

Monergism

A TREATISE ON PRAYER

A DECLARATION WHAT TRUE
PRAYER IS, HOW WE SHOULD PRAY,
AND FOR WHAT WE SHOULD PRAY

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A DECLARATION WHAT TRUE PRAYER IS, HOW WE
SHOULD PRAY,

AND FOR WHAT WE SHOULD PRAY. SET FORTH

BY JOHN KNOX, PREACHER OF GOD'S HOLY WORD

A confession and declaration of prayers added thereto,

by John Knox, minister of Christ's most sacred Gospel, upon the death of that most virtuous and most famous king, Edward the VI, king of England, France, and Ireland. In this confession, the said

John accuses not only his own offenses but also the offenses of others as the cause of the untimely death of that most godly prince, who now reigns with Christ while we endure plagues for our unthankfulness.

Imprinted in Rome, before the Castle of St. Angel, at the sign of Saint Peter, in the month of July, in the year of our Lord 1554.

UNTO THE SMALL AND DISPERSED FLOCK OF JESUS CHRIST.

How necessary is the right invocation of God's name (otherwise called perfect prayer) for no Christian to mistake; seeing it is the very branch that springs forth from true faith, and if anyone lacks it, despite having other virtues, in the presence of God, he is not regarded as a Christian at all. Therefore, it is a clear sign that those who are negligent in prayer do not understand the essence of perfect faith. For if fire lacks heat or a burning lamp lacks light, then true faith can lack fervent prayer. But because, in the past (and unfortunately, with a significant number even today), what was considered prayer in the sight of God was and is far from it, I intend to touch on its aspects briefly.

WHAT PRAYER IS.—Anyone who wishes to pray must know and understand that prayer is earnest and familiar communication with God. It is where we express our troubles, seek His support and assistance in our adversities, and praise and laud His magnificent name for the benefits we receive. Thus, prayer includes the declaration of our sorrows, the request for God's protection, and the exaltation of His glorious name, as clearly taught in the Psalms of David.

WHAT IS TO BE OBSERVED IN PRAYER.—The utmost reverence should accompany this act, as it should make us reflect on whose presence we are in, to whom we are speaking, and what we are

desiring. We stand in the presence of the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth and all its contents. Thousands upon thousands of angels serve and obey His eternal Majesty. We speak to Him who knows the secrets of our hearts, before whom dissimulation and lies are always abhorrent, and we ask for that which may bring the most glory to Him and comfort to our conscience. Therefore, we must diligently ensure that anything offensive in His divine presence is removed to the best of our ability. First and foremost, worldly concerns and earthly thoughts that distract us from contemplating God must be banished, allowing us to call upon God without interruption. However, it is challenging to achieve this one thing in prayer, and no one knows this better than those who, in their prayers, strive for purity approved by God. They do not seek what foolish human reasoning desires but what may be pleasing and acceptable in God's presence. Our adversary, Satan, is always circling around us, and he is never more active than when we are about to pray. He secretly and subtly infiltrates our hearts, diverting us from God and causing us to forget our purpose. Thus, when we should speak to God with all reverence, we often find our hearts engaged with the vanities of the world or the foolish imaginings of our own thoughts.

HOW THE SPIRIT MAKES INTERCESSION FOR US.—So, without the Spirit of God supporting our infirmities (powerfully making intercession for us with unceasing groans that cannot be expressed with words, [Rom. 8.26]), there is no hope that anything we desire according to God's will can be fulfilled. I do not mean that the Holy Spirit mourns or prays, but that He stirs up our minds, giving us a desire or boldness to pray and causes us to mourn when we are drawn away from it. It is impossible for mere human strength to grasp these concepts, but it is clear that those who do not understand what they pray for, do not explain or declare the desires of their

hearts clearly in God's presence, and do not expel vain thoughts from their minds during prayer, achieve nothing in prayer.

WHY WE SHOULD PRAY AND ALSO UNDERSTAND WHAT WE ARE PRAYING FOR.—But some may object and say, "Even if we do not understand what we pray for, God understands, as He knows the secrets of our hearts. He also knows what we need even if we do not explain or declare our necessities to Him." Such people indeed reveal that they do not comprehend the meaning of perfect prayer or why Jesus Christ commands us to pray. First, our prayers are meant to continually ignite our fear, honour, and love for God, to whom we turn for support and help whenever danger or necessity arises. By learning to express our desires in His presence, He may teach us what is worth desiring and what is not. Secondly, we acknowledge that our petitions are granted by God alone, and therefore, we must offer Him praise and gratitude. With His infinite goodness firmly rooted in our minds, we can steadfastly await the fulfillment of our fervent prayers.

