



THE AMEN IN PUBLIC PRAYER

Abraham Booth
(1734 – 1806)

THE AMEN IN PUBLIC PRAYER

Jeremiah said, Amen: The LORD do so.

—*Jeremiah 28:6*

*How shall he that occupieth the room of the
unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks,
seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?*

—*1 Corinthians 14:16*

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“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

—Matthew 6:9-13

Introduction: The Word *Amen*

The graciously condescending character of God which constitutes the introduction to this divine pattern of prayer, the various petitions contained in it, and the doxology subjoined have all been discussed by my brethren in the course of this monthly exercise. The concluding and emphatic term *amen*, and that only, now remains for our consideration. But, so concise and so unusual is my text that it is highly probable I should never have appeared with it in any pulpit had it not been chosen for me on the present occasion. Nay, when I first heard that this detached and single word was allotted for me, I could not help but hesitate because I have long detested the thought of selecting any part of sacred Scripture to be the subject of a trial of skill in order to excite popular curiosity and to afford amusement. For such conduct deserves the most em-

phatic disapproval, as being a disgrace to the pulpit and a profanation of the sacred ministry. But when I reflected on the meaning of the word *amen*, on the solemn connection in which it stands, and on its being, of itself, a sentence, I acquiesced in the choice which my brethren had made for me. Even though the text is extremely concise and very unusual, the subject is of considerable importance to both ministers of the Word and private Christians. Totally banishing from our minds, therefore, all vain curiosity and every trifling thought, let us with devout solemnity and as in the presence of God proceed to consider the meaning of the expressive term as here used and the edifying truths which are suggested by it.

a. The meaning of the word

As to the meaning of the term *amen*, of which my text consists, it may be observed that, when prefixed to an assertion, it signifies “assuredly,” “certainly,” or emphatically, “so it is.” But when, as here, it concludes a prayer, whether longer or shorter, “so be it” or “so let it be” is its manifest import. In the former case, it is assertive. It assures of a truth or a fact and is an asseveration.¹ In this manner it is frequently used by our Lord in His divine discourses, especially in the Gospel according to John, and is properly translated “verily.” In the latter case, it is petitionary and, as it were, epitomizes all the requests with which it stands connected. It is a purely Hebrew term but has been transplanted into many languages, both ancient and modern. Its meaning in the passage before us is therefore “so be it” or “so let it be.”

¹ **asseveration** – solemn declaration.

b. Its authorized use

Thus it was used by *the ancient Hebrews*, of which we have abundant evidence in the Old Testament. [An instance of this use is] when the word first occurs in our English Bible, respecting an Israelite woman suspected of adultery, who, on hearing the conditional curse pronounced upon her, was to reply, "Amen, amen" (So be it, so be it; Num 5:22). Thus, likewise, [it is used] in the very last example of its use by inspired writers. For, to the language of our Lord, "Surely, I come quickly," the answer is, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20).

Nor was the emphatic term used among the ancient Hebrews by detached individuals only, but also on certain occasions by an assembly at large. Thus, for example, when six of the chosen tribes were convened at Mount Ebal, and the Levites denounced a variety of curses on those who transgressed the laws of Jehovah, all the people were to unite in saying, "Amen...Amen" (Deu 27:14-25). So, when Ezra blessed Jehovah, the great God, "all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands" (Neh 8:6).

This branch of religious practice, not being of a ceremonial kind nor peculiar to the Jewish ritual, was far from being confined to the Mosaic dispensation; for it was adopted in the public worship of *the primitive Christian churches* and received the sanction of apostolic authority, as appears by the following words: "When thou shalt bless with the spirit [by the use of an extraordinary gift, in an unknown language], how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" (1Co 14:16; Rev 5:11-14). By this

remarkable passage we are taught that it was customary in the apostolic churches, when he who led the worship concluded a devotional address to God, for all the Christians that composed the assembly to unite, either audibly or mentally, in saying, "Amen." This was practiced, not only by churches which consisted principally of Jewish converts, who might be supposed to have transferred the usage from the synagogue worship,² but also in the Gentile churches, of which number was the church at Corinth. And it had the sanction of divine authority, for the inspired writer argues on this very ground when reproving the misapplication of an extraordinary spiritual gift. This practice in the primitive churches receiving a divine sanction as relating to New Testament worship has the force of an express apostolic precept or of divine law; and consequently, being of a moral nature, it must be equally the duty of those individuals who constitute a worshipping assembly now, as it was of the church at Corinth, to unite in subjoining their solemn, "Amen," at the close of a devotional address to God.

The same custom was continued *among the Christians in following times*, as we learn from Justin Martyr, from Chrysostom, and from others. Jerome informs us of its being the custom in his time so to conclude every public prayer that the united amen of the people sounded like the fall of water or the noise of thunder. But as, in various instances, apostolic rites and customs were in subsequent ages either entirely laid aside or extremely corrupted, so there is reason to suppose that the emphatic, the solemn, and the devout

² Caepgius Vitringa, *The Synagogue and the Church*, L. III Pars II. Cap. 18.

amen which Paul approved was in process of time converted into an unmeaning, a noisy, and a very indecent formality.

Nor is the practice of some professors in our own times to be commended, who, with a low, though audible voice, add their amen to almost every sentence as it proceeds from the lips of him who is the mouth of social³ prayer. This is because, in certain instances which have come under my own observation, those who are in the habit of so doing sometimes express their amen before the sentence be completed, and therefore cannot understand the full import of it. It is not commendable because it also has a tendency to interrupt the devotion of those private worshippers that are near to them. This is also because it may sometimes perhaps disconcert the thoughts of him who leads the worship. A mental, "So be it," in this case, is all that should be used.

