all.*

The Church has always taught that knowledge of God is possible for all men through the use of their God-given reason. This is based on S Paul’s letter to the Romans, where he says: “There is no respect of persons with God . . . For when the Gentiles, who have not the law, (that is, the Torah revealed by God to the Jews), do by nature the things contained in the law, these . . . show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness.”

God revealed himself to the Jews by a special revelation of the covenant through Moses, when they received the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Torah, but long before that he had revealed himself to all mankind in the covenant with Noah, when he swore that never again would he send the flood. The sign of that covenant between God and all humanity was the rainbow. The writer James Baldwin was referring to that covenant when he wrote the lines:

*God gave Noah the rainbow sign;
No more water, the fire next time!*

Of course the Church has always taught that God’s full and definitive revelation of himself and his nature of love was given in Jesus Christ. In the Hebrew prophets and in the Greek poets there were gleams of light and partial grasping of truth, but the full light of the glory of God shone forth in the face of Jesus Christ and in him only, the final, total revelation of God.

This is where that seemingly narrow and hard saying of Our Lord’s comes from. Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” Fundamentalists use this saying to assert that it means that only

Christians will be saved into eternal life, that all but true Christian believers will perish eternally, that only those who explicitly confess Jesus Christ to be the way to God can be saved.

But this is to deny the whole message of Jesus as more than the man who lived thirty-three years in Palestine. As we have already noted, S John's Gospel in particular portrays Jesus as the eternal Logos, the very Word of God from all eternity and the light of God for all men.

This means that those who do not have the particular revelation of the Word of God in the Torah, or the particular revelation of the Word of God made flesh in the man Jesus Christ may nevertheless attain salvation and eternal life with the God who made them by following the light of the highest ideals of their conscience and the natural revelation of God in goodness, mercy and love.

Needless to say, my beloved George MacDonald has a word to say on this. The original is in the Scots dialect form his book *Robert Falconer*, but I'll be merciful and put it into standard English. I should also add that the Brahmin friend in this extract is not a resident of Boston, but a high caste Indian!

"The more the words of Jesus come into me" the doctor began again, "the surer I am of seeing my old Brahmin friend, Robert. It's true I thought his religion not only began but ended inside him. It was all about bowing down before and aspiring to the bosom of the infinite God. I don't mean to say that he was not honourable to those about him. And I never saw in him much of that pride that belongs to the Brahmin. It was rather a stately kindness than that condescension which is the vice of Christians . . . The first commandment was all he knew. He loved God—not a God like Jesus Christ, but the God he knew—and that was all he could. The second commandment—that glorious recognition of the divine in humanity, making it fit

and needful to be loved, that claim of God upon and for his own children, that love of the neighbour as yourself—he did not know. Still, there was religion in him; and he who died for the sins of the whole world has surely been revealed to him long before now, and through the knowledge of him, he now dwells in that God after whom he aspired."

You see, MacDonald is not denying that it will be through Jesus Christ that the Brahmin will be saved, but he is maintaining that Jesus died for the Brahmin and will reveal himself fully to him, if not in this life, then in the next. He is saying that the man who has lived up to the highest ideals of natural law and natural reason, who has done good where he could, who has loved his family, who has followed the light of his conscience, is in a fit state to receive the full light of the glory of God when it is shown him.

Sadly, the opposite is true also. The person who has stifled the voice of his conscience, has lived selfishly for himself alone, who has brought grief, not joy, to those around him, who has embraced evil, even though he might declare himself a Christian and be baptized, confirmed and even ordained, will be in a wretched state when the light of God in Christ is turned fully on him in the life to come. That man will experience the light not as beauty and clarity beyond all human joy, but as a burning, searing, Hellish torment.

Here in the midst of Lent, we should redouble our efforts to live as children of light, showing the fruits of the Spirit, which S Paul lists in his letter to the Galatians as "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," or in our Epistle today as "goodness, righteousness and truth."