WHY GOD DELAYS GRANTING OUR PRAYERS.—Sometimes, God delays answering our prayers to test and strengthen our faith, not because He sleeps or is absent from us, but so that we may receive with greater joy that which we have patiently awaited. This assures us of His eternal providence, to the extent that our weak and corrupt nature allows, and we can trust that His merciful hand will assist us in times of urgent need and extreme tribulation. Therefore, those who teach that it is not necessary to understand what we pray because God knows our needs would also imply that we should not honour God or give Him thanks for the blessings we receive. For how can we honour and praise Him when we do not know His goodness and generosity? And how can we know unless we receive and gain

experience? And how can we know that we have received unless we truly understand what we have asked for?

The second thing to be observed in perfect prayer is that, when in the presence of God, we must show reverence for His holy law, sincerely repent for our past sins, and intend to lead a new life. Otherwise, all our prayers are in vain, as it is written, "Whoever turns his ear away from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." [Proverbs 28.9.] Similarly, Isaiah and Jeremiah say, "When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood," referring to cruelty and wicked deeds. [Isaiah 1.15.] Furthermore, the Spirit of God, through the mouth of the blind man whom Jesus Christ healed, declared, "We know that God does not hear sinners" (meaning those who persist in sin); therefore, true repentance is necessary and must precede perfect prayer or sincere invocation of God's name.

WHEN SINNERS ARE NOT HEARD BY GOD.—To these two examples, we must add a third, which involves our humble self-abasement in the presence of God. We must completely reject and cast away our own righteousness, along with all thoughts and opinions about it. Let us not believe that we will be heard because of anything that comes from ourselves, for anyone who elevates, boasts, or relies on their own righteousness in the presence of God's mercy is akin to the proud Pharisee and repels His mercy. Therefore, we find the holiest of men in prayer to be the most humble and lowly. David says, [Psalm 79.9], "O Lord, our Saviour, help us, be merciful to our sins for your own sake. Do not remember our past iniquities. But, O Lord, hurry and let your mercy come before us." Jeremiah [14.7] says, "If our iniquities bear witness against us, act according to your own name." And consider Isaiah [chapter 64], "You are angry, O

Lord, because we have sinned and are filled with wickedness; our righteousness is like a soiled cloth. But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, you are the potter, and we are the work of your hands. Do not be angry, O Lord, do not remember our iniquities forever." Daniel, greatly commended by God, offers a humble confession in his prayer with these words, "We are sinners and have offended; we have acted ungodly and deviated from your commandment. Therefore, we do not present our prayers before you based on our own righteousness, but we rely on your right and great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, be merciful and spare us! O Lord, listen, help, and do not delay; my God, do it for the sake of your own name; for your city and your people are called by your name." In these prayers, there is no mention of their own righteousness, their own satisfaction, or their own merits. Instead, they offer a profoundly humble confession that springs from a sorrowful and penitent heart. They have nothing on which to depend except the free mercy of God alone, who promised to be their God, meaning their helper, comforter, defender, and deliverer. This is the same promise He has made to us through Jesus Christ in times of tribulation. They do not despair; rather, after acknowledging their sins, they call for mercy and obtain it. Therefore, it is evident that those who, in their prayers, regard any virtue as proceeding from themselves and think that their prayers are accepted because of it, do not pray correctly.

WHAT FASTING AND ALMS DEEDS MEAN IN PRAYER—Although fasting, vigilance, and acts of charity are joined with fervent prayer, none of them are the reason God accepts our prayers. Instead, they are incentives that prevent us from wavering and make us more capable of persevering in prayer, which is what the mercy of God accepts. It may be objected that David prays, "Preserve my life, O Lord, for I am holy; O Lord, save my soul, for I am innocent; and let

me not be consumed." [Psalms 33, 86.] Similarly, Hezekiah says, "Remember, Lord, I beg you, that I have walked righteously before you, and that I have done what is good in your sight." [2 Kings 20.] These words are not spoken by men who boast or trust in their own works. Instead, they testify to being the children of God through regeneration, to whom He promises always to show mercy and to hear their prayers at all times.

THE CAUSE OF THEIR BOLDNESS WAS JESUS CHRIST.—So, their words originated from a familiar, steadfast, and fervent faith, truly believing that God, in His infinite mercy, had called them to His knowledge, not allowing them to continue in their own natural wickedness but partly teaching them to conform to His holy law for the sake of the promised Seed. They believed that God would not abandon them in such great and extreme need, providing them with comfort, consolation, and defense. They did not use their righteousness to boast or trust in but to strengthen and confirm their faith in God's promises. I wish all Christians to have this comfort in their prayers—a testimony of a good conscience to assure them of God's promises. However, they should depend solely on Him to obtain what they ask, setting aside any opinions or thoughts of their own righteousness. Additionally, in the preceding verses, David compares himself with King Saul and the rest of his enemies who wrongfully persecuted him. He implores God not to let them prevail against him, essentially saying, "They persecute me unjustly, so defend me according to my innocence." Nevertheless, he openly acknowledges his grievous offenses against God in previous passages.