But whether at the conclusion of social prayer we annex our amen with an audible voice, in a low whisper, or merely in a mental way, it should always include, like that of Benaiah, an ardent desire of having it ratified by the amen of God Himself. When David, lying on his deathbed, nominated Solomon to succeed him on the throne of Israel, Benaiah answered, "Amen: The LORD God of my lord the king say so too" (1Ki 1:36; Jer 28:6). Yes, my brethren, when we say, "Amen," it should be with a solemn and believing regard to that divine amen. To this, Luther, it is probable, referred, when, writing to the timid Melanchthon, he said, "I do pray for you. I have prayed for you, and I

³ **social** – public; in the context of a gathering of people.

will pray for you. Doubt not but I shall be heard, for I feel the amen in my heart.”⁴

Now, my brethren, such being the import of the expressive term *amen*, and such its divinely authorized use not only in private devotion but also in worshiping assemblies, both Jewish and Christian, let us proceed to consider the edifying truths which are suggested by it with regards to prayer, whether secret or social.

1. The Amen Demands Understanding, Fervor, and Expectation in Prayer.

It suggests first that we should pray with understanding, with fervor, and with expectation.

a. With understanding

It strongly suggests that we should pray with understanding. For as our amen, whether in public or in private, is a mere formality if we do not pay a solemn regard to the amen of God Himself, so it manifestly teaches the necessity of praying according to the divine revealed will. For why do we pray, if not that God may regard, approve, and accept our adorations, confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings that are addressed to Him? There is no reason to expect this except in proportion as our prayers are conformable to His own directions. Now His wise and holy and gracious will respecting this important affair must be learned from the doctrines and promises, the precepts

⁴ Herman Witsius, *Sacred Dissertations on the Lord's Prayer*, Dissertation XIV.

and the examples, which are contained in sacred Scripture.

If then we pray agreeably to these, we shall approach the Father of mercies under our proper character, that is, not as claimants, but as supplicants.⁵ We should approach Him under a deep conviction of our guilt and our depravity; of our ignorance and unworthiness; and as lying entirely at His mercy. For “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luk 18:13) stands on divine record as a prayer that is worthy of imitation. Now, a sinner, as such, is an accursed character, or one that deserves damnation.

If we pray as the Scriptures teach, we shall draw near to the King Eternal with a believing regard to the all-sufficient atonement and the prevailing intercession of Jesus Christ. For as it is only through His vicarious obedience, finished on the cross, that our sins are pardoned and our persons justified in the sight of God, so it is only through the intercession of our great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary that our prayers ascend with acceptance before the Most High. This we are taught, if I mistake not, by the following remarkable passage: “And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand” (Rev 8:3-4). This is a representation of the ancient Jewish high priest

⁵ **not as claimants, but as supplicants** – not as those who appeal to a supposed legal right, but as undeserving needy ones who beg mercy and kindness from their King.

burning incense upon the golden altar on the day of atonement when he entered into the most holy place. For that altar was just at the entrance of it, directly before the mercy seat, or throne of Jehovah, in the earthly sanctuary, to which the apostle alludes when he speaks of “the throne of grace” (Heb 4:16). This apocalyptic angel, therefore, is our High Priest; for none else could approach that altar and burn incense upon it, the smoke of which was to enter the most holy place.

Now, “the prayers of the saints” denote the whole worship of the Christian church, which is presented before the throne of God by our heavenly High Priest. Nor is it said that the prayers of all saints, but that the smoke of the incense, ascended to God out of the angel’s hand; for it is the intercession of Christ, and that only, which procures their acceptance with God. For such a mixture of sin, such diversified imperfection, and such personal unworthiness attend all our devotional services that we might well despair of their obtaining divine acceptance, were it not for the work and worthiness of our great High Priest, Who is passed into the heavens, even Jesus the Son of God. But the all-sufficiency of His atonement for sin purges away the iniquity of our holy things (Exo 28:38). The never-failing efficacy of His intercession gives acceptance to our worship, which, in itself, is very imperfect; and the supreme dignity of His Person, Who appears as the representative of His redeemed, delivers the conscience from that painful sense of personal unworthiness, which would not permit our approach with boldness to the throne of grace.⁶ These considerations are

⁶ Dr. John Owen, *On the Person of Christ*, chap. XX.

happily adapted to relieve the conscience, to comfort the heart, and to animate devotion.

If we pray according to the directions of Scripture, it will be with a special regard to the aid of the Holy Spirit, Who is expressly called “the spirit of grace and of supplications” (Zec 12:10), His assistance being absolutely necessary to a holy amen. For such is the darkness of our minds that “we know not what we should pray for as we ought” (Rom 8:26). And such is the carnality of our hearts that we cannot command a devotional frame. We shall be the more sensible of the lack of this divine assistance in proportion as we remember that He Whom we address, He Who is our God, is a consuming fire. Hence that apostolic precept: “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” This precept is enforced by this consideration: “For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:28-29).

Yes, though under the Christian economy the infinite object of our adoration does not manifest His peculiar presence by the miraculous appearance of devouring fire, as He did to Moses in the bush and to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, yet those divine properties, His absolute purity, His burning jealousy, and His punishing justice, which were signified by the terrific, fiery emblem (Deu 4:23-24; 9:3), are still the same. For His immutability forbids our supposing that He is less pure in His nature, less jealous of His honor in the worship which He requires, or less disposed to execute justice upon transgressors now than under the Mosaic dispensation. It is a great mistake, therefore, for anyone to suppose that when God is denominated a consuming fire it has regard to sinners considered merely as destitute of a mediator. This is because the applica-

tion and improvement of that divine character by the apostle evidently respects real Christians equally with others. If then we approach the Most Holy with acceptance, it must be through faith in the blood of Jesus by the aid of the sacred Spirit (Eph 2:18; 3:12), and with profound reverence. For where there is no reverence, there is no devotion. In proportion as we address God under a divine influence, we shall pray with knowledge and with faith, with liberty and with delight.

b. With fervor

This adverbial and expressive term (amen) suggests that, when addressing God according to His revealed will, we should pray with holy fervor. Yes, as by the concluding word *amen* we epitomize all the foregoing requests, it manifestly denotes earnestness in our application to the Fountain of mercies and the Friend of man. For with what propriety or to what purpose do we briefly repeat our petitions if we be not fervent in prayer—if we be not in earnest with God to obtain the blessings we supplicate? Without this, our amen loses its emphasis and becomes a superficial formality or a mere word of course.

c. With expectation

Once more, we are taught by this expressive and solemnly concluding term (amen) that we should pray with expectation of a gracious audience of the King Eternal. For why do we pray, and why has Jesus taught us to conclude our petitions with an emphatical, “So be it,” if we have no ground of expectation that God will condescendingly hear and graciously answer our various requests by subjoining His own efficacious amen? It is of high importance, my brethren, in every

devotional exercise, that we approach God with expectation. For where there is no expectation of a gracious audience and of receiving benefits from His liberal hand, there is either no sense of want, and it is a merely formal service, or it is under a conviction of obligation to adore God while oppressed with slavish fear. And in each case, the animating principle is wanting, which is faith operating in the way of expectation.