All I have said is directed against the bigotry of fundamentalism, whether it be the Biblioatry of the Southern Baptists or the Catholic fundamentalism of the Lefevrists, whether it be the

fundamentalism of Jews or the fundamentalism of Muslims. The light of Christ is for all mankind. We who have received what we believe to be the fullest revelation of God in Jesus Christ must be very careful to acknowledge that this is not an exclusive privilege for the elite, but rather an unspeakable gift for us to share with all mankind.

We often sing a lovely hymn by Father Faber compared with which my own stumbling attempts to display the scope of the love of God in Jesus Christ, the light of the world, pale into insignificance:

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea,
There's a kindness in his justice,
Which is more than liberty.

There is grace enough for thousands
Of new worlds as great as this;
There is room for fresh creations
In that upper home of bliss.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

But we make his love too narrow
By false limits of our own,
And we magnify his strictness
With a zeal he will not own.

If our love were but more simple,
We should take him at his word;
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord.

May our lives be filled with the light of the Son of God, the light of the world, the light that shines in darkness and is not overcome by that darkness. May we, like S John the Baptist, bear witness to Jesus Christ, the light that lighteneth *all* men, (even when it involves his Cross), so that all men through him may believe. And what are all men to believe? That the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Then all men will behold his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. No wonder, after the Last Gospel ever Sunday, all we can say is "Thanks be to God."

Kalendar

February 2008 – *The Holy Childhood.*

- 1 F S Ignatius, B.M. *S Brigid, V. Abs.* [The Church of Ireland]
2 Sa **Purification B.V.M. Candlemas.** [The Community of S. Mary]
3 Su **Quinquagesima.** *S Blaise, B.M.* [Parish]
4 M S. Andrew Corsini, B.C. [More frequent use of the Sacrament of Penance]
5 Tu S. Agatha, V.M. [Cancer sufferers]
6 W **Ash Wednesday.** S Titus, B.C. *S Dorothy, V.M. Fast & Abs.* [That we may keep a holy Lent]
7 Th S Romuald, Ab. *Feria. Fast.* [Those who follow the Rule of S. Benedict]
8 F S John of Matha, C. *Fast & Abs.* [Prisoners & captives]
9 Sa S Cyril of Alexandria, B.C.D. *S Apollonia, V.M. Feria. Fast.* [Those with dental ailments]
10 Su **Lent I.** S Scholastica, V. [Parish]
11 M *Apparition of the BVM Immaculate. Feria. Fast.* [The Society of Mary]
12 Tu Ss Seven Holy Founders of the Servites, Cc. *Feria. Fast.* [Living Rosary of Our Lady & S Dominic]
13 W S Benedict Biscop, Ab. *Ember Day. Fast & Abs.* [The Benedictines of Elmore and Three Rivers]
14 Th *Feria. S Valentine, Pr.M. Fast.* [An increase of Charity in our relationships]
15 F *Ember Day. Ss Faustina & Jovita, Mm. Fast & Abs.* [The Organists & Choir]
16 Sa S Gilbert of Sempringham, C. *Ember Day. Fast & Abs.* [Increase of vocations to the religious life]
17 Su **Lent II.** [Parish]
18 M *Feria. .S. Simeon, M. Fast.* [The Guild of All Souls]
19 Tu *Feria. Fast.* [Increase of prayer in our daily lives]
20 W *Feria. Fast.* [The Friends of S Clement's]
21 Th *Fast. Fast.* [Greater fidelity to the Lenten Fast]
22 F Chair of S. Peter at Antioch. *Feria. Fast & Abs.* [Pope Benedict XVI]
23 Sa S Peter Damian, B.C.D. *Vigil. Feria. Fast.* [For a spirit of penitence in the Church]
24 Su **Lent III.** [Parish]
25 M **S. Matthias, Ap..** *Feria. Fast.* [Parish]
26 Tu *Feria. Fast.* [The Bishop & Diocese of Pennsylvania]
27 W *Feria. Fast.* [All Saints Sisters of the Poor]
28 Th S Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin, C. *Feria. Fast.* [The Acolytes Guild]
28 F Ss. Five Wounds. *S Oswald, B.C. Feria. Fast & Abs.* [Increase in devotion to the Passion]