HYPOCRISY IS NOT ALLOWED WITH GOD.—Thirdly, it should be observed in prayer that what we ask of God, we must earnestly desire, acknowledging our neediness and emptiness. We should

recognize that only God can grant the desires of our hearts according to His will and pleasure. Nothing is more detestable to God than hypocrisy and deceit, where people ask God for things they do not truly need or believe they can obtain through means other than God alone. For example, if someone asks God for forgiveness of sins but still thinks they can obtain it through their own works or the merits of others, they are deceiving themselves and mocking God. Many people, especially the powerful and wealthy, fall into this trap, as they might recite the part of the Lord's Prayer that says, "Give us this day our daily bread," referring to moderate and reasonable sustenance, even though their hearts testify that they do not need to pray for it, as they enjoy all worldly comforts and prosperity. I do not mean that rich individuals should not pray this part of the prayer, but I wish they understood what they should pray for in it (which I will discuss later), and that they do not request anything they do not genuinely feel themselves in great need of. Unless we genuinely call upon God, He will not grant our requests, and unless we speak with our whole hearts, we will not find Him.

The Fourth Rule necessary to follow in prayer is to have a firm hope of obtaining what we ask for. Nothing offends God more than when we pray with doubt about whether He will grant our petitions, as this implies doubt about God's truthfulness, might, and goodness. James says that such individuals will not receive anything from God. Therefore, Jesus Christ commands us to firmly believe that we will receive whatever we ask for, as all things are possible to those who believe. In our prayers, we should always eliminate all feelings of despair. I do not mean that anyone in the midst of great trouble can be without immediate sorrow and fear of further trouble to come.

TROUBLES ARE THE SPURS TO STIR US TO PRAY.—Difficulty and fear serve as strong incentives for prayer. When a person,

surrounded by intense calamities and plagued by constant worry, finds no hope of deliverance with the assistance of others, their heart heavily burdened and fearful of greater punishment, they call upon God for comfort and support from the depths of their tribulation. Such prayers ascend to God's presence and do not return in vain.

GOD DELIVERS HIS OWN FROM THEIR TROUBLE AND ENEMIES.—Just as David, during the intense persecution by Saul, was relentlessly pursued and driven from every refuge, fearing that he would eventually fall into the hands of his persecutors. After lamenting that he had no place of rest remaining, he fervently prayed, saying, "O Lord, my God, in whom I trust alone, save me from those who persecute me, and deliver me from my enemies. Let not this man (referring to Saul) devour my life like a lion devours its prey. For I seek comfort only from you."

Amidst these distresses, God's goodness sustained him, making the present tribulation bearable, and the unerring promises of God assured him of deliverance to such an extent that fear was partially mitigated and diminished, as is evident to those who carefully observe the progress of his prayers. After his enemies had made numerous threats and menaces against him, he concluded with these words, "The pain he intended for me shall fall upon his own head, and the violence with which he would have oppressed me shall bring down his own head. But I will magnify the Lord according to His justice and praise the name of the Most High." This account is not recorded solely for David but for all who will experience tribulation until the end of the world. As the writer of this passage, I can boldly attest (to the praise and glory of God alone) that, in the anguish of my mind and severe tribulation and affliction, I called upon the Lord when not only the ungodly but even my faithful brethren, and even my own understanding, deemed my situation beyond remedy. Yet,

during my greatest calamity and when my suffering was most severe, God's eternal wisdom directed my hands to write something contrary to the judgment of human reasoning, which His mercy has proven to be true. Blessed be His holy name! Therefore, I dare to confidently declare, based on the truth of God's Word, that despite the intensity and prolonged duration of trouble, the despair of all men, the fear, danger, pain, and anguish in our hearts, if we persistently call upon God, He will deliver us beyond everyone's expectations.

WHERE CONSTANT PRAYER IS, THERE THE PETITION IS GRANTED.—Let no one consider themselves unworthy to call and pray to God because they have greatly offended His Majesty in the past. Instead, let them approach God with a sorrowful and repentant heart, echoing the words of David, "Heal my soul, O Lord, for I have sinned against thee. Before I was afflicted, I transgressed, but now let me observe thy commandments." To alleviate the sorrows of our wounded conscience, our wise Physician provides two remedies to encourage us to pray, even when we are aware of our transgressions: a command and a promise. The command to pray is universal and frequently emphasized in God's Scriptures: "Ask, and it shall be given unto you." [Matthew 7.] "Call upon me in the day of trouble." [Psalm 50.] "Watch and pray that ye fall not into temptation." [Matthew 26.] "I command that ye pray ever without ceasing." "Make unceasing supplications and give thanks in all things." [1 Thessalonians 5.] Those who scorn or disregard these commandments are no less guilty than those who steal, for just as "thou shalt not steal" is a negative commandment, "thou shall pray" is an affirmative commandment. God requires equal obedience to all His commandments. Moreover, I would boldly assert that he who, in times of necessity, does not seek the support and help of God provokes His wrath no less than those who worship false gods or openly deny Him.

HE THAT PRAYETH NOT IN TROUBLE, DENIETH GOD.—To refrain from calling upon God during your tribulations is akin to not knowing God at all or outright denying Him. It is like knowing a physician and medicine but choosing not to use or receive them.

