

THE DAILY OFFICE

	Morning Prayer	Evening Prayer
LENT 2¹ February 25	Psalm 51	Pss 130, 131, 134 Genesis 43 St Luke 22:31-53
Monday, February 26	Ps 119, Pts 19, 20 Exodus 2:23-3 end St John 1:1-28	Ps 119, Pts 21, 22 Exodus 4:1-23 Colossians 2:8-3:11
George Herbert, ² Tuesday, February 27	Psalms 126,127,128 Exodus 4:278-6:1 St John 1:29-end	Psalms 129,130,131 Ex 6:2-13 & 7:1-7 Colossians 3:12-4:1
Wednesday, February 28	Psalm 136 Exodus 7:8-end St John 2	Psalms 137, 138 Exodus 8:1-19 Colossians 4:2-end
St David of Wales, ³ Thursday, March 1	Psalms 1, 2, 3 Exodus 8:20-9:12 St John 3:1-21	Psalms 4, 5 Exodus 9:13-end Philemon
St Chad and John & Charles Wesley, ⁴ Friday, March 2	Psalm 9 Exodus 10:1-20 St John 3:22-end	Psalms 10 Exod. 10:21-11 end Ephesians 1
Saturday, March 3	Psalms 15, 16 Exodus 12:1-20 St John 4:1-26	Psalm 17 Exodus 12:21-36 Ephesians 2

Reading the Bible. The Prayer Book helps us hear the Bible in two different ways. At Morning and Evening Prayer, we read the Bible *serially*, in large parts, more-or-less chapter by chapter. This kind of reading helps us answer questions like, ‘What happened? What does the text say?’ At Holy Communion the Bible is read *doctrinally* and *ascetically*, to answer questions like, ‘What are we to believe? What can we hope for? Given this faith and this hope, how are we to live?’

Dorothy L. Sayers on the Seven Deadly Sins

#5: ‘Envy’

But we are only half-way through our list of the Deadly Sins. Hand in hand with Covetousness goes its close companion - *Invidia* or *Envy*, which hates to see other men happy. The names by which it offers itself to the world’s applause are Right and Justice, and it makes a great parade of these austere virtues. It begins by asking, plausibly: “Why should not I enjoy what others enjoy?” and it ends by demanding: “Why should others enjoy what I may not?” Envy is the great leveller: if it cannot level things up, it will level them down; and the words constantly in its mouth are: “My Rights” and “My Wrongs.” At its best, Envy is a climber and a snob; at its worst, it is a destroyer- rather than have anybody happier than itself, it will see us all miserable together.

In love, Envy is cruel, jealous, and possessive. My friend and my married partner must be wholly wrapped up in me, and must find no interests outside me. That is my right. No person, no work, no hobby must rob me of any part of that right. If we cannot be happy together, we will be unhappy together-but there must be no escape into pleasures that I cannot share. If my husband’s work means more to him than I do, I will see him ruined rather than preoccupied; if my wife is so abandoned as to enjoy Beethoven or dancing, or anything else which I do not appreciate, I will so nag and insult her that she will no longer be able to indulge these tastes with a mind at ease. If my neighbours are able to take pleasure in intellectual interests which are above my head, I will sneer at them and call them by derisive names, because they make me feel inferior, and that is a thing I cannot bear. All men have equal rights-and if these people were born with any sort of privilege, I will see to it that that privilege shall be made worthless-if I can, and by any means I can devise. Let justice be done to me, though the heavens fall and the earth be shot to pieces.

If Avarice is the sin of the Haves against the Have-Nets, Envy is the sin of the Have-Nots against the Haves. If we want to see what they look like on a big scale, we may say that Avarice has been the sin of the Anglo-Saxon democracies, and Envy the sin of Germany. Both are cruel -the one with a heavy, complacent, and bloodless cruelty; the other with a violent, calculated, and savage cruelty. But Germany only displays in accentuated form an evil of which we have plenty at home.

¹ The Collect, Epistle and Gospel (‘C, E & G’) are found beginning on page 143.

² Pastor and poet, AD 1633. C, E & G, page 317.

³ ~~Rashleigh, Bishop of Exeter, AD 1633. C, E & G, page 304.~~

³ Archbishop of Menevia, Abbot & Missionary. C, E & G, page 304.

⁴ St Chad, Missionary and first Bishop of Lichfield, AD 672. John Wesley, Preacher, 1791; Charles Wesley, Poet, 1788. C, E & G, page 317.