Agenda:

- 2 February **Candlemas.** Candlemas Ceremonies (Blessing of Candles & Procession) & High Mass, 11.00 a.m.
- 3 February **Quinquagesima.** Regular Sunday schedule with Blessing of Throats following Masses.
- 6 February **Ash Wednesday.** Low Mass, 7.00 a.m. High Mass, 7.00 p.m. Ashes blessed & imposed at both Masses.
- 8 February Stations of the Cross & Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, 6.30 p.m.
- 9 February Low Mass & Benediction (Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament), 10.00 a.m.
- 15 February Stations of the Cross & Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, 6.30 p.m.
- 16 February Low Mass & Suffrages for the Departed (Guild of All Souls), 10.00 a.m.
- 18 February **Station at S. Clemente:** Litany, High Mass of the Lenten Feria & Veneration of the Relic of the True Cross, 7.00 pm.
- 19 February Monthly meeting of Vestry, 7.00 p.m. [Anchor Room]
- 22 February Stations of the Cross & Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, 6.30 p.m.
- 23 February Low Mass & Devotion in honour of Our Lady (Society of Mary), 10.00 a.m.
- 29 February Stations of the Cross & Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, 6.30 p.m.

Note:

Due to the early date of Easter this year, Easter Flower Offering Envelopes are included with this issue of the Newsletter. Please return by 24th February.

Music for the Month – February 2008

2nd February, Purification BVM:

Ordinary: *Tomás Luis de Victoria*, Missa 'Alma Redemptoris'

Canticle: *Gustav Holst*, Nunc Dimittis

Motet: *Johannes Eccard*, Maria wallt zum Heiligtum

Organ: *Jehan Alain*, Variations on 'Lucis Creator'

Théodore Dubois, Fiat lux

3rd February, Quinquagesima:

Ordinary: *Philippe de Monte*, Missa 'O Altitudo Divitiarum'

Motet: *William Byrd*, Diliges Dominum

Organ: *Johann Sebastian Bach*, Prelude in b minor

Bach, Fugue in b minor

6th February, Ash Wednesday:

Ordinary: *William Byrd*, Mass for Five Voices

Motet: *Gregorio Allegri*, Miserere mei

Organ: *Johann Sebastian Bach*, Auf tiefer Not

Bach, Ich ruf' zu dir

10th February, Lent I:

Ordinary: *Herbert Howells*, Mass in the Dorian Mode

Tract: *H. Walford Davies*, Qui habitat

Motet: *Howells*, Like as the Hart

Organ: *Howells*, Preludio 'Sine Nomine'

Howells, Psalm Prelude No. 3, Set 1

17th February, Lent II:

Ordinary: *Gabriel Fauré*, Messe Basse

Motet: *Fauré*, Ave Verum

Organ: *Fauré*, Prelude in f-sharp minor

Fauré, Nocturne

24th February, Lent III:

Ordinary: *Joseph Rheinberger*, Mass in F Major

Motet: *Orlando Gibbons*, O Lord, I lift my heart to thee

Organ: *Marcel Dupré*, Audi, benigne Conditor

Johann Sebastian Bach, Vater unser im Himmelreich

Lent Study Course – 2008

The accounts of Our Lord's death and resurrection are full of minor characters, some of whom disappear almost as quickly as they appear but whose actions and roles played significant parts in the history of our salvation.

During this year's Lent Course we will examine the Passion Narratives from the perspectives of some of these people. As well as discovering what can be known about them historically we will see what glimpse they can give us of the political and social backdrop to the most important events in human history. They will provide valuable entry points into both Scripture and church history and show how their lives can illuminate the world in which we live.