NOT TO PRAY, IS A SIN MOST ODIIOUS.—So why do we cease to call upon His mercy when He has commanded us to do so? Above all our sins, we demonstrate clear contempt and disdain for Him when, out of negligence, we delay seeking His gracious support. Those who call upon God obey His will and find no small comfort in knowing that nothing pleases His Majesty more than humble obedience. [Jeremiah 2:4-8.]

In addition to this commandment, He offers His most undeniable promise in many places: "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." [Matthew 7.] Through the prophet Jeremiah [chapter 29], God declares, "Ye shall call upon me, and I shall hear you. Ye shall seek and shall find me." Likewise, in Isaiah, He says, "Can a father forget his natural son, or a mother the child of her womb? Even if they do, yet I will not forget those who call upon me." These words align with the words of Jesus Christ [Luke 11], who said, "If you, being wicked, can give good gifts to your children, how much more will my heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." Moses, in his reprimand, warns us not to think that God is absent or does not hear us: "There is no nation that has their gods so near to them as our God, who is present at all our prayers." [Deuteronomy 4.] The Psalmist also proclaims, "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him in truth." And Christ declares, "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

READINESS OF GOD TO HEAR SINNERS.—To dispel any notion that God will not hear us, Isaiah assures us, "Before you cry, I shall

hear, and while they speak, I shall answer." He also adds, "If sorrow or calamity comes in the evening, by morning I shall bring back gladness." These comforting words are not directed solely at carnal Israel but to all who are heavily oppressed and await God's deliverance: "For a moment and a little while, I turned my face from you, but in everlasting mercy, I shall comfort you." [Isaiah 54.]

THE HOPE TO OBTAIN OUR PETITIONS SHOULD DEPEND UPON THE PROMISES OF GOD.—Oh, how hardened are the hearts of those whom such numerous, exceedingly sweet, and reliable promises do not soften! Our hope to obtain our petitions should be based on these promises. We should not concern ourselves with our own indignity or unworthiness, for even though we may be far inferior to those chosen ones who have lived in holiness and purity, in this regard, we are equal. We have the same command to pray and the same promise of being heard. His Gracious Majesty does not consider the prayer or grant the petition because of the dignity of the person praying but solely for the sake of His promise. That's why David said, "You have promised to your servant, O Lord, that you will build a house for him, therefore your servant has the intention to pray in your sight. Now, Lord, you are God, and your words are true. You have spoken these things to your servant, so begin to do according to your promise. Multiply, O Lord, the household of your servant." Behold, David entirely relies on God's promise. Jacob [Genesis 32] also did the same; after confessing himself unworthy of all the benefits received, he dared to ask for even greater blessings in the future, all because God had promised. Likewise, let us be encouraged to ask for whatever God's goodness has freely promised. We will declare what we should ask for primarily later.

OBSERVATION IN GODLY PRAYER.—The fifth observation that godly prayer requires is a perfect understanding of the Advocate,

Intercessor, and Mediator.

OF NECESSITY, WE MUST HAVE A MEDIATOR.—Since no one is inherently worthy to appear in God's presence due to the continual presence of sin in all people, which in itself offends God's Majesty, causing disputes, strife, hatred, and division between His inviolable justice and us, we must have someone other than ourselves to make satisfaction. Without such satisfaction, we have little hope of attaining anything from Him, and we cannot have any surety with Him at all. [1 John 2.] To deliver us from this dreadful dilemma, our most merciful Father has given us His only beloved Son to be our justice, wisdom, sanctification, and holiness. [1 Corinthians 1.] If we faithfully believe in Him, we are so clothed that we can confidently appear before the throne of God's mercy, having no doubt that whatever we ask through our Mediator, we shall most assuredly obtain. [Hebrews 8, 4.]

NOTE DILIGENTLY, BY WHOM WE MUST PRAY.—It is crucial to observe that we must not enter into prayer without our Mediator, Advocate, and Peacemaker, Jesus Christ. The prayers of those who pray without Jesus Christ are not only in vain but also detestable and abhorrent to God. This was clearly prefigured and demonstrated to us in the Levitical priesthood. Just as no one except the High Priest alone could enter the Sanctum Sanctorum (the Most Holy Place), and just as all sacrifices offered by anyone other than the priests alone provoked God's wrath upon the sacrificer [2 Chronicles 26], so anyone intending to enter into God's presence or make prayers without Jesus Christ will find nothing but fearful judgment and dreadful damnation.

TURKS AND JEWS.—Therefore, it is evident that Turks (Islamic idolaters or Muslims) and Jews, even though they seemingly

fervently pray to God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the One who guides and governs all things, the One who defends the good and punishes the evil, their prayers are never pleasing to God. They do not honour His holy Majesty in any way because they do not acknowledge Jesus Christ. For anyone who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father [John 5.23].

