

## 490 “In every thing give thanks”

In recent Reflections we have focussed on our Christian calling to respect Almighty God’s Trinitarian nature which He has revealed to us in His holy Word. Thus for example our normal prayer habit is to pray TO God the Father, THROUGH God the Son, BY God the Holy Spirit, thereby honouring each Person of the Godhead and their particular roles.

Yet interestingly, we have two well-known, much-used prayers which omit mention of God the Son for different reasons. The first is “the Lord’s Prayer” itself, addressed correctly to “our Father who art in heaven”, but which is not lifted to Him through the Lord Jesus Christ. We can work out why this is: Jesus as the Jewish Messiah taught this prayer to His Jewish disciples – before He had suffered death and resurrection to “take away the sins of the world” (egs., Matthew 6.9-13 & parallels / John 1.29). So when we, as Christ’s redeemed followers under the new covenant of grace, use this precious Jewish prayer, it is no bad thing to end it with “through Jesus Christ our Lord”, at least in thought if not in utterance.

Clearly we need to come to all other Jewish Scripture too, (meaning the Old Testament and the Gospels themselves), through this “lens” of Christ as our Lord and Saviour. It is through Christ alone that we Gentiles are granted access to these Jewish Scriptures, and it is because of Christ alone that we in turn can now understand these Jewish Scriptures much more fully because of “the light of Christ”. What a debt we owe to our Jewish brethren and to their as-yet largely unrecognised Messiah!

The second Christ-omitting prayer we can mention, (very timely over this weekend of thanksgiving and celebration for the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee) is the National Anthem. The fact that this Anthem is actually a prayer at all is a reminder of our Protestant Christian constitution established over previous centuries, and especially since the Reformation (1520s onwards).

This does not mean for a moment that everyone in the country was a “born-again Christian” – far from it. But it does show that the components of “the Establishment”, involving the monarch, the law-makers and the law-upholders, were all committed, at least in theory, to operate within an avowedly biblical moral framework. This in turn meant that the people themselves were biblically well-informed as to “right and

wrong", especially when Sunday church attendance was the norm, and the Bible was being regularly read and expounded to them in their own language. Our nation clearly regarded itself as being Protestant Christian at its heart, and as a result and by God's grace, the nation was much blessed, and, again by God's grace, was the means of bringing much blessing to millions around the world.

Yet our National Anthem, while certainly a prayer, has its limitations. In its first verse for instance, just "God" is addressed. There is no mention here of God as our Father, or of Jesus Christ His Son and our Saviour by whom alone we have access to God the Father (John 14.6 / I Timothy 2.5 / Hebrews 7.24-27; 10.19-22), or of an "Amen – So be it" at its end. As such, perhaps this wording suggests the old habit of nominally Christian people, of acknowledging "God" when it suits, or at least a God, as a vague, possibly comforting notion, while shunning God's full Trinitarian character Self-revealed for us in His Word.

But despite our National Anthem's Christian omissions we can be deeply thankful for our nation's Christian heritage, especially over this weekend of thanksgiving. As we sing the Anthem together in coming days, we might quietly try to mention "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" as we go along, even though these additions will mess up the tune! For under God's grace we do still have so much to be thankful for, not least for the Queen's extraordinarily long, faithful reign on our behalf, based on her duty, service and Christian commitment.

We are bidden by the Holy Spirit through Paul, "In every thing give thanks" (I Thessalonians 5.18a, KJV). We note here the subtle differences between "In every ..." rather than "For every ..."; and between the KJV's two-worded "every thing" rather than today's spelling, "everything". For despite continuing human sinfulness before Almighty God in its many forms, both down the years and in and around us today, all who are "in Christ", by God's grace and the gift of faith, always have abundant, spilling-over reasons to be giving thanks, no matter what may be our personal or further-afield circumstances. Why? Because all of the blessings of Almighty God our Creator and Father, poured out through Christ and by the Holy Spirit, always far, far outweigh anything else! - (now a bumper crop of examples for this special weekend of thanksgiving: John 10.27-29 / Romans 5.1-2; Chapter 8; 15.13 / I Corinthians 10.13 / II Corinthians 1.3-4 / Galatians 1.3-5; 2.20 / Ephesians 1.3-14 / Philippians 1.21; 3.7-9; 4.4 / I Peter 1.3-5; 5.10-11 / Revelation 7.14-17 / ...).

So may our prayers over this Jubilee weekend be indeed full of thanksgivings, addressed humbly and gratefully to Almighty God our Father, through His Son and by His Holy Spirit, Whom we bid in His mercy, please, to “save the Queen”.

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