

pray not only for distinctly spiritual blessings, but also that 'our sinful bodies may be made clean by' our Lord's 'Body,' an expression entirely consistent with our Lord's own language about the life-giving effect of His flesh upon the body, and with the duty, which S. Paul urges, of the consecration of our 'bodies' to God's service. 'It is true,' says a valuable writer,* 'that the body is sinful, and, therefore, . . . unworthy of this glorious consecration. But through our union with Christ (a union which by a faithful reception of this sacrament is cemented,) the sinful body is made clean by Christ's Body (the Body in which He bore our sins on the tree), even as the sinful soul is washed through the spilling of the Blood of Christ in expiation of sin.'

We now come to the central point of the office, to which all its different lines of prayer and praise converge. 'This consists,' as a great Liturgical writer tells us,† 'of the commemoration of the one sacrifice once offered by Christ upon the Cross, the history and the institution of the Sacrament, together with prayer that, together with the bread and wine, we may communicate of the body and blood of Christ.' The prayer naturally falls into three parts (1), an introduction, recounting before God the nature and object of the holy rite which the Church is celebrating; (2), a petition; (3), the recitation of the Gospel history, which forms part of the act of consecration. It may be well to consider these different parts separately.

(1). The introductory portion of the prayer is a solemn remembrance of our Lord's atoning work before the Father. God's 'tender mercy' is called to mind. Twice in our Prayer Book is this word 'tender' applied to the Divine mercy—once in the Palm Sunday collect, and here in the prayer of consecration. People have been known to complain of the coldness of Church prayers, and yet, if we examine them closely, we shall find that our Prayer Book constantly uses expressions which can only be real when they are the fervent outpourings of a deep spiritual affection. This introduction begins by recognising the Father as the author, jointly with the Son, of the redemption of the world. This is very important, because sometimes people have thoughtlessly spoken as if the Atonement were only the work of God's blessed Son, apart from the other Persons of the Holy Trinity, whereas, the Son only executed that which had been planned always in the eternal counsels. Then the sufficiency of our Lord's death is beautifully set forth. The Church seems, indeed, in accordance with the apostolic description, to 'show the Lord's death.' The fulness, perfection, and sufficiency of that sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction 'for the sins of the whole world,' are beautifully and exactly set forth. We are reminded that this offering was 'made *there*,' *i.e.*, on the Cross, 'by His one oblation of Himself once offered.' These words are to be noticed, because they guard against a common error arising from the acceptance of the Roman doctrine of the Mass. Whether the Church of Rome actually taught the *repetition* of our Lord's sufferings or not in the Mass, one thing seems certain,

* Dean Goulburn on the Communion Office.

† Bishop Cosin.