WHEN WE BE NOT HEARD.—Just as the Law is a statute that we shall call upon God, and just as the promise is made that He shall hear us, we are commanded only to call through Jesus Christ, by whom alone we obtain our petitions. For in Him alone are all the promises of God confirmed and fulfilled. Without any dispute, it is clear that those who have called or presently call upon God by any other name than Jesus Christ alone [1 Corinthians 1] disregard God's will and obstinately transgress His commandments. Therefore, they do not obtain their petitions, nor do they have access to His mercy. For no one comes to the Father except through me, says Jesus Christ. He is the right way; those who deviate from Him err and go astray. He is our Leader, and without following Him, we will walk in darkness. He alone is our Captain, without whom we will never achieve praise or victory.

INTERCESSION TO SAINTS.—I will not argue further against those who depend on the intercession of saints, but I will briefly mention the qualities of a perfect Mediator. First, the words of Paul are most certain: "A Mediator is not the mediator of one," meaning wherever a mediator is required, there are also two parties involved—one party that has offended and another party that has been offended. These parties cannot be reconciled by themselves in any way. Second, the mediator who takes on the task of reconciling these two parties must be someone who has the trust and favour of both parties but also differs from both in some ways. The mediator must also be clear and

innocent of the crime committed against the offended party. This can be made clearer through the following explanation: On one side, there is the Eternal God, and on the other side, there are all natural men descended from Adam. The infinite Justice of God is so offended by the transgressions of all men that amity cannot be made unless someone is found who can fully make satisfaction for the offences of man. Among the sons of men, no one was found capable of doing so because all were found guilty in the fall of one. God, who is infinitely just, must abhor the fellowship and sacrifice of sinners.

[OUR HEAVY AND GREAT SINS EXCEED THE STRENGTH OF ANY OF US. WHEREFORE IT IS NECESSARY THAT THOU, O CHRIST, THYSELF, MAKE SATISFACTION FOR US.—MARGIN.]

ANGELS CANNOT BE MEDIATORS.—And for the Angels, what availed the transgressions of man? Although they might have interposed themselves as mediators, they did not possess infinite justice. So, who could be the Peacemaker in this case? Surely, the infinite goodness and mercy of God could not allow the perpetual loss and rejection of His creatures. Therefore, His eternal wisdom provided a Mediator, one who had the means to satisfy God's justice and who was distinct from the Godhead. This Mediator was His only Son, who took on the nature of humanity. He interposed Himself as a Mediator, not merely as a man.

JESUS CHRIST, GOD AND MAN, OUR MEDIATOR.—The pure humanity of Christ, by itself, could neither intercede nor provide satisfaction for us. He was both God and Man. In His divinity, He could fulfill the will of the Father, and in His humanity, being pure and without sin, He could offer a sacrifice for the cleansing of our sins and satisfy God's justice. So, unless saints possess these two

qualities—divinity equal to the Father and humanity without sin—they cannot assume the role of mediators.

Objection. But it may be objected here: Doesn't everyone know that Jesus Christ is the only Mediator of our redemption? What prevents saints and holy men from being mediators and interceding for us? Answer. As if Jesus Christ had only been our Mediator for an hour and then handed over the office to His servants!

WHO MAKES OTHER MEDIATORS THAN JESUS CHRIST DETRACTS FROM HIS HONOUR.—Do such individuals not treat Jesus Christ lightly, diminishing a portion of His honour? The Scriptures of God speak differently, testifying that He became man, experienced our weaknesses, willingly suffered death, conquered it, and all for the purpose of being our perpetual High Priest, a position into which no one else may enter. As John says, "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the just." [See Hebrews 6, 7, 9, 10.]

Mark well these words: John says, "We have presently a sufficient Advocate" [1 John 2], whom Paul affirms to sit at the right hand of God the Father and to be the only Mediator between God and Man [Rom. 8]. "For he alone," as Ambrose says, "is our mouth, by whom we speak to God; he is our eyes, by whom we see God, and also our right hand, by whom we offer anything to the Father." Unless he intercedes, neither we nor any of the Saints can have any communion or fellowship with God. What creature can say to God the Father, "Let mankind be received into your favour, for the punishment of his transgression, I have borne in my own body? For his sake, I was afflicted with all infirmities and became the most contemned and despised of all men. Yet in my mouth was found no guile or deceit, but I was always obedient to your will, suffering the

most grievous death for mankind. Therefore, do not look at the sinner, but at me, who, through my infinite righteousness, have perfectly atoned for his offences." Can anyone else (except Jesus Christ) make intercession for sinners in these words? If they cannot, then they are neither mediators nor intercessors. "For although," as Augustine says, "Christians commend each other to God in their prayers, they do not make intercession, nor do they dare to usurp the role of a Mediator, not even Paul, although he was a principal member under the Head. He commends himself to the prayers of faithful men." But if someone objects that this is not the condition of the departed Saints, who have now put off mortality and no longer bear the fragility of the flesh, although I grant this to be most true, they are all compelled to cast their crowns before Him who sits on the throne, acknowledging that they have been delivered from great affliction and purified by the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, none of them attempt to be a Mediator since they neither have existence nor righteousness of their own.