To the enjoyment of this expectation, however, in drawing near to God, it is necessary that persons be sensible of their spiritual wants in connection with a view of revealed mercy; for, destitute of that sensibility, they have scarcely any errand at the throne of grace. They may pray, indeed, in their own way; but, not feeling their various necessities, they have no specific objects in view for which to supplicate the divine Father. Their prayers are by rote and in compliance with religious custom. But in proportion as anyone is convinced of his numerous wants, believes in Jesus, and regards the gracious promises, will expectation operate in his daily supplications. Nor is this animating expectation confined to peace of conscience and spiritual joy. No, it will be very much directed to divine communications of spiritual instruction, of necessary reproof, of support under trials, and of sanctifying influence in its various application to the human heart.

As a means of exciting this expectation, we should consider and endeavor to realize the gracious characters under which the great Object of our devotion stands revealed, in connection with those divine declarations, precepts, and promises, which have a special regard to prayer.

His gracious characters. Such, for instance, as the following: “Our Father which art in heaven...the God of all grace...the God of all comfort...the Father of mercies...The LORD...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...thou that hearest prayer” (Mat 6:9; 1Pe 5:10; 2Co 1:3; Exo 34:6-7; Psalms 65:2).

Declarations, precepts, and promises. The following are a specimen: “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it...Ask, and ye shall receive...Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you...We have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him [Christ]...Let us...come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need...Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Psalms 81:10; John 16:24; Mat 7:7; Eph 3:12; Heb 4:16; Heb 10:19-22). These and similar characters of Him Whom we adore—these and similar sayings of inspiration—together with numerous recorded facts relative to the success of prayer, fully warrant our expectation of a gracious answer in due season when drawing near to the divine Father in the name of Jesus. Nay, such is the provision which sovereign grace has made to animate prayer with hope that the vilest wretch upon earth has reason to expect the divine amen to his prayer, when from the heart he cries, “God be merciful through the atonement to me a sinner!”

Here, however, to prevent mistakes, I would sub-join the following cautions. Let none imagine that their obligation to pray arises merely from the reason there is to expect that God will graciously answer their petitions. No, for though that reason of expectation be a delightful encouragement and the grand motive to pray, it is far from being the ground of obligation to bow at our Maker's footstool. The infinite excellence of God, His absolute dominion over us, and our entire dependence upon Him for life, blessedness, and being constitute the ground of obligation to worship Him. Are we indulged with solid reason to expect the amen of God Himself to our prayers? It is of His mere, sovereign mercy, which might have been entirely withheld from us without in the least enfeebling the true ground of our obligation to adore Him as the Creator and moral governor of the universe. Awful, therefore, is the state of that man who has the exercise of his rational powers and yet lives without prayer! He is a practical atheist. Implicitly renouncing the divine dominion and tacitly denying the God that is above, he virtually claims independence from every invisible power. Making his own inclination the rule and his own pleasure the end of his conduct, the language of his heart is that of the wicked in the Book of Job: "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" (Job 21:15). Independently, then, of that provision which grace has made for the holiness and happiness of sinners by the atonement and intercession of Jesus Christ, by the aids of the divine Spirit in devotional duties, and by giving substantial reason to expect a condescending answer to our petitions, we are bound to revere, to love, and to adore the eternal Sovereign.

Again, let none of you consider this expectation as implying that the amen of God, when granted to our prayers, will always coincide with the time and manner which we prefer. Against a supposition of this kind, the Scripture guards by both doctrine and facts.

By doctrine. So, for instance, our Lord spake a parable concerning the importunate widow and the unrighteous judge professedly to inculcate the necessity of perseverance in prayer until the blessing solicited be conferred (Luk 18:1-8). But it is expectation of receiving the benefit requested that must nerve the soul for such perseverance in prayer because despondency cuts the sinews of application.

By facts. Thus, for example, Paul reiterated his earnest supplication to the Lord that the thorn in his flesh, the messenger of Satan, might depart from him, and was graciously answered. But this was not by the immediate removal of that which so deeply distressed him. For the answer of Jesus was, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2Co 12:7-9). This, doubtless, in the words of David, strengthened him with strength in his soul (Psa 138:3) to bear with patient submission the extremely painful trial, and shows that God may annex His amen to our prayers while the temptations or the burdens under which we labor continue. Yes, if He invigorate faith, increase patience, and enliven hope of a happy issue, He not only answers prayer, but gives an evidence of it, even though the subject of a Christian's complaint remain in all its force.

Once more: Let none of you expect that God will say, "Amen," to your petitions for the subduing of strong corruptions, for spiritual peace, or for holy joy,

except those petitions be connected with a habitual disposition to watch, to use the appointed means of religious improvement, and to reduce your supplications to holy practice. It is a good saying of an eminent author: "He who prays as he ought will endeavor to live as he prays." Now he who acts according to this rule will carefully watch over the secret operations of his own mind, the affections of his heart, and the various branches of his conduct. These he will frequently compare with his confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings at the throne of grace. By this comparison, he will daily receive a variety of salutary reproofs that will have a happy tendency to increase watchfulness and promote humility—to strengthen the spirit of self-denial and excite fervor in devotion. The utility of prayer, even in this respect, though probably much overlooked by many professors, is of great importance. As to spiritual peace and holy joy, our Lord has implicitly forbidden His disciples to expect them except in connection with obedience to His commands. For thus He speaks, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour...He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him...If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (Joh 12:26; 14:21, 23). Sublime and beatifying enjoyments are here promised, which are to be expected, not by nominal Christians at large, nor by superficial professors of the genuine gospel, nor even by real saints, except in proportion as they live by faith on the Son of God—as they are diligent in the use of spiritual means; as they are watchful, circumspect, and self-

denying; as they sincerely aim at impartiality and uniformity in their obedience to Jesus Christ; and as they are spiritually-minded.⁷ We should never forget, that, whatever words we use in prayer, God interprets them according to the secret desires of our hearts.