3rd February – Pontius Pilate

10th February – Mrs Pilate

17th February – Joseph of Arimathea

24th February – Barabbas

2nd March – Peter

9th March – Mary Magdalene

We will meet Sunday mornings, 9.30-10.15 in the Anchor Room. For more information please contact Fr Wall:
FrRichardWall@s.clements.org

From the Parish Register, 2007:

Baptisms:

Hadden Polk Townsend , 31st March
Duke Clement Henderson, 26th August
Leia Marcia Johnson, 16th December

Confirmation:

Leia Marcia Johnson, 16th December
Timothy Smith, 16th December

Reception from the Roman Catholic Church:

Stephen Shandor, 16th December

Marriages:

Jerry Ray McMillan, Jr & Keri Ann Conzone, 9th March
Charles Rhea Flynt & Yolanda Yellin, 3rd May

Funerals:

Helen Leach, 22nd June
Suzanne Schellenger, 23rd June
Kenneth Hudson, 29th June
Carol Bower, 30th July
Dennis Bage, 3rd October
David Hege, 8th October
Edward Dixon, Sr, 6th December
Frederick Sherrer, 28th December

A Catholic Alphabet

Y is for Year

In the Western Church the Christian Year is based on the two great Festivals of Christmas and Easter.

The year begins with the First Sunday in Advent. There are four Sundays in Advent and then either one or two after Christmas, bridging the gap between Christmas and the Epiphany (6th January). Sundays are then reckoned after Epiphany until Septuagesima, Sexagesima and Quinquagesima, whose names indicate the number of days before Easter. Ash Wednesday introduces the Forty Days Fast of Lent culminating in Holy Week and Easter. Five Sundays “after Easter” lead to Ascension Day with its following Sunday and Pentecost, the end of Eastertide. The next Sunday after that is the feast of the Holy Trinity. The Sundays for the rest of the year are called either “after Pentecost” or (in the Church of England, both before and after the Reformation) “after Trinity.”

The liturgical year of the Eastern Orthodox Church is based solely on Easter and falls into three parts, “tridion” (the ten weeks before Easter), “pentecostarion” (the paschal season) and “oktoechos” (the rest of the year).

Z is for Zucchetto (Z is as bad as X!)

The zucchetto is the small round skull-cap worn by clerics since the 13th century. It varies in colour according to different grades of the hierarchy, the Pope wearing white, cardinals red, bishops purple and others black.

Some Principles & Practices of the Spiritual Life

by Basil W. Maturin, Mission Priest of the Society of S. John the Evangelist, Oxford

VI. Prayer.

THE perfect life consists in the perfect correspondence to the Will of God. He who came to teach us how to live said, I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the Will of Him that sent Me; “My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work,” and S. Paul says of Him, “Even Christ pleased not Himself.” In the hour of His Agony His Prayer was, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” He would not anticipate by a moment the appointed work of His life. “Mine hour is not yet come.” He said again and again; but when the hour had come for work or suffering, He never failed. From first to last His life was the perfect correspondence with His Father’s Will; His first word was, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” almost his last, “It is finished.” Therefore the more truly we desire to follow our Lord’s example and to attain perfection, the more deeply must this principle underlie all our plans and actions; as we lose sight of this we are almost certain to get astray, and set up false standards and unworthy aims.

But such a life involves great self-discipline and constant sacrifice; many an ambition has to be crushed, many an opening for plans that are much to our taste has to be abandoned. Any who would live such a life must have their nature well in hand, and be living in close communion with God. It is an easy thing to say, The perfect life is the perfect correspondence with the Will of God, but it is not easy to carry out in practice, for it is certain to lead us along a rough and difficult path where often times our heart and strength will fail us. If it was so with the Master, we cannot be surprised that it should be the same with the servant.

Two things especially any who would live this life will need. First, the ever-increasing knowledge of God’s Will; and, secondly, the grace to correspond with it when it is known. First light and secondly grace; light for the mind, grace for the will. We may know God’s Will for us well enough at any given moment, and not have the strength to obey it, or we may at times earnestly desire to follow God’s Will and yet not know it. We need both light and grace.

Now, that we may attain these gifts, it is necessary to be living near God. It is impossible for us to turn suddenly from a distracted or careless life and to find ourselves at once illuminated and strengthened. The knowledge of God’s Will is often most difficult to attain, even for those living very near Him; often those who love Him most and are most single-minded are left in doubt as to His purpose for them, and only by constant prayer and self-discipline do they gradually gain the knowledge.