[NOTE THIS WELL: —MARGIN.]

But in this great light of the Gospel that is now beginning (praise be to the Almighty!), there is no need to dwell long on such matters. Some say, "We will use only one Mediator, Jesus Christ, to God the Father, but we must have Saints, and especially the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, to pray for us to Him."

AGAINST THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE MEDIATORS TO JESUS CHRIST.—Alas! whoever thinks this way clearly does not understand Jesus Christ properly. Is He who descended from heaven and deigned to associate with sinners, commanding all those who are deeply troubled and sick to come to Him [Matthew 11], (who, hanging on the Cross, prayed first for His enemies), now so

unyielding that He will not hear us without an intermediary? O Lord! open the eyes of those who may clearly perceive Your infinite kindness, gentleness, and love toward mankind.

Above all, it should be noted that what we ask of God should be beneficial to ourselves and others, and harmful or dangerous to no one. Secondly, we must consider whether our petitions relate to spiritual or physical things. Spiritual things, such as deliverance from impiety, forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and eternal life, we should desire unconditionally through Jesus Christ, in whom all these are promised. When asking for these, we should not pray like this: "Father, forgive our sins if it is Your will." For His will has been expressed, saying, "As I live, I do not desire the death of a sinner, but rather that he repents and lives." Anyone who doubts this solemn and unchanging oath makes God a liar and, to the best of their ability, would deprive God of His divinity. He cannot be God unless He is eternal and infallible truth. And as John says [1 John 5], "This is the testimony that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." We should steadfastly cling to this truth, even though worldly sorrow may overtake us. Like David, exiled from his kingdom and stripped of all his glory [2 Samuel 15], he was not cut off from God but steadfastly believed in reconciliation through the promise made, even though all creatures on earth had rejected, abandoned, and rebelled against him. "Blessed is the man whom You inspire, O Lord."

[CORPORAL THINGS: —MARGIN.]

When praying for physical things, first, let us inquire if we are at peace with God in our conscience through Jesus Christ, firmly believing that our sins are forgiven in His blood. Secondly, let us examine our own hearts to determine whether we recognize that

temporal wealth or possessions do not come to man by accident, fortune, or chance, nor solely through the industry and diligence of human labor, but are solely the generous gift of God, for which we ought to praise and thank His goodness, wisdom, and providence alone.

WHAT SHOULD BE PRAYED FOR.—And if we truly acknowledge and confess this, let us boldly ask Him for whatever is necessary for us, such as sustenance for our bodies, good health, protection from misery, deliverance from trouble, peace and tranquility for our nation, and successful outcomes in our vocations, labors, and affairs, whatever they may be. We ask all of this from Him to assure us that all things are under His control and disposition. By asking for and receiving these physical blessings, we taste His goodness and are inflamed with His love, thereby exercising and increasing our faith in reconciliation and the forgiveness of our sins.

WHY GOD DELAYS OR PROLONGS GRANTING OUR REQUESTS.—However, when asking for temporal things, we must note, firstly, that if God delays or prolongs the granting of our requests to the extent that it seems He is rejecting us, we should not cease to pray, setting neither a time nor a manner of deliverance for Him. As it is written, "If He prolongs the time, wait patiently upon Him," and also, "Let not the faithful be too hasty, for God sometimes delays and will not quickly grant to test our endurance," as the words of Jesus Christ testify. We should receive with even greater joy that which we have longed for ardently. Just as Anna, Sarah, and Elizabeth, after suffering great disgrace due to their barrenness and sterility, received the fruit of their wombs with joy. Secondly, since we know that the Church is always under the Cross, especially when asking for temporal blessings and deliverance from trouble, let us offer obedience to God if it pleases His goodness to continue our trials. We

should patiently endure them, as David did when he desired to be restored to his kingdom, even when he was exiled by his own son. He offered obedience to God, saying, "If I find favour in the presence of the Lord, He will bring me back home. But if He says, 'I am not pleased for you to rule any longer,' I am obedient; let Him do what seems good to Him" [2 Samuel 15].

BETTER TO OBEY GOD THAN MAN.—And the three children replied to Nebuchadnezzar, "We know that our God, whom we worship, can deliver us, but if He chooses not to do so, let it be known to you, O King, that we will not worship your gods" [Daniel 3]. Here, they made a true confession of their unwavering faith, believing that nothing is impossible for the omnipotent God. They also affirmed their reliance on His mercy, for otherwise, human nature could not willingly subject itself to such horrible torment. Instead, they offered humble obedience to God, to be delivered according to His good pleasure. This is how we should approach all afflictions, for in such trials, our frail flesh desires deliverance, but we may not fully understand what to ask or desire as we ought. The frail flesh, oppressed by fear and pain, longs for deliverance and recoils from obedient submission.

O Christian brethren, I write from experience, but the Spirit of God calls the mind back to obedience. Although the flesh desires and awaits deliverance, it should not murmur against God's will. Instead, it should persistently pray for the strength to endure with patience. This battle is incredibly challenging, known only to those who have experienced it in themselves.