The difficulty about dealing with Envy is precisely that it *is* the sin of the Have-Nots, and that, on that account, it can always find support among those who are just and generous-minded. Its demands for a place in the sun are highly plausible, and those who detect any egotism in the demand can readily be silenced by accusing them of oppression, inertia, and a readiness to grind the face of the poor. Let us look for a moment at some of the means by which Envy holds the world to ransom.

One of its achievements has been to change the former order by which society was based on status and substitute a new basis—that of contract. Status means, roughly speaking, that the relations of social units are ordered according to the intrinsic qualities which those units possess by nature. Men and institutions are valued for what they are. Contract means that they are valued, and their relations ordered, in virtue of what bargain they are able to strike. Knowledge, for example, and the man of knowledge, can be rated at a market value—prized, that is, not for the sake of knowledge, but for what is called their contribution to society. The family is esteemed, or not esteemed, according as it can show its value as an economic unit. Thus, all inequalities can, theoretically, be reduced to financial and utilitarian terms, and the very notion of intrinsic superiority can be denied and derided. In other words, all pretension to superiority can be debunked.

The years between the wars saw the most ruthless campaign of debunking ever undertaken by nominally civilized nations. Great artists were debunked by disclosures of their private weaknesses; great statesmen, by attributing to them mercenary and petty motives, or by alleging that all their work was meaningless, or done for them by other people. Religion was debunked, and shown to consist of a mixture of craven superstition and greed. Courage was debunked, patriotism was debunked, learning and art were debunked, love was debunked, and with it family affection and the virtues of obedience, veneration, and solidarity. Age was debunked by youth and youth by age. Psychologists stripped bare the pretensions of reason and conscience and self-control, saying that these were only the respectable disguises of unmentionable unconscious impulses. Honour was debunked with peculiar virulence, and good faith, and unselfishness. Everything that could possibly be held to constitute an essential superiority had the garments of honour torn from its back and was cast out into the darkness of derision. Civilization was finally debunked till it had not a rag left to cover its nakedness.

It is well that the hypocrisies which breed like mushrooms in the shadow of great virtues should be discovered and removed; but Envy is not the right instrument for that purpose; for it tears down the whole fabric to get at the parasitic growths. Its enemy, in fact, is the virtues themselves. Envy cannot bear to admire or respect; it cannot bear to be grateful. But it is very plausible; it always announces that it works in the name of truth and equity. Sometimes it may be a good thing to debunk Envy a little. For example: here is a phrase which we have heard a good deal of late: “These services (payments, compensations, or what not) ought not to be made a matter of charity. We have a right to demand that they should be borne by the State.” It sounds splendid; but what does it mean?

Now, you and I are the State; and where the bearing of financial burdens is concerned, the taxpayer is the State. The heaviest burden of taxation is, naturally, borne by those who can best afford to pay. When a new burden is imposed, the rich will have to pay most of it.

Of the money expended in charity, the greater part—for obvious reasons—is contributed by the rich. Consequently, if the burden hitherto borne by charity is transferred to the shoulders of the taxpayer, it will inevitably continue to be carried by exactly the same class of people. The only difference is this: that people will no longer pay because they want to - eagerly and for love - but because they must, reluctantly and under pain of fine or imprisonment. The result, roughly speaking, is financially the same: the only difference is the elimination of the two detested virtues of love and gratitude.

I do not say for a moment that certain things should not be the responsibility of the State - that is, of everybody. No doubt those who formerly contributed out of love should be very willing to pay a tax instead. But what I see very clearly is the hatred of the gracious act, and the determination that nobody shall be allowed any kind of spontaneous pleasure in well-doing if Envy can prevent it. “This ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor.” Then our nostrils would not be offended by any odour of sanctity - the house would not be “filled with the smell of the ointment.” It is characteristic that it should have been Judas who debunked that act of charity.

NEXT WEEK – ‘Sloth’ or ‘Accidie’

SOME ANNOUNCEMENTS

PARISH OF SACKVILLE ANNUAL MEETING.

The Parish Treasurer has said on several occasions that there should be at least two other people who know how the Parish's accounting system works and what is involved with the position of Treasurer. He is not planning to give up this work any time soon. His point is that more than one person should know how the Parish's finances work.

THURSDAY MORNINGS.

Thursday morning study groups:
'Fathers and Forbears' after

Morning Prayer (7:30 a.m.) and

Breakfast (8:15 p.m.)

until 9:30 a.m.

Bible Study: 'Miracles and Parables'. 10:00 a.m. at St Paul's.