2. The Amen Suggests Cautions and Reproofs.

Having considered the significant and solemn *So be it*, as implicitly directing us to pray with understanding, with fervor, and with expectation, we now proceed to show, secondly, that the same comprehensive and emphatical term suggests *a variety of salutary cautions and keen reproofs* with regard to social prayer. This it does both to him that leads the worship and to them that unite in it.

a. To him that leads the worship

It is apparent that those for whom he is the mouth in prayer are under obligation so to unite with him through the whole as to conclude with a cordial amen. Now this emphatical *So be it* implicitly but strongly forbids and reproves:

The use of such words and modes of speech as his fellow worshippers do not understand. Our language in social prayer should always be so plain and simple that those who cannot read and are of narrow capacities may know what we mean, or else how shall they be able to subjoin their amen? Never is a desire of appearing learned or of having the command of elegant language so misapplied, so contemptible, and so abomi-

⁷ See Abraham Booth, *Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners*, 2nd edition, 260-263.

nable in the sight of God as when addressing Him in public prayer. For anyone designedly to convert what ought to be the prayer of sinners prostrate at the throne of grace and crying for mercy into an occasion of displaying the brightness of his own parts or the superiority of his literary excellence is an evil of no common magnitude. But though the impropriety of such conduct be so manifest and its criminality so great, there are some, I presume, in this assembly that can witness from their own experience the necessity of being constantly on their guard lest, instead of worshipping Him Who is a consuming fire with reverence and godly fear (Heb 12:28-29), they, in the figurative language of inspiration, should offer sacrifice to their own net and burn incense to their own drag (Hab 1:16). They must be on guard lest the desire of making a respectable figure among their fellow-worms and the lust of popular applause be more operative in their hearts than a sense of the divine Presence, contrition for sin, faith in Christ, or a desire of communion with God. He, however, who has the honor of addressing you on the present occasion, though now hoary in a profession of godliness and in the gospel ministry, perceives great reason on this account for deep humiliation and the strictest watchfulness.

The concluding and expressive amen loudly forbids and powerfully reproves *all quaint expressions and low language that are adapted to raise a smile, and every term and phrase that savors of wit or of contrivance*. Because everything of this kind, being adverse to devout attention, to united fervor, and to the very nature of prayer, must be inimical⁸ to an harmonious and

⁸ **inimical** – hostile; unfriendly.

solemn *So be it*. Nay, language, if not absolutely inadvertent,⁹ which has a natural tendency to provoke laughter in serious persons, treats them with rudeness and insults the majesty of that divine presence in which the speaker stands. Far from serving Jehovah with fear, and equally far from imitating the profound humility and reverence of the seraphim in their sublime worship (Isa 6:1-4), he by levity profanes the service of the Most Holy, wounds the devotional feelings of those who are truly pious, and shocks common sense, even in those that are ungodly.

The united and concluding amen very forcibly forbids and keenly reproves *the use of all ambiguous phrases or expressions of doubtful meaning*. For, to petitions and thanksgivings in such language, who, besides the person that uses them can say, “So be it”? Undesignedly to employ phraseology of this kind interferes with the intention of social prayer; and to adopt it by choice or to have a latent meaning under well-known terms which the words themselves do not express is to be without integrity and to deceive those who unite in the solemn exercise. Never do ambiguities appear so hateful as when presented to the heart-searching God in social supplication and claiming the amen of private worshippers. For where, in whose presence, or on what occasion ought simplicity and sincerity to appear in their highest exercise, if not in professed converse with Him Whose eyes are as a flaming fire?

The devout and united amen of all that are present in social worship entirely forbids and sharply reproves *a polemical or controversial turn in prayer*. For if he

⁹ **inadvertent** – unintended; accidental.

who is the mouth of a congregation, instead of addressing penitential confessions, ardent petitions, and grateful acknowledgments to God, undertake to confirm truth or to confute error, the attention of his fellow-worshippers is necessarily diverted from the proper object of their concluding amen to the pertinency and force, or the weakness and futility, of his arguments. The exercise of a praying frame is immediately suspended, and the spirit of devotion languishes. So that instead of adoring at the throne of grace and being conscious of it, they are deeply engaged in mental controversy and feel as if contending with opponents. But that all this is extremely foreign from the true nature and real design of social prayer is beyond a doubt.

Besides, however true the sentiment or commendable the practice which is thus defended in prayer may be, it is not improbable that some really pious persons in the assembly may have their doubts respecting the truth of such sentiment or the validity of such practice. But in social supplication, he who leads the devotion should endeavor so to express himself that every real Christian—that everyone who enjoys the Spirit of prayer and is not under the immediate influence of some prejudice or some temptation—may heartily unite in the closing amen. Nor is it unworthy of remark that though real converts very much differ as to some points of doctrine and certain modes of worship, yet observation has taught us that in their experience and in their prayers there is a pleasing harmony among them. I will add, it is not in preaching the Word as it is in prayer. For does a minister of Christ, as a public teacher, address an audience on the doctrine of grace or the doctrine of duty? Appearing under that

character and in his individual capacity, he must, whether those around him approve or not, express his own views of truths and blessings, of obligations and of dangers, while the people hear and judge for themselves. But, when taking the lead in prayer, he appears not as a detached individual, nor yet as a public teacher, but as a member of the collective body, as the mouth of the congregation, or as the instrument of the whole assembly in making known their united requests to God.

