

TEXT

Prayer        *Jesus,*  
for the        *save us from making great dramas of our lives,*  
Study         *help us grow up,*  
                  *help us make sense of the daily routine,*  
                  *so that we are rooted deeply enough in you*  
                  *to face the hardest crises when they come.*  
                  *Amen.*

NOTES

**5-A**

Christians are good members of society in completely secular terms: they keep the law and pray for good order, but they do not see their obedience to the law as based on any conviction about the sacredness of the legal system or the lawgiver. Page 97f.

**5-B**

Martyrdom only begins to make sense if you believe in an ‘invisible’ God, because it takes for granted that Christian actions are not directed at any visible reward. Page 98f.

**5-C**

It is a style of thinking that is clearly foreshadowed in some pages of the New Testament itself; it becomes part of the emotional energy behind the worst kinds of Christian anti-Semitism; it is, in short, an attempt to unlearn all that the trial stories of the Gospels are meant to teach. The hidden hand of God, the transcendence of God that refuses to compete with worldly power, is shown to be no more than a temporary arrangement. God will, fairly soon, step in to show that he is just as capable of violent success as any earthly authority. His kingdom is of this world after all. Page 102

**5-D**

The use – the exploitation – of stories of suffering is a major element in the way Christians have organized and defended their life together, and it is another area in which Jesus’ trial summons us to trial too. Page 102

**5-E**

We shall have to have a new Holy Spirit – and so a new baptism and a new Christ, or else ‘make a strange metamorphosis of the old; clap him on a crooked beak, and stick him full of eagle’s feathers, and force him to do contrary to that He was wont, and to that His nature is’ In truth, however, the Spirit is not changeable, and the characteristics he bestows on the Church are what they always were. To turn the Spirit into the consuming fire of violence is to deny the essential and unchanging nature of God’s work. Page 103f.

**5-F**

There is such a fine line, it seems, between martyrdom as the acknowledgement and demonstration of a different kind of power and martyrdom as a bid for the same power, something that will be a trump

card in the struggle for control of the world. It serves to remind us of the fine line in all our experience between coming to terms honestly with what we have suffered and using our suffering as a weapon, a justification, an alibi. It is hard to be both truthful about our pain and careful about the temptation to cling to the position of victim. Nonetheless, that is the challenge: to understand that what is revealed in the martyr's trial is also what is revealed in the trial of Jesus – the simple difference between God and the way the world organizes itself. Page 104

### 5-G

Yes, politics is frequently about choosing where the cost will come, not about finding a cost-free option. The Christian is certainly called on to take up the unpopular position of being the person who asks about specific costs, about the tragic element in public decisions – not to turn the screws of guilt, but to remind us that facing cost is the only adult way of understanding the full nature of freedom. The Christian may also be the person who has the still more unpopular task of saying that this particular cost is unacceptable in terms of social or international wellbeing or public integrity.

Such awkwardness comes, I would suggest, not from the conviction that we occupy a higher moral plane, but simply from the sense that we have to say what it has been given us to see, even when (as is all too usual) we possess little clarity about how to make a better job of it. We can at least ask that we behave, as and are treated as adults, capable of acknowledging the price we pay for our actions. Believers, shaped by the stories of the trials of their Lord and his witnesses, will know that the price of untruth is the highest price of all, for a person or a society. Page 115f.

## JESUS AND HIS JUDGES

Prayer        *Jesus,*  
for the        *give us the courage to let ourselves be judged by you,*  
Study        *and the courage to let ourselves be loved by you;*  
                  *and as you come to us, risen from the dead,*  
                  *help us to hear and respond when you say,*  
                  *'Don't be afraid.'*  
                  *Amen.*

### 5-H

*John sets ... the world God loves, the world we are called to be at home in and with, against the world tidied and organized by our wills and imaginations. The consolation he pinpoints is that of not being where we are, inhabiting instead the world of which we are in charge. ... Our concluding look at how the fate of Jesus' judges might be imagined simply asks whether the cost of refusing the full scale of our own humanity can genuinely be thought of as outweighing the cost of the pain caused by embracing a reality we do not control.* Page 134

### 5-I

There is a Latin expression associated with late medieval and Reformation

religious thought which sums up much of what these chapters have been about: *experimentum crucis* literally ‘the experience of the cross’, but also, by an obvious extension of meaning, the test, the ‘experiment’ of the cross, the way in which, in our own self-understanding, the cross tries and probes us. One of the rather depressing things about a good deal of theology concerning the cross of Jesus is that it can give the impression (unintentionally, of course) of directing our attention purely and simply to what is done for us by Jesus’ crucifixion, thus directing our attention away from the question of exactly how that crucifixion is rooted in who and what we are.

