

C. S. Lewis, "Dogma and the Universe" (*The Guardian*, March 1943)

God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics, Walter Hooper, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 47

When any man comes into the presence of God he will find, whether he wishes it or not, that all those things which seemed to make him so different from the men of other times, or even from his earlier self, have fallen off him. He is back where he always was, where every man always is. *Eadem sunt omnia semper.*⁸ Do not let us deceive ourselves. No possible complexity which we can give to our picture of the universe can hide us from God: there is no copse, no forest, no jungle thick enough to provide cover. We read in Revelation of Him that sat on the throne 'from whose face the earth and heaven fled away'.⁹ It may happen to any of us at any moment. In the twinkling of an eye, in a time too small to be measured, and in any place, all that seems to divide us from God can flee away, vanish leaving us naked before Him, like the first man, like the only man, as if nothing but He and I existed. And since that contact cannot be avoided for long, and since it means either bliss or horror, the business of life is to learn to like it. That is the first and great commandment.

⁸ 'Everything is always the same.'

⁹ Revelation xx. 11.

Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2æ, 83, 1 and 2

On Prayer

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod desiderium pauperum dicitur Dominus exaudire, vel quia desiderium est causa petendi, cum **petitio quodammodo sit desiderii interpres**, vel hoc dicitur ad ostendendum exauditionis velocitatem, quia scilicet dum adhuc aliquid in desiderio pauperum est, Deus exaudit, antequam orationem proponant, secundum illud *Isa.: Eritque antequam clament, ego exaudiam eos.* [Isaiah 65:24]

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod, sicut supra dictum est [Ia. 82, 4; Ia2æ. 9, 1 ad 3], voluntas movet rationem ad suum finem. Unde nihil prohibet, movente voluntate, actum rationis tendere in finem charitatis, qui est Deo uniri. Tendit autem oratio in Deum, quasi a voluntate charitatis mota, dupliciter: uno quidem modo ex parte ejus quod petitur, quia hoc præcipue est in oratione petendum ut Deo, uniamur, secundum illud *Psal. Unum petii a Domino, hanc requiram, ut inhabitem in domo Domini omnibus diebus vitæ meæ* [Psalm 26:24]; alio modo ex parte ipsius petentis, quem oportet accedere ad eum a quo petit, vel sicut ad hominem, vel mente, sicut ad Deum. Unde dicit ibidem Dionysius quod **quando orationibus invocamus Deum, revelata mente adsumus ipsi** [*De Div. Nom.* 3. PG 3, 680]. Et secundum hoc etiam. Damascenus dicit, quod *oratio est ascensus mentis in Deum* [*De Fide Orth.*, III, 24. PG 94, 1089].

Hence: 1. The Lord is said to hear the desire of the poor either because desire is the cause of their petition, since a **petition is an expression of desire**, or to show how quickly the poor are heard, for God hears the poor even before they offer a prayer, as it says in Isaiah, *Before they call, I will answer.*

2. As stated above, the will moves reason to its goal; hence an act of reason can be directed by the will to union with God which is the goal of charity. Prayer motivated by charity tends toward God in two ways: first, in so far as the thing requested is concerned, because when we pray we should ask principally to be united to God, as the Psalmist says, *One thing I ask of the Lord, this I seek, to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life*, secondly, in so far as the one praying is concerned, because one ought to approach the person from whom he requests something, either in place when from a man, or in mind when from God. Hence Dionysius says, **when we call upon God in our prayers we unveil our mind in his presence**, and in the same sense Damascene says, *prayer is the lifting up of the mind to God.*