The concluding and solemn amen absolutely forbids and severely reproves *every appearance of angry, envious, and malevolent passion*. For as our Lord has taught us that the least degree of malevolence toward our neighbors is abhorrent from the nature of acceptable prayer, when performed by an individual (Mar 11:25-26), so whatever wears the aspect of private resentment or seems inconsistent with genuine benevolence to our fellow-creatures in general must, so far as it appears, be an insuperable bar to that righteous, devout, and solemn amen which is required. For, as before demanded, where, when, in the presence of whom, and on what occasion, should the heart be filled with rectitude and with kind affections toward our brethren of the human race, if not when professedly prostrate at the feet of eternal Majesty, whether pleading for mercy or presenting our thanks for benefits received? Where should humility and meekness, where should the overflowings of love to God and man, express themselves if not at the throne of grace?

In a word, the united, the solemn, the emphatic amen of silent worshippers in social prayer forbids and reproves *every impropriety and moral defect* in him who leads the devotion that has a natural tendency to

interfere with devout attention, with deep solemnity, and with the lively exercise of holy affections toward God. If he, therefore, who is the mouth in social supplication do not appear to feel the solemnity of his own situation, as addressing the Most High; if he do not apparently pray with humility, with reverence, and from the heart; if his language and manner afford strong presumptive grounds of suspicion that he performs the service in a merely official, or in a customary way; if he protract the service to such a length as wearies the attention of those who are not under the power of bodily indisposition and have the Spirit of prayer; or if the rectitude of his habitual conduct and the piety of his general character be doubted by them, the concluding amen cannot be expected to have either that emphasis or that devotion which the nature of the case requires. Thus, we have seen how fruitful of caution and of admonition to everyone that is the mouth in social prayer is the closing and solemn *So be it!*

Let us now consider the same adverbial and comprehensive term as pregnant with salutary caution and keen reproof,

b. To those who silently unite in social supplication

It powerfully, for example, cautions against and severely reproves *every degree of negligence respecting their attendance at the place of prayer before the devotional exercise begins*. To unavoidable hindrances, doubtless, the most godly persons in all stations are liable, especially on working days; and, therefore, rather than to forbear an attendance, it may be both pious and prudent, in certain cases, to enter the place of worship after prayer is commenced. In multitudes of instances, however, this inconvenience might be pre-

vented by a wise foresight well improved. But it is one thing to be unavoidably hindered, and it is another not conscientiously to aim at being always present in due time. When persons come into a worshipping assembly after prayer is begun, they are not only rendered incapable of saying amen to the preceding petitions, but they interrupt the devotion of others. This they do, not merely by the opening of doors, passing the aisles, and entering the pews—the noise of all which is often increased by the clatter of pattens¹⁰—but, sometimes, when taking their seats, by paying a kind of profane respect one to another in the same pew. I said, a kind of *profane* respect, nor can I give it a milder epithet. Because to suspend, though but for a moment, an act of devotion to God rather than omit a token of politeness or an expression of esteem to a fellow-worm is incomparably more absurd and indecent than for a condemned felon, when begging his life at the feet of his sovereign, to discontinue his engaging supplication while he takes the opportunity of caressing a lap dog. A similar censure will apply, when anyone, without some singular necessity for it, examines the state of the time, either by the public dial, or by his own watch, while professedly engaged in addressing the omnipresent God in prayers or in praise. These and similar improprieties are indeed so flagrant that there is no need of spiritual illumination to discover them, nor of a remarkably tender conscience to detest them. The

¹⁰ It is much to be desired that those females who wear pattens would always take them off when entering a place of public worship.—*A. Booth*

pattens – wooden shoes with an iron ring, worn to keep the shoes from the dirt or mud.

nature of the case and common sense well employed are sufficient for those purposes.

Besides, were the concluding and united amen quite out of the question, in proportion as we unnecessarily fail of being present for social prayer before the exercise begins, the time being stated and known, we are manifestly lacking in respect for divine worship and are much less concerned to improve the time allotted for communion with God and our own spiritual benefit than the notaries of licentious pleasure are to obtain the full measure of gratification at the theater or in any other place of illicit amusement. Habitual negligence of this kind may therefore be ascribed to a habitual lack of devotional principle, which is an awful indication that the heart is not right with God.

There is, indeed, reason to apprehend that many persons, when a sermon is expected, make little account of uniting in the first prayer, provided they be but in time to hear the minister announce and read his text. This, however, is, an absurd and criminal partiality respecting the duties of social religion. For such professors of Christianity do not appear in a place of worship in order to adore Him in Whom they live and move and have their being; or that they may pour out their hearts before Him and have communion with Him as the God of all grace, which ought certainly to be their first intention; but they attend for other purposes that are more agreeable to their taste. They attend, it may be, either merely out of custom to gratify curiosity by hearing some new or eminent preacher; or, considering themselves as critically wise in theological affairs, to determine upon the soundness of his doctrine and to appreciate his ministerial abilities. Hence it is common for persons, when declaring how

they have used or mean to employ their time at places of public worship, to say, "I have been," or, "By the assistance of Providence, I intend going, to this, that, or the other place," not, "that I may *worship God*," but, "that I may *hear such a preacher*." But what indication is there of real godliness or of true religion in language and conduct of this kind? They naturally suggest the thought that public prayer and praise are become obsolete and useless customs. There is reason to conclude, however, that those who treat social supplication and social praise with indifference never derived much advantage from public preaching.

The emphatic term (amen) so often repeated inculcates caution and ministers reproof relative to *wandering thoughts and inattention in social prayer*. For, in proportion as these prevail in the silent worshipper, he cannot, without hypocrisy, unite in the final amen. To have wandering thoughts when professedly addressing the omniscient God is common to real Christians, nay, at some times, even such thoughts as are most detestable and shocking to the devout mind. Nor are the most advanced saints, in the present life, entirely free from them. But, confessedly to have these thoughts without being pained and sincerely mourning over them before God—without watching, and praying, and striving against them—is the mark of a hypocrite or at least of a self-deceiver. As, therefore, the best of men are liable, in the sacred seasons of converse with God, to be interrupted by these hateful intruders, it is our indispensable duty by all means to guard against them in both public and private devotion. For very suspicious is the religious character of that worshipper who in public supplication is habitually all alive to everything around him that stirs; is, except very much in-

disposed, almost every minute changing his attitude;¹¹ and is gazing a considerable portion of the time either on different parts of the congregation or on those of the place in which he is. It cannot be justly supposed that the heart of such a worshipper is influenced by the Spirit of supplication, is in a state of deep humiliation at the throne of grace, melted in holy sorrow for sin, drawn out in devout affections toward God, enjoying communion with Him, or ardently seeking those refined enjoyments—no, nor even in a proper frame to unite in the solemn amen.