To speak of it only as an ‘external’ settling of debts will not do. While it is essential to see the passion of Jesus as something that freely works, independently of our effort, to renew and heal us, that very healing and renewal come to their fullness only as we absorb in heart and mind what it is in us that calls out for healing. Hence the significance of reflecting on the history of the passion, and in particular on the stories of the trial. As we have seen time and time again in these pages, the question we are left with as we read is about who *we* are. The various ways in which we can ask Jesus who *he* is, summed up in the variety of ways he is cross-examined by his judges, tell us where we are coming from, what it is in us that is afraid of the prisoner in the dock.

Once we have started to see how these fears work, we are better placed to see also how they are activated in our world, in our relationships. Part of the purpose of this book has been to suggest how the trial of Jesus is re-enacted in our contemporary experience; how the *experimentum crucis* comes to us in the shape of the small and large crises of encounters with strangers and outsiders now; how it comes alive in the Church’s constant struggle not to become the object of its own faith; how it is as possible as ever today to betray for the sake of what we think is peace. Page 134f

### 5-J

[W]e have largely lost any vivid sense of how the resurrection set a new agenda for the infant Church. Judging from the Gospel accounts, far from being first and foremost a simple fulfilling of expectations, a confirmation of what had already been said and believed, the resurrection seems to have been mysterious, baffling, something that threw expectations off balance and which carried its own sense of a call to trial and judgement. It was understood as a gift coming out of real and definitive darkness, loss and death, not a happy ending or a reversal of tragedy. If it is to be that for us too, we have to live *through* the process, not just rush straight on to the conclusion. Faith in the resurrection is necessarily related to the *experimentum crucis*, the ‘cross-examination’ in which our untruths are laid bare to us and we lose the consolations of having a clear image of ourselves and how we stand before God. Page 136

### 5-K

Our danger, therefore, is that we risk taking the resurrection for granted. We shall only experience the resurrection in its true *strangeness* if we can work back to the judgement of Jesus on trial. Page 138

### 5-L

The Christian gospel tells us not simply that we are saved from sin or that

our guilt is taken away – it insists that we shall find out who we are and what we may be in an encounter, a relationship. All human identity is constructed through conversations, in one way and another. Page 138

#### **5-M**

One thing that is central to our encounter with Jesus on trial is our willingness to be silent, to let his silence work upon us, and to sense his gaze upon us. Luke has left us one searing image of this, when he concludes his account of Peter's betrayal with the words, 'The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter, and Peter remembered.' (Luke 22:61). Page 139

#### **5-N**

The trial of Jesus, as I have said often enough, is about establishing his identity, not about gathering details on what he has done. ... The Old Testament asks whether a human being can see God and live. These stories pose for us another question: whether we can *be seen* by God and live.

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# Communion under Special Circumstances

*Book of Alternative Services Rite*

*The minister conducting the service greets those present in these or similar words.*

*Brothers and sisters* in Christ, God calls us to faithful service by the proclamation of the word, and sustains us with the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. Hear now God's word, and receive this holy food from the Lord's table.

*A Prayer from the study session is read*

*A passage of Scripture appropriate to the study, is read.*

*After the reading, the minister may comment on it briefly. Suitable prayers may be offered.*

*A confession of sin may follow.*

*Minister* Most merciful God,  
*All* **we confess that we have sinned  
against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole  
heart;  
we have not loved our neighbours as  
ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly  
repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us,  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your name. Amen.**

*A priest says,*

Almighty God have mercy upon you,  
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,  
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in eternal life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*People* **Amen.**

*The Peace may then be exchanged.*

*Minister* The peace of the Lord be always with you.

*People* **And also with you.**

*The Lord's Prayer is said.*

*Minister* As our Saviour taught us, let us pray,  
*All* **Our Father in heaven  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen.**

*The minister may say the following invitation.*

The gifts of God for the People of God.

*People* **Thanks be to God.**

*The sacrament is given with the following words.*

The body of Christ (given for you).

The blood of Christ (shed for you).

*Minister* Glory to God,

*People* **whose power, working in us,  
can do infinitely more  
than we can ask or imagine.  
Glory to God from generation to  
generation,  
in the Church and in Christ Jesus,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

*The service concludes with a dismissal.*

*Minister* Let us bless the Lord.

*People* **Thanks be to God.**

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