Therefore, if we would not make grievous mistakes, and perhaps make shipwreck of our lives, we must endeavour to keep near God, to learn to know Him better, to understand the tokens of His Will and the method of His dealings with us; in a word, to get upon terms of loving and reverent friendship with Him.

But this can only be done by prayer. A prayerful life is almost certainly a life of conformity to the Will of God; a prayerless life is quite certainly a life of self-will, in which imperfections and sins and the spirit of worldliness cloud the spiritual perception so that it is not even conscious of how far it is separated from God.

And yet, while prayer is the condition of knowing God, there is no practice of the spiritual life more difficult. To pray well, to grow in the knowledge of God, we must pray; and to be able to pray well we have to learn how to pray, to live through, perhaps, many years, in which we seem to gain little fruit, and are often scarcely conscious of any progress.

And, moreover, each has practically to learn for himself how to pray. We may gain some encouragement, some little help from others, but the real secret of prayer we must learn for our selves. How can anyone teach another the form of conversation and method of intercourse with a friend? It grows, unfolds, develops of itself; it is intensely personal. We may learn something from the experience of others as to where dangers lie, as to possible self-deception, the need of perseverance through times of darkness and coldness; but the inmost secret of prayer must be our own. It is the deepest expression of the soul's personal relationship with God. It is, indeed, in one sense like, but in another unlike, the prayer of anyone else. If God has given us any power in prayer, we shall find that it is impossible to communicate the secret of that power to anyone else ; when we try to tell that we fail. We may repeat the prayer that we say, and tell of some of the trials and struggles through which we have passed, but we cannot tell just that thing which gives the power and strength to our prayers, for in fact it is our relationship to God Himself; it is the expression of all that we mean by our spiritual life.

Yet there are certain dangers that are common to most people, and certain principles upon which growth in the life of prayer must be based.

To many persons it seems, when first they begin in earnest the practise of prayer, that the best guide is their own devotion, that in spiritual matters system and rule crush out all spontaneity and life, and that often even the mere attitude of kneeling chills them and makes them formal. They find that they

can pray better at work than on their knees; at irregular times of exceptional fervour than at stated times, and that consequently the best rule is to pray when they can pray best. Such persons have a proper dread of formalism, and it seems to them as if system and rule must degenerate into formalism if prayers are to be said at stated times whether there is any fervour of spirit or not. Yet such persons should remember:

1. That as time goes on those inspirations and times of fervour, unless carefully disciplined, become less frequent and intense, and at last probably die out altogether. They belong to the early years of spiritual youth; they are given to help the soul in those first arduous struggles with bad habits and sins of the past, but they pass away; they are not a necessary part of the saintly life; they are, moreover, full of imperfections, and those who depend upon such states of mind for prayer, will find that as time goes on they pray less, not more.

2. Everything is of value only in so far as it helps to form character. A person whose intercourse with God mainly depends upon the amount of emotional fervour he experiences will not have much strength of will or determination. The life of prayer cannot be built upon any thing so unreliable as feelings without being itself unreliable; it is built rather upon acts of the will. The religious character, therefore, is developed, and more is done for God by system and regularity than by all the fervour and excitement in the world. A great part of the discipline of faith is the holding on to God in darkness; one, therefore, who goes on regularly with prayer in coldness and deadness as faithfully as in times of the greatest fervour, thanking God when He makes His Presence felt, but not laying too much stress upon it, not gauging his progress by it, but believing that it is the will, fighting its way through darkness and almost the chill of death, which is accepted by God; such a person's character is altogether a more religious one and a stronger one than the other, and

moreover we shall find that he has a far deeper and truer knowledge of God. The effort to get nearer God when He seems far off awakens a longing, and strengthens the will in a way which one can never experience whose prayers depend upon emotion. The religious character that is ruled by impulse is quite a different one from that which is governed by principle. God can reveal Himself in darkness as well as in light; we are told that "clouds and darkness are round about Him," as well as that "He decketh Himself with light as it were with a garment." Those, therefore, who will not pray in darkness lose that special revelation which God gives through the darkness, and surely none who have persevered through such times can doubt that God revealed Himself to them then. When the darkness has passed the soul will find what an increased knowledge and love of God it has gained.