The concluding *So be it* administers useful caution and, in many instances, necessary reproof relative to *brotherly love and Christian union among those that unite in social prayer*. For as they address God by a public instrument,¹² so they have but one mouth in prayer. Consequently, the Object of their address; the character which they assume; the medium of their approach to the divine throne; the grounds of their expectation to receive a condescending answer; together with their confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings, are all the very same with regard to each concerned in the devotional exercise. Besides, by the closing and comprehensive amen, unless there be any latent exceptions in their own minds, they epitomize the whole that has been expressed. Such being their professed union, therefore, when conversing with God on the mercy-seat, the dispositions of their hearts and the tenor of their behavior one toward another should undoubtedly be in holy unison with their social address to Him Who searches the heart. Their disposi-

¹¹ **attitude** – position; posture; direction one faces.

¹² **public instrument** – the one leading in prayer.

tions and behavior should be kind, affectionate, and harmonious. It is not possible for them all to unite in a truly devout amen if their affections one toward another be unkind, unsociable, and immoral.

Once more, the concluding and comprehensive term before us (amen) very strongly cautions and severely reproves respecting *the use of language in prayer, which the heart is not in genuine agreement with*. To an acceptable amen, in the sight of God, an enlightened understanding, an impressed conscience, and an upright heart must all be engaged in prayer; for, without some degree of these mental qualities in exercise, the closing and emphatical *So be it* does not express the least devotion in them that use it but becomes a mere word of course. A conviction of sin, sincere desire of receiving blessings from the hand of sovereign mercy, serious attention to the language of social prayer, and a cordial adoption of scriptural petitions presented to God are necessary to a devout amen.

Destitute of these and unconcerned about them, how often, alas, in how many millions of instances, has a verbal *So be it* been annexed to the several parts of this divine pattern of prayer, when used as a form, the state of the heart and the tenor of the conduct having been opposed to the language. Multitudes of persons have said, without hesitation, "Our Father which art in heaven" (Mat 6:9), as if they had undoubtedly stood in the filial relation to God, revered His majesty, confided in His paternal care, and lived in high expectation of enjoying the eternal inheritance, whose conduct nevertheless manifested that they were, as our Lord speaks, of their father the devil (Joh 8:44).

They have daily used and added their amen to “hallowed be thy name” (Mat 6:9), as if the sanctification of His most august character were the first wish of their hearts and the main object of their lives, while it was the riding passion of their souls to raise their own characters and those of their families in the world though perhaps at the expense of piety and of truth, of justice and of humility.

They have added their amen to “thy kingdom come” (Mat 6:10), as if the conversion of sinners to Jesus Christ, the extending of His gracious empire in the souls of men, and the enlargement of His visible church upon earth were objects of their ardent desire, when their predominant concern was to have their own secular possessions, power, and honor increased—nay, when their hearts were full of bitterness and their hands armed with vengeance against the true subjects of that spiritual kingdom.

They have said, “Amen,” to “thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Mat 6:10), as if they were heartily disposed to perform the revealed will of God and earnestly desirous of the same disposition becoming universal among mankind, when the prevailing bias of their souls and the general course of their behavior were in a state of hostility with every principle of true virtue and every precept of real piety.

They have said an amen to “give us this day our daily bread” (Mat 6:11), as if, habitually feeling their dependence on the bounty of God for every temporal enjoyment, they were sincerely thankful for the mere necessities of life, while they disregarded Providence in the bestowment of temporal benefits, were eagerly

desirous of amassing riches, and of rising in the scale of ecclesiastical or of secular distinction.

They have added their amen to “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Mat 6:13), while far from cautiously avoiding the occasions of temptation to sin, and equally far from habitual prayer that God would preserve them from falling by the snares of Satan, they were devoted to the pleasures of sensuality, the gratifications of avarice, or the pursuits of ambition.

And finally they have added their amen to “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Mat 6:12), as if, being full of benevolence and mercy toward those who have injured them, the least evidence of repentance for it would command their forgiveness, when [in reality] their hearts were so full of malevolence toward their offending neighbors that if God as an echo to their amen had annexed His own righteous and omnipotent *So be it*, their case must have been hopeless and their future damnation certain.

It is, indeed, a very common thing for the prevailing temper of a person’s heart and the prominent features of his behavior to be the reverse of his amen in prayer. Nor is it an easy matter for a real Christian, in certain cases, cheerfully to receive the Lord’s amen to his own petitions. Does a believer pray, for instance, that our heavenly Father would subdue his corruptions, purify his heart, and elevate his affections to things above? Does the Lord graciously sanction his prayer with an efficacious amen? It is expressed, perhaps, and takes effect, partly by means of great affliction in his own person, relatives, or temporal circumstances—by sickness, pain, or poverty. He forgets, it

may be, that the Father of mercies afflicts the heirs of heaven in order to make them partakers of His holiness. When afflictions come on, continue, and increase, instead of expecting from God an answer to his prayers by means of this kind (though a common mode of divine proceeding), he is too frequently alarmed and filled with distress, as though the Lord had entered into an awful controversy with him, or as if some strange thing had happened to him. To Christians in such circumstances, the language of Paul is instructive, corrective, and encouraging: "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb 12:5-6). Such are the important cautions, admonitions, and reproofs which the expressive *So be it* suggests to private worshippers.