[NOTE WELL.—THE FLESH STRUGGLES AGAINST THE SPIRIT
—PERSECUTION OF THE FAITHFUL—COMFORT FOR THE
AFFLICTED. —MARGIN.]

THE SPIRIT'S PETITION.—It is worth noting that God sometimes grants the spirit's petition while delaying the desire of the flesh. Who doubts that God eased Joseph's distress even though He did not grant immediate release from his long imprisonment [Genesis 39]? God gave him favour in the eyes of his jailer and inwardly provided him with spiritual consolation. Furthermore, sometimes God answers the spirit's petition while entirely rejecting the desire of the flesh. The spirit always seeks our true happiness, which we must attain through tribulation and final death. Both human nature and the flesh instinctively recoil at the thought of death, especially when under the cross, and they cry out for swift deliverance. However, God, who alone knows what is best for us, may delay the deliverance of His chosen or allow them to taste the bitter cup of physical death before reaching old age. This experience can provide healing and cure for all infirmity. Who can deny that John the Baptist wished to have witnessed more of the days of Jesus Christ and spent more time in His company? Or that Stephen desired to preach the gospel of Christ for many more days, even though he quickly faced the verdict of martyrdom? [Acts 7]. So, even if we do not see apparent help for ourselves or for others in affliction, we should not cease to pray, for God will grant unspeakable comfort to the spirit and turn all circumstances to our advantage beyond our own expectations.

IMPEDIMENTS ARISING FROM THE WEAKNESS OF THE FLESH.—The reason I am taking so long to discuss this matter is that I understand how fierce the battle is between the Spirit and the Flesh, especially under the heavy burden of affliction where there seems to be no worldly defense, only imminent death. I'm aware of the grumbling and murmuring complaints of the flesh. I know the anger, wrath, and indignation it harbours against God, casting doubt on all His promises and being on the brink of falling away from God at any moment. The only thing that stands against this is faith,

urging us to call earnestly and pray for the assistance of God's Spirit. If we persist in this, our most desperate trials will be turned into joy and lead to a favourable outcome. To You alone, O Lord, be the praise, for I write and speak from experience.

WHERE, FOR WHOM, AND WHEN WE SHOULD PRAY must not be ignored.

[PRIVATE PLACES FOR PRAYER.—MARGIN.]

PRIVATE PRAYER—Private prayer, which individuals offer secretly to God by themselves, does not require a specific place, although Jesus Christ does command us [Matthew 6:6] to pray in our rooms, with the door closed, in secret to our Father. He wants us to choose places for our prayers that offer the least opportunity for distractions and to expel all vain thoughts from our minds during prayer. Otherwise, Jesus Christ Himself does not observe a particular place for prayer; we find Him sometimes praying on the Mount of Olives, sometimes in the desert, sometimes in the temple, and in the garden. Peter wanted to pray on the rooftop [Acts 10:9]. Paul prayed in prison and was heard by God. He also commands people to pray in all places, lifting up pure and clean hands to God [1 Timothy 2:8], as we see the prophets and the holiest of men doing whenever danger or necessity required.

APPOINTED PLACES FOR PRAYER MUST NOT BE NEGLECTED. —However, public and communal prayers should take place in designated places of assembly, and those who neglect to gather in such places are not excusable. I don't mean that it's a sin to be absent from a place because that place is holier than another, for the entire Earth created by God is equally sacred. But the promise that "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" [Matthew 18:20] condemns those who scorn the congregation

assembled in His name. But pay attention to the word "gathered." I don't mean coming together to hear music, singing, or playing instruments, nor to mechanically recite prayers or read from books they don't understand, nor to engage in idolatry by worshipping what is not truly God. I will not participate in common prayer or the partaking of external sacraments with such people, for doing so would be an endorsement of their superstition and abominable idolatry, which I, by God's grace, will never do, nor advise others to do so either.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE GATHERED IN THE NAME OF CHRIST.
—This congregation, which I refer to, should assemble in the name of Jesus Christ, to praise and glorify God the Father for the countless blessings they have received through His only Son, our Lord. In this congregation, the mystical and last Supper of Jesus Christ should be administered without superstition, using no more ceremonies than He Himself used, and His Apostles followed. Additionally, during the distribution of the sacrament in this congregation, they should inquire about the needs of the poor among them and provide support until their next gathering, distributing it among them. Common prayers, comprehensible to all present, should also be offered in this congregation, so that with heartfelt and sincere minds, all can respond with a resounding "Amen." Those who withdraw themselves from such a congregation (although, alas, where can it be found?) declare that they are not members of Christ's body.

FOR WHOM AND WHEN WE SHOULD PRAY.—Now, regarding for whom and when we should pray, Paul commands us to pray for all people at all times [1 Timothy 2]. Especially, we should pray for those of the household of faith who are undergoing persecution and for nations that are unjustly oppressed, persistently invoking God to oppose the tyranny of such oppressors.