3. Then, too, it must be borne in mind that devotion is of two kinds, essential and accidental. The word means consecration, and this consecration is an act of the will offered, dedicated, devoted. Essential devotion, then, is devotion of the will offered to God and independent of any emotion. He who prays in such a spirit, offering himself to bear whatever God may send, is certainly devout whatever he may feel, though his whole time of prayer be spent in nothing but a struggle with distraction. God will not refuse to accept the service of a will which is devoted to Him. Accidental devotion arises when there flows in upon the will thus holding on to God the light and joy and peace which stirs the heart and feelings. This is, after all, but accidental, it is not of the essence of devotion; one may be very devout without it. For the deepest love is the love that has passed down into the will and rules there. The love that a young couple experience in the first days of their married life is full of passion and feeling; but after they have lived together for years and their lives are woven into one another, those passionate feelings of love have mostly given way to a stronger love that rules the will. They

probably feel little of what they used to experience, but now each rules and moulds the other's life; perhaps it is only when there comes the possibility of a separation that either realises how intense their love is.

So it is in prayer. We must not gauge our devotion by what we feel, but rather by what we are ready to endure. Indeed it often happens that God tries the most advanced by letting them experience a coldness and deadness in prayer such as ordinary people seldom experience, and none could endure in such times if their love for God were not very deep and strong, ruling and sustaining the will.

Now, in considering the act of prayer itself, we must remember that it is composed of a natural and supernatural element: the act of the person who prays, and the help which God gives. Different classes of minds are in danger of laying undue stress on one or other of these parts as if it comprised the whole, but all true prayer involves both.

Therefore due consideration must be given to both parts. If the best musician in the world were playing on an organ that was out of tune he could not produce good music, and if the Holy Spirit were to breathe over our souls in prayer while the strings were lax from damp or carelessness, He could not produce the music that God loves to hear. Our prayer may fail, therefore, not because God does not help us, but because we have not taken proper care in preparing ourselves; the strings of the mind are out of tune. We shall never get so high as to be able to leave out of consideration our own preparation and discipline. And, on the other hand, if the mind were under perfect control and discipline, we should never be able to pray without the help of God's Holy Spirit. The organ may be in perfect tune, but it needs the hand of the musician to draw out its powers. When we come to our prayers we must place ourselves beneath His influence. The Spirit also helpeth our

infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.

Let us consider these two elements then, the natural and the supernatural.

I. The natural.

i. The mind must be prepared. So many of our prayers are poor and unworthy because the mind is not properly prepared; one kneels down with the best disposition, but the mind has got into a morbid condition, and the whole time of prayer is lost in a kind of unhealthy self-examination; or it is absorbed in some matter that it has allowed to take possession of it, and the time is spent without ever rising up to God. Or again, no sooner does one kneel down than it seems to be the signal for the imagination to break loose and bring before the mind everything one has thought, said, or done, and everyone that one has seen during the day. It is important, therefore, that we should remember that the instrument with which we pray is that with which we do all our other mental work; when we turn it to God we shall find that it has the same defects and the same powers that it has at other times, only that we become more conscious of the defects in times of prayer. No wonder it is difficult to pray if there is no effort made to discipline or concentrate the mind at other times; how can the mind that is left relaxed and unguarded all through the day be recollected in prayer? Prayer is not the only time to struggle against distractions; the more orderly, methodical, disciplined and concentrated our minds are during our daily life, the more we shall be able to direct them to God in prayer.