3. Conclusion

A word to those who habitually take the lead in social prayer, to those who are silent worshippers, and to those who have little or no regard to prayer, whether secret or social, shall conclude this discourse.

a. To those who habitually take the lead

It is evident from what has been said that when anyone appears as the instrument of an assembly to present their united requests to God, the situation in which he stands is peculiarly solemn. Of this, I trust, not only my brethren in the ministry now present, but many others in this congregation have been long

aware; and yet perhaps none of us have realized the fact as we ought. Is a minister of Christ under indispensable obligations, when expounding the divine oracles, to be conscientiously cautious that he do not misinterpret and misapply the language of God to men? And is he not bound to be cautious of misrepresenting the character and state, the wants and supplies, the fears and the hopes, the sorrows and the joys of his fellow-men, when unitedly speaking to God, that those who are devout in the exercise may feel their interest, more or less, in all he expresses? Besides, voluntarily and professedly to appear before the divine Majesty, guilty, corrupt, and unworthy as we are; to approach Him in Whose presence those morning stars, those children of light and love, the seraphim, veil their faces and cover their feet (Isa 6:1-4); to draw near to Him, though as on the throne of grace, and by the blood of Jesus, Who is a consuming fire; to address Him in prayer, not as a detached individual, but as presenting the confessions, requests, and thanks of the whole assembly; as directing the intercessions of each worshipper in the congregation, for all the churches of Christ upon earth, for the civil government under which we live, for the millions of our fellow mortals that lie in wickedness; and all this with a view to the united and solemn amen of the whole assembly must constitute a situation that is very solemn and very important. So solemn and so important is it as justly to excite similar feelings with those of the revering patriarch when he said, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Gen 28:17). Surely, then, my ministering brethren, whenever thus employed, we must stand in the greatest need of grace or of divine influ-

ence that we may serve God acceptably and be the happy means of exciting, promoting, inflaming devout affections in the hearts of all those who unite with us!

Yes, my brethren, we in a particular manner are under the overwhelming necessity of having divine assistance in the sacred service lest, in leading the public devotion, we should sink into habitual formality, lest we should be contented with employing our gifts in prayer as ministers without exercising our graces in prayer as Christians. For dreadful is the state of that minister who is not much on his guard in this respect, because the frequent recurrence of seasons for conducting social prayer, not only in public, but also in his own family, in the families of his friends, and when visiting the sick, has through natural depravity a tendency to produce an unhallowed familiarity with prayer and with God—a familiarity without self-abasement, without faith, without fervor, and without delight.

My brethren will not be offended if I should add: There is great reason to suspect and to mourn over the suspicion that the inattention and formality in our assemblies, when we are leading their devotion, are too often partly owing to our *own* want of deep solemnity, of holy ardor, and of spiritual savor in the exercise. Though daily constrained to lament the lack of more spirituality in our secret devotions and bound to labor for it, we should be still more solicitous in public prayer, when leading the worship, to possess a large degree of clearness in our conceptions; of reverence in our adorations; of self-abasement in our confessions; of earnestness in our petitions; of gratitude in our thanksgivings; and of sacred unction through the whole, because the devotion of many others is much

concerned, on such occasions, in the apparent frame of *our* hearts; in the language of *our* lips; and, perhaps, on reflection, in *our* example.

Nor is it, under God, of small importance to our usefulness, when officiating as the mouth of a congregation in prayer, that the rectitude of our conduct and the piety of our character be unimpeached and unsuspected by those who are present and should add their solemn amen. For if the conduct of a minister be stained by known immorality or his religious character be considered as doubtful, those who unite with him, whatever appearance of devotion there may be in prayers, will probably have many unpleasing thoughts at the time arise in their minds respecting him that will greatly interfere with a devotional frame.

Of all the religious professors on earth, none have so many powerful motives to holiness of heart and life; to spirituality and heavenly-mindedness; or to lead the exercises of social supplication with deep elevation, as a minister of the Word. For as to suitable petitions in prayer the habitual dispositions of any man's heart and the tenor of his conduct ought always to be in complete unison; so should it be in a more especial manner with regard to a professed minister of Christ. Because whether he stand up in a congregation to interpret the divine oracles or to be the mouth in prayer, he should appear and be recognized as a "man of God" (1Ti 6:11), much more venerable for his Christian character than for his ministerial office. The former being permanent and stamping his destiny for eternity, the latter transient, and may be annihilated in a moment. How it is with you, my ministering brethren, I do not know; but as to myself, when reflecting on the numerous obligations under which I am to be entirely devoted to God,

and on the multiplied motives I have to exemplary holiness and heavenly-mindedness—motives arising from my Christian profession, my public ministry, my pastoral office, my hoary hairs, and from a vast variety of other sources—my own sermons reprove me; my daily prayers reprove me; and I feel myself deeply convicted before God. Were it not, therefore, for that relief which is administered by the atonement and intercession of Jesus Christ, I should be utterly confounded. I should sink in despair.

It is much more common, I presume, for ministers to be embarrassed by timidity when they appear before certain characters among their fellow-worms to discuss an article of doctrine, of privilege, or of duty than when, as the mouth of an assembly, they professedly appear at a throne of grace before the heart-searching God. But whence—if the foregoing particulars be maturely considered—whence can this proceed, in any of us, except from our carnality, our official pride, and our forgetfulness of the divine presence in which we stand? Alas! Alas! My brethren, we are too frequently, though often insensibly, much more apprehensive of not obtaining that honor which cometh from men and is usually attached to learning and eloquence—to a lively imagination and strong reasoning powers in preaching—than we are of not approving ourselves to God by the exercise of repentance and faith, of reverence and spirituality in prayer. But, as an apostle says on another occasion, “These things ought not so to be” (Jam 3:10).

b. To those who are silent worshippers

It is evident from the nature of things that prayer in the present state is an indispensable duty and essen-

tial to real godliness. Totally to neglect it, therefore, suits the character of none but an atheist because it is a tacit denial of the divine dominion and the divine existence. Nor is prayer, whether social or secret, whether stated, occasional, or ejaculatory,¹³ a mere duty. It is also a privilege. Yes, on evangelical principles, it is a very important privilege. For it is a grand means of spiritual edification or of invigorating the graces of Christianity when produced in our hearts. No ordinance of holy worship nor any exercise of the human mind is more adapted to cultivate the principles of real piety in any person that is born again. It must therefore be considered as an admirable means of promoting holiness and of increasing happiness in this evil world.