GOD'S JUDGMENT CAN BE ALTERED.—When we witness the plagues of God, such as famine, pestilence, or war approaching or taking hold, then, with sorrowful voices and repentant hearts, we should call upon God, imploring His boundless mercy to stay His hand. If we do this sincerely, without a doubt, He will relent from His wrath, even in the midst of His fury, and remember mercy, as the infallible and eternal truths in Scripture teach us. For instance, in Exodus, God said, "I will destroy this nation from the face of the earth," but when Moses prepared to pray for them, the Lord continued, saying, "Let me alone that I may consume them." Then Moses prostrated himself and prayed for the people for forty days and ultimately obtained forgiveness for them [Exodus 32-34, Deuteronomy 9]. In the midst of a severe plague, David called upon God in lamentation [2 Samuel, the last chapter]. The King of Nineveh said, "Who can tell? God may turn and relent and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish" [Jonah 3]. These examples and scriptures are not recorded in vain but to assure us that, through our prayers offered in the name of Jesus Christ, God, in His innate goodness, will mitigate His plagues even when He has threatened to punish or is presently punishing, as He attests in His own words, saying [Jeremiah 18], "If I pronounce a judgment against any nation or people and they repent of their wickedness, I will relent and not bring upon them the disaster I had intended."

[WEAKNESS OF PRAYER]

I write this, lamenting the great apathy of people who, even under such prolonged divine chastisement, are not moved to pray with repentance but continue to lead sinful lives. It's as if the ongoing wars, severe famine, daily outbreaks of pestilence, and other contagious, unusual, and unfamiliar diseases are not clear signs of God's wrath, provoked by our transgressions.

A PLAGUE THREATENS ENGLAND.—O England! May your internal strife and domestic violence urge you to lead a more virtuous life, in accordance with the openly proclaimed word within you. Otherwise, you shall soon drink from the cup of the Lord's wrath! The multitude will not escape; they will drink the bitter dregs and have the cup shattered upon their heads. Judgment begins in the house of the Lord, and often the least guilty are the first to be punished, in order to encourage the more wicked to repent. But, O Lord, who is infinitely merciful, if You choose to punish, may it not be total destruction. Rather, cut away the proud and unfruitful branches and preserve the community of those who provide shelter and support to Your disregarded messengers, who have long suffered in exile in the wilderness. May Your Kingdom come soon, so that sin may cease, death may be defeated, and Your enemies may be confounded. We, Your people, delivered by Your Majesty, may then obtain eternal joy and complete happiness through Jesus Christ, our Saviour, to whom all honour and praise belong forever. Amen.

JOHN KNOX

Hasten, Lord, and do not delay.

HEREAFTER FOLLOWS A CONFESSION,

[OR PRAYER.]

OMNIPOTENT and everlasting God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, by Your eternal providence, governs kingdoms as it seems best to Your wisdom: we acknowledge and confess Your judgments to be

righteous in taking away from us, due to our ingratitude and misuse of Your most holy word, our Native King and earthly comforter.

Justly, You may pour out upon us the utmost of Your plagues, for we have not recognized the days and times of Your merciful visitation. We have scorned Your word and disregarded Your mercies. We have violated Your laws, working deceitfully with our neighbours. We have not abhorred oppression and violence. Charity has not manifested among us as our profession requires. We have paid little heed to the voices of Your prophets, and Your threats we have considered as empty and worthless. So, in ourselves, there is nothing deserving of Your mercies, for all are found fruitless, even the princes with the prophets, like withered trees fit to be burned in the fire of Your eternal displeasure.

But, O Lord, behold Your own mercy and goodness, that You may cleanse and remove the most filthy burden of our most terrible offences. Let Your love overcome the severity of Your judgments, just as it did when You gave the world Your only Son, Jesus, when all of mankind was lost, and no obedience remained in Adam or his descendants. Regenerate our hearts, O Lord, through the power of Your Holy Spirit. Convert us, and we shall be converted. Work in us sincere repentance, and move our hearts to obey Your holy laws.

Look upon our troubles and imminent destruction, and hold back the sword of Your vengeance before it consumes us. Appoint over us, O Lord, for the sake of Your great mercy, a leader with rulers and magistrates who fear Your name and desire the glory of Christ Jesus to spread. Do not take from us the light of Your Gospel, and do not allow a Papist to gain influence in this realm. Illuminate the heart of our Sovereign Lady Queen Mary with abundant gifts of Your Holy Spirit. Ignite the hearts of her Council with true fear and love for

You. Subdue the pride of those who would rebel, and remove from all hearts contempt for Your Word. Let not our enemies rejoice in our destruction, but consider the honour of Your name, O Lord, and let Your Gospel be boldly preached in this realm. If Your justice must punish, then chastise our bodies with the rod of Your mercy. But, O Lord, may we never turn away or return to idolatry. Soften the hearts of those who persecute us, and do not let us falter under the Cross of our Saviour. Assist us with the Holy Spirit until the end.

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