There is nothing, therefore, that we do during the day which may not prove a help or hindrance in times of prayer. In reading, working, thinking, we are unconsciously training our minds for prayer. If it is the same mind which we use for all our ordinary work which we use in prayer, the same and no other, we shall find the same laxity, the same distractedness, the same slipshod and

careless ways, the same habit of losing ourselves in day-dreams at prayer which we experience in all our mental life. It is a good thing, therefore, to remember that prayer is not the time to train the mind, but that in prayer we shall reap the fruits of the carelessness or watchfulness of our ordinary life.

ii. Again, it must be remembered that the mind is a very delicate instrument, and is very easily put out of order, and that spiritual work does not exempt people from natural laws. We need, therefore, care and common sense just as much in spiritual as in temporal things; a person may suffer very considerably in his spiritual life from lack of the exercise of a little common sense.

(a) In learning to pray it is, therefore, most important not to overburden oneself at first with too many prayers. Leave plenty of room to grow, be content at first to say such prayers as are suited to a beginner. If you would ever be able to spend a long time in prayer you must begin with short times; the mind must be seasoned. Do not let prayer hang over you as a burden. It may be an admirable exercise in humility to confess to oneself how short a time one is able to pray; the mind must grow into the life of prayer, but it will never do this if it is allowed to be overweighted with a burden of prayer beyond its strength.

(b) Again, do not leave your prayers to be said when the mind is too wearied to think. If you are obliged to be up late, say the greater part of your prayers earlier in the evening; it is a fatal thing to go to one's room at night tired out and burdened with the dread of a considerable time to be spent in prayer, much of which experience has taught will be a mere struggle with sleep. One will never learn to pray by such methods; the mind needs in prayer the exercise of all its powers, and prayer should be said when the mind is fresh and in full vigour. The times of prayer, therefore, should be arranged so that the natural instrument is at its best, not at its worst, and it should be always borne in mind that

God does not give His grace to help us to do what nature can do of itself. You have no right to expect God to help you to say your prayers when you are tired, because you have not taken the trouble to say them in proper time.

(c) There must be, if there is any life in prayer, adaptability; one of the chief conditions of life is the capacity of adapting inward to outward relations. It is the same with prayer. Prayers in sickness will not be the same as in health if they are the utterances of a living soul, and in times of special trial or temptation the prayers will not be those of one's ordinary life. The soul, in proportion as prayer becomes a reality, will instinctively adapt its prayers to special circumstances, not lightly indeed changing the form of prayer, but having that liberty of spirit which makes rule not a hindrance but a help, not the destroyer but the developer of life.

2. The supernatural.

But there is also the supernatural element in prayer. We must, indeed, discipline and train our minds, and fulfill our part; but prayer is not a mere straining of the mind towards God; we must pray as Members of Christ; He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. We pray not as those who have nothing to depend upon but their own efforts, but as those whose acceptance is already assured if they have faith to realise their great privileges. We Christians speak, as it were, with the Lips of Christ. We know that in proportion as we believe in and use our great privilege, God cannot reject us. Our own powers may be very limited, the sense of our sins may dismay us, but we draw near with

the life of our Lord within us, "Members of His Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones," and we know that God will hear the voice of His own Son.

Yet this sense of membership in Christ must be developed, not merely at the times of prayer; it must be the effort of our daily life, the aim of our self-discipline. For it is on this that our Lord's promise depends: "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." And as Members of Christ we have the assistance of the Holy Spirit, "who helpeth our infirmities." We kneel down, but, notwithstanding all our watchfulness and care, our hearts are cold, and our words come falteringly; but we persevere, and then at times not always consciously, but at times we feel the Breath of the Spirit breathing through us and kindling our devotion, and words come to our lips, or longings too great for words well up within our hearts and reach to God. We feel, in one way, that what we say and long for is our own, it has the colour and temper of our minds; but again we feel it is not our own, it is greater and stronger than we are; and then we know that it is partly ourselves, partly the Spirit of God, that the music that thrills us is the Breath of the Spirit breathing through the instrument which we have striven so hard to prepare.

Such moments we must cherish and recall in times of darkness; they enable us to feel and to know that we are not alone in our efforts to pray, but that there is One who helpeth our infirmities, and who, when He sees fit, at any moment can make His power to be felt, though when we are least conscious of it He is still with us.