Solemn and frequent prayer is adapted, for instance, to maintain on the mind a devout sense of our entire dependence on God, of His dominion over us; and of our accountableness to Him as the moral Governor of the world; to excite reverence of His majesty, His justice, and His purity; to promote the exercise of self-abasement, of contrition, or of godly sorrow for sin before Him; to endear the atonement and intercession of Jesus, being conscious that we are sinners and knowing that He to Whom we pray is a consuming fire; to increase our desire of sanctifying influence and of conformity to the Redeemer's image; to prepare our hearts for a thankful reception of the blessings that are necessary for us; to promote, by interceding for others, the exercise of brotherly love to real Christians, and of

¹³ **stated** – planned, as a regular prayer meeting; **occasional** – used as demanded by an event or occasion; **ejaculatory** – short, impromptu prayers.

the social, benevolent affections toward all mankind; to habituate and familiarize ourselves in filial communion with God; to be a means of enjoying those heavenly foretastes, those refined pleasures, which nothing but fellowship with the Father and the Son can possibly afford; to prepare us, as well for arduous duties as for painful conflicts here; and to mature us for a joyful departure hence into the state of celestial blessedness. For, as before observed, "He who prays as he ought, will endeavor to live as he prays."

Such being the happy tendencies of real prayer to promote the vigor of true piety, were our hearts perfectly right with God, all our mental powers and all the energies of our souls would unite their exertions from day to day at the throne of grace. But though at some bright intervals in our devotions we feel ourselves near to God and our hearts enlarged with holy affections toward Him as revealed in Jesus; though at such seasons, we behold His glory, are de-lighted in His presence, and sink, as it were, into nothing before Him, rejoicing that He reigns, that we are in His hands, that He always executes His own pleasure, that our immortal happiness depends entirely on His favor, and that He is the *eternal all*—yet, alas, how soon are those happy moments elapsed! Nay, my brethren, too frequently, when addressing the Father of mercies, our minds are dark, and our pious affections are dormant. The sources of godly sorrow seem to be exhausted, and the joys of communion with our heavenly Father are far from us. We treat Him without reverence, without confidence, and without delight, as, if He were little superior to a dumb idol that neither cares nor knows how he is worshipped. Thus we make work for bitter grief and sorrowful confessions. Or if not sunk so low

in devotional exercises, our thoughts are frequently so volatile, so unmanageable, and so wandering. Our endeavors to rouse the principles of devotion into exercise are so feeble and so inefficacious that there is very little which savors of true piety in our prayers except the conflict with our own corruptions and perhaps a concluding, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luk 18:13), or the ardent exclamation of an apostle: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom 7:24). Such is the undistorted representation of the manner in which our devotional duties are too frequently discharged!

But shall I, my brethren, or shall you, when conscious of these abominations in our prayers, content ourselves with saying, "Alas, we are so depraved that without divine assistance we cannot do otherwise without watching, supplicating, agonizing against them?" Far be it! The fault is in *us*, even in our *very hearts*; and, therefore, we should take the shame. The blame belongs to us, and therefore we should condemn ourselves. Instead, then, of consoling ourselves, when, convicted of such evils, by referring to the language of our Lord, "Without me ye can do nothing" (Joh 15:5), we should first endeavor to humble ourselves in the dust before God on account of that innate corruption which renders divine assistance absolutely necessary for us and then seek the encouragement that is exhibited by sovereign grace.

c. To those who have little or no regard to prayer

That there are millions of such in the world is a lamentable fact, and probably some of you may be of that character. Suffer me to address you then with a few questions; and, as in the presence of God, let con-

science answer. Do not some of you live habitually without secret prayer, without devoutly feeling and solemnly acknowledging your entire dependence on Providence for life and health, for food and raiment? Do none of you rise in a morning, receive the necessary supplies by day, and go to rest at night, without bending the knee before Him in Whom you live, and move, and have your being? You are fed, you are clothed, you enjoy health and plenty while multitudes are emaciated with disease and pinched with want of necessary food and of necessary clothing. But what ungrateful and rebellious returns do you prayerless creatures make for that divine liberality which is the source of all your supplies! You have sinned. You have offended the Most High. You are in His hands to deal with you just as He pleases. Nor can anyone tell how He will dispose of you; and yet you have never thought it worth your while to read His Word with diligence, to study His gospel with prayer, or even to cry for mercy. You have heard, it may be, or might have heard, a thousand times, the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ in a public ministry; but you have never seriously made it your business to understand its gracious meaning nor prayed for enlightening influence. You are under a divine sentence of temporal death, of which you cannot doubt. You are uncertain whether you shall survive another day and are in imminent danger of eternal ruin; yet, far from being awake to your final interests, far from spending your time as walking on the brink of the grave, you sleep on in sins, dreaming of long life and of many happy days in this world of wickedness, of disappointment, and of misery. Being under the curse of divine law, you are every moment exposed to everlasting perdition. If death

overtake you in that condition, it will be to you no other than the arrest of eternal justice, summoning you to appear at the bar of God; and then your damnation will be inevitable. Yet you live without habitual seriousness, without real devotion, and without solemn prayer! But were you assured by infallible information that God had absolutely forbidden you to pray, or that He had determined never to regard your prayers, though ever so ardent, or ever so frequent, how dreadful would your situation be, considered even by yourselves! Dark despair would probably envelope your minds. A trembling horror would seize your animal frames, and your feelings would be an awful anticipation of hell. Little do you think, while in a prayerless and impenitent state, that, were God to leave you in it, you would certainly go on to treasure up “wrath against the day of wrath” and must inevitably “drink of the wrath of the Almighty” (Rom 2:5; Job 21:20). May the Spirit of grace effectually excite you to “seek...the LORD while he may be found,” to “call...upon him while he is near,” and “to flee from the wrath to come” (Isa 55:6; Mat 3:7)! For, should you persevere in a thoughtless, impious, prayerless condition, your final sentence from Jesus the supreme Judge will certainly be: “Depart...ye cursed, into everlasting fire” (Mat 25:41)! And all holy creatures, perfectly approving the irreversible sentence, will unanimously say, “